

Saudi Diplomacy Towards the Somali-Ethiopian Border War 1982 - 1988

Wael Nasser Hussein¹ and Ali Hussein Nimr²

Abstract

The aim of the research is to identify the role of Saudi diplomacy vis-à-vis the 1982-1988 Somali-Ethiopian border war, particularly since the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea are particularly important in Saudi security thinking; The conflicts in the Horn of Africa region represented an important source of security threat to the region's neighbours, particularly Saudi Arabia, because every conflict that erupted in the region had implications for Saudi Arabia; By virtue of the long coastal boundary on the Red Sea.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Ethiopia, Mohamed Siad Barre

INTRODUCTION

The Horn of Africa and the Red Sea are of particular importance in the map of international and regional interests. The region has experienced considerable growth in the presence of many international and regional forces, particularly in the early 1960s. Most of the countries of the Horn of Africa were independent, and colonialism left them with unprecedented border conflicts. Those conflicts represented an important source of security threat to the region's neighbours. ", particularly for Saudi Arabia, because every conflict that erupted in the region had repercussions on Saudi Arabia; By virtue of the long coastal boundary on the Red Sea through which Saudi oil trade passes the mainstay of its economy.

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The causes of the inter-African border conflicts are the partition of the African continent's European colonization, as well as the pursuit of some power; because of race, what happened between those nationalities fell under the struggle of identity and trying to establish oneself through effective participation in each of those nationalities' governance. (1)

For Somalia and Ethiopia, they were in a chronic state of tight hostility between them; Because of their border differences, although the Ogaden war between them ended in 1978, both did not recognize their borders, as opposed to the inability of all parties to find solutions to the outstanding problems between the two sides, hatred persisted between the two countries. (2)

By the end of June, on 30 June 1982, Ethiopian forces dispatched a military force to Somalia (3), successfully annexing the Jaldobeb and Belmabel areas of central Somalia, which threatened to cut off contacts between the two parts of Somalia. (4)

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia intervened in the corridors of the League of Arab States for the Somali cause and requested a satisfactory solution for Somalia. Accordingly, the League of Arab States confirmed that it would discuss the matter at the Fez Summit in September 1982. (5)

To complement its position, Saudi Arabia announced through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs in early August 1982 its position with Somalia against the Ethiopian annexation of Somalia's regions. Somalia thanked Saudi Arabia through the Deputy Foreign Minister of Somalia, Muhammad Ali Hamoud, in a statement on 21 August 1982, on the situation in the Horn of Africa and the Somali issue. As to how to assess the Arab position as an Arab League and as States against this war, he stressed: "There are Arab States that have stood by Somalia

¹ College of Arts/Dhi Qar University, Dhi Qar Education Directorate E-mail: Wael.275275@gmail.com

² College of Arts/Dhi Qar University, Dhi Qar Education Directorate

physically and morally, such as Saudi Arabia, which acted as a sister State in addition to Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain." (6)

The issue of Somalia remained present in the discussions of Saudi Arabia during the Arab summits, and during the twelfth summit in Fez, Morocco, on 6 September 1982 Saudi Arabia stressed that

Gathered on the need to support Somalia politically and materially to confront Ethiopia's repeated abuses (7), the Conference, at the Saudi request of the Democratic Republic of Somalia as a result of Ethiopia's entry into its territory (8), decided(9):

To support the Democratic Republic of Somalia in maintaining its sovereignty over its territory and removing Ethiopian force from Somali territory.

The countries of Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Somalia respect each other's sovereignty and independence after Ethiopia's withdrawal from Somali territory.

The Conference's support for the peaceful endeavours of the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to resolve problems between the parties on these grounds.

The Conference decided to establish a committee (Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Tunisian Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria) to establish contacts with the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council in follow-up to the Conference resolutions on the question of Somalia (10)

Border warfare continued, and Ethiopian forces intensified attacks in central Somalia at the beginning of September 1982, penetrating about 20 miles into Somalia's territory, prompting Mohamed Siad Barre to declare a state of emergency in the country, and asking Saudi Arabia and the United States to put an end to that Ethiopian progress. (11)

This is where Somali President Mohammed Siad Barre wanted to benefit more from Saudi Arabia's Arab and international heft "The Somali Ambassador to Riyadh Abdullah Mohamed Mahmoud met with King Fahd on 27 October 1982 and asked King Fahd to provide Somalia with financial assistance and materiel to withstand Ethiopian abuses, King Fahd assured Ambassador Saudi Arabia to stand by the Government and people of Somalia, It will not fail to provide any political and financial support to Somalia. (12)

Continued Ethiopian attacks led to the visit of Vice-President Mohamed Ali Sumter of Somalia to Riyadh on 16 February 1983 and met with King Fahd, and the two sides discussed Somalia's external problems, particularly Ethiopian abuses on Somali cities, King Fahd confirmed the Kingdom's readiness to provide material and political support to Somalia to realize its rights s Islamic Arab Line away from the Soviet camp ".(13)

As the Somali-Ethiopian border war continued, Somalia's Foreign Minister, Abdirahman Jammeh Barre, visited Riyadh on 27 April 1983, during which he met with Prince Abdullah, Crown Prince, and delivered a letter from President Mohammed Siad Barre to King Fahd, thanking Saudi Arabia for its continued support for Somalia.(14)

Subsequently, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz discussed with the Saudi Ambassador to Somalia the developments of the border war on 21 June 1983. During the meeting, the Ambassador assured the Crown Prince of Mogadishu of Mogadishu's appreciation for Riyadh's Arab and Islamic efforts in support of Somalia and of Somalia's good relations with Saudi Arabia.(15)

In the area of the impact of this Saudi stance on Somalia's situation on the nature of friendship with the American ally, the United States assured the Saudis on 15 July 1983 that they should not go far in risking peace, given the Soviet threat in the region, particularly Somalia, and should provide continued assistance to it (16). It appears that the United States has supported Saudi Arabia's position on the issue of Somalia in its various periods, stemming from its interests and strong relations with the Kingdom, and has supported Saudi Arabia's activities aimed at ensuring its security and stability.

During August 1983, fighting between Somali and Ethiopian forces intensified Foreign Minister Abdel Rahman Jama visited Saudi Arabia on August 18 of the same year, He met with King Fahad bin Abdulaziz and delivered a letter from Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre stressing the need for Saudi Arabia to make a greater effort to address the crisis situation in the Horn of Africa. King Fahd emphasized to the Somali Minister the importance of Somalia's security for the security of Saudi Arabia and the Red Sea.(17)

Saudi Arabia continued to defend the rights of the Somali people in various international forums at both the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and even in its relations with the United States of America, and during the League of Arab States Conference at its regular session in Tunis on 14 September 1983 s Council decided to expedite implementation of the decision of the Fez Summit to exit Ethiopian forces from Somalia.(18)

Ethiopian forces did not abide by Arab League resolutions and continued their military operations inside Somali territory. Somali Defence Minister Mohamed Ali Sminter visited Saudi Arabia on 27 September 1983 and discussed with Saudi officials the strengthening of military cooperation between the two countries to enhance Somali military capabilities.(19)

To complement this, Saudi diplomacy played an important role towards Somalia during the fourteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Dhaka, People's Republic of Bangladesh, from 6 to 11 December 1983. Saudi Arabia successfully advocated the promotion and dissemination of the principles of justice, freedom, dignity and humanity. The Conference decided (20):

The Conference condemned Ethiopia's aggression against the Democratic Republic of Somalia and called on Ethiopia to withdraw its forces from the territory it had occupied from the Democratic Republic of Somalia.

The Conference requested Ethiopia to prevent any further act of aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of Somalia.

The Conference decided to provide material and moral support to the Democratic Republic of Somalia to counter its aggression.

The Conference recommended that development be kept on the agenda of the Conference and requested the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to report to the next session of the Conference on the implementation of this resolution.

In addition to its political stance, in January 1984, Saudi Arabia sent a shipment of 3,000 tons of food for distribution to victims of drought and famine in Somalia, and Riyadh emphasized that the objective of such assistance was a humanitarian one to help the Somali people regain control of the country and to avert potential threats.(21)

In addition to that assistance, Saudi Arabia performed an important position with Somalia during the Arab League summit at its regular session in Tunis from 29 to 31 March 1984, affirming its continued condemnation of Ethiopia's intervention in Somalia and his lack of commitment to move out of Somalia's territory, and demanded a strong statement by the Council of the League of Arab States towards Ethiopia UNU Council, therefore, decided on 31 March, on the basis of its previous decision of 14 September 1984 (22) :

To mandate the Secretary-General of the League to establish a fact-finding committee and to submit a field report on the two areas of the territory of the Democratic Republic of Somalia occupied by Ethiopia to the Council at its next session.

Follow-up to the implementation of the twelfth Summit resolution on the subject.

Ethiopia did not abide by the Arab decision in their repeated meetings. Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between 11 14 August 1984 on Ethiopia's intervention in Somalia and a meeting was held at the Hospitality Palace in Riyadh between King Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz and Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre, Siad Barre reiterated his thanks to King Fahd for Saudi Arabia's efforts to support Somalia politically during the Ethiopian overreach on Somaliland peace in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea, and to keep this vital corridor out of trouble "(23).

Somali President Mohammed Siad Barre's visits to Saudi Arabia followed, and he made another visit between 1 - 9 September 1984, during which he discussed with King Fahd the issue of Saudi support for Somalia in the light of Somalia's critical situation, and asked King Fahd to try to influence the decisions of the Islamic summits and the summits of the Arab League. King Fahd assured him of his promise to raise and defend the issue of Somalia by various means (24).

The Fact-Finding Committee -- commissioned by the League of Arab States and headed by Saudi Arabia -- submitted its report on Ethiopia's overreach on Somalia to the meeting of the League Council at its regular session on 25 September 1984 and emphasized in its report the survival and non-withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from inside Somalia, A recommendation was made confirming the referral of the matter to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs' preliminary meeting of the thirteenth Arab Summit (25).

On 20 December 1984, Ethiopian forces carried out a ground and air attack on the morning of 20 December 1984 against the towns of Udal and Tujdheir in north-western Somalia, enabling Somali forces to repel the Ethiopian attack (26).

The weakness and defeat of the League of Arab States, which accompanied those Ethiopian attacks, prompted Saudi Arabia to defend Somalia from ongoing Ethiopian abuses. Saudi Arabia assured Washington of a major role in the Horn of Africa, particularly the cause of Somalia. On 2 March 1985, the United States of America announced support for Somalia with financial assistance and political influence (27). Saudi Arabia seems to have wanted a strong presidential presence in the region to address the Soviet challenges supporting Ethiopia in the region, the United States of America.

With mid-October 1985, Somalia's differences with Ethiopia escalated, dealing with a series of Ethiopian attacks on three locations in the west of the country, notably the villages of Gildojb and Belmbel, which led Riyadh to confirm at the end of October of the same year that Ethiopian forces should withdraw from the villages and respect Somalia's sovereignty (28).

For its part, Saudi Arabia has taken an interest in the Somali issue outside the scope of the two countries' relations. by influencing Islamic summit conferences, as evidenced by the sixteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Fez, Morocco, from 1 to 10 January 1986 s struggle to preserve their dignity, independence and national rights, Consequently, as a result of Saudi influence at the Conference, the Conference decided that the previous resolutions of the relevant Islamic summits of the Horn of Africa, particularly the cause and rights of the Somali people, should be implemented (29).

That Saudi diplomatic effort did not know how to stop achieving Saudi goals from its relations with the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia. In spite of the weak impact of the League's decisions internationally, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has had a significant impact on the decisions of the League of Arab States, During its regular session in Tunis on 19 October 1986, Saudi Arabia called on the States of the League to maintain their position in support of Somalia. and stop Ethiopian abuses, so the University Council decided (30):

The League Council confirmed its support for the Democratic Republic of Somalia.

The UNU Council welcomed the contacts and talks between Somalia and Ethiopia and called for their support in order to achieve satisfactory positive results.

The Council mandated the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Shazali Qalibi, to liaise with the Government of Somalia and to inform the Council of the progress and progress of the talks at its forthcoming sessions.

At the beginning of 1987, in January 1987, President Mohamed Siad Barre of Somalia confirmed that Saudi Arabia had represented his country's large and supportive side in various trials (31), as confirmed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia, Abdirahman Jama Barre, on 20 June 1987, speaking on Somali-Arab relations: "Somalia has a special relationship with some Arab States, particularly Saudi Arabia. We are grateful to some Arab States that have provided assistance to the people of Somalia, particularly the brothers in the Gulf, namely the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which has provided economic support to Somalia. (32)"

The Foreign Minister of Somalia makes clear Saudi Arabia's role in the resilience and independence of Somalia in the face of external greetings, particularly Ethiopia, thanks to Saudi economic assistance, its role and its Arab and global political influence in safeguarding the rights of the people of Somalia.

Riyadh has followed Somalia's cause through the Organization of the Islamic Conference and during the seventeenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Amman, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, from 20 to 21 March 1988, Saudi Arabia, through its Foreign Minister, confirmed Prince Saud al-Faisal The Conference must affirm its support for the struggle of all Islamic peoples to preserve their dignity, independence and national rights, Having heard the report submitted by the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Somalia, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, acting upon the Saudi recommendation, decided (33):

Reaffirms all the decisions of the Islamic Conference concerning full support and solidarity with the Democratic Republic of Somalia in securing its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and urges Ethiopia to immediately and unconditionally withdraw all its forces from the territory of the Democratic Republic of Somalia and to seek a just and lasting peaceful solution to the conflict in the Horn of Africa.

Requests the Secretary General to submit a report of the situation to the forthcoming Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.

Those efforts by Saudi Arabia in Arabic and Islamic terms, and the United States support for its policy in the Horn of Africa, which provided Somalia's resilience to Ethiopian excesses, weighed down Ethiopia with economic losses that disrupted its internal situation, were eventually forced to agree to Somalia's proposals; to address their internal situations that threatened the survival of their system.

At the beginning of April 1988, the Somali side set conditions for peace agreed by the Ethiopian Government in return for the recognition of Ethiopia's current borders. The parties signed the Mogadishu Convention on 4 April 1988, by which the border war between them (34) ,ceased and the terms of that agreement were summarized as follows (35):

Restoring diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The withdrawal of the two countries' forces stationed at the border.

The parties' end to hostile activities and anti-propaganda.

Non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

Exchange of prisoners and political prisoners.

A ministerial meeting was held at the request of one side to discuss the issue of disputed borders.

The reason for the Ethiopian and Somali Governments' achievement of this agreement was the existence of internal unrest and opposition in both countries, and their feeling that those conditions had put a strain on their governments (36). Eritrea's rebellion (Eritrean factions) was the opposition of the Ethiopian Government. On the one hand, the TPLF, on the other hand, and the coordination between the Eritrean Liberation Front and the Afar Liberation Front, which has been active against the Ethiopian regime, as well as the fact that the conflict with Eritrea has cost the Ethiopian treasury about 1 million United States dinars a day, exacerbating Ethiopia's economic situation and weakening its military combat capabilities (37). The Somali Government's opposition was represented by the Somali National Movement, which was supported by the Isaac tribe in north-west Somalia (38).

On 5 April 1988, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia affirmed the need for the two countries to preserve the Convention and requested Ethiopia to abide by the requirements of the Convention and not to override Somalia's borders again.

CONCLUSION

During the period of the 1982-1988 Somali-Ethiopian border war and the strong relationship between Saudi Arabia and Somalia, and Somalia's repeated defeats against Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia financed the British arms deal for Somalia to stand up to Ethiopia's ongoing abuses.

Saudi Arabia stood with Somalia's Islamic brotherhood and strong relationship during the 1982-1988 Somali-Ethiopian border war, supporting Somalia financially and politically at various levels, which ultimately forced Ethiopia to sit at the table of dialogue and sign the Mogadishu Convention in 1988 that ended the war between the two countries.

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