

Strategic and Tactical Issues of Ethiopia's Foreign Policy:

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

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Geo-political areas of the Horn of Africa and the Middle East

1. Introduction

To what extent are the fundamentals of Ethiopian foreign policy aligned with the multi-polar global order and regional geo-politics, as well as attuned to recent political and diplomatic developments in neighbouring countries? The paper aims to address such issues and provide a perspective on the ongoing debate on Ethiopia's strategic and long-term foreign policy positioning as well as its tactical and short-term stance vis-à-vis its neighbouring countries and the geo-political areas of the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. It assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the basis of its foreign policy and recent politico-diplomatic developments that present opportunities and threats. Specifically, it reviews briefly Ethiopia's foreign policy challenges and prospects regarding recent developments in Somalia, Eritrea, South Sudan and Djibouti on the one hand and Egypt, the Sudan, Israel and the GCC countries on the other. It argues the importance of contextualising regional politics within the global and multi-polar power politics, which is the prime driver of the regional geo-politics that impacts on Ethiopia.

2. Global Power Politics and Ethiopian Foreign Policy

During the era of the Cold War and “*bi-polar global order*”, and under the Monarchy and Military regimes, Ethiopia was politically and ideologically pigeon-holed and treated as a pawn in the grand strategic chess game of the Super Powers. In contrast, the contemporary world is a “*multi-polar global order*”, which is characterised by unevenly evolving world order consisting of a declining and increasingly “isolationist” but dominant USA; a retreating and fracturing but powerful Western Europe; emerging economic power-houses and rising but non-hegemonic China, India, South Korea

and Brazil; a weakened but resurgent and assertive Russia (cf. USSR); a stagnating but strong Japan; and the increasing political and economic awakening of Latin America, Africa and Asia. Moreover, globalisation and its counter-currents, such as protectionism and the prevalence of “nationalistic and populist politics”, have further weakened the old bi-polar world power configuration. In such an emerging multi-polar world order, Ethiopia has pursued a relatively independent foreign policy, fashioning a successful non-aligned, “*Win-Win*” foreign policy, benefiting in terms of greater access to foreign resources and diplomatic weight from China, the USA, the EU, and indeed from the world at large. Ethiopia, because of its accelerated economic growth, relative political stability and pivotal role within the AU, is a much respected and preferred country for foreign direct investment (FDI), and political and diplomatic influence. In one major respect, the multi-polar global power politics has provided a decisively favourable setting for Ethiopia’s achievements internally and regionally. In contrast, the current global power politics has brought about massive regime failures of hitherto Ethiopia’s adversarial states, ranging from Libya, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia to Eritrea. Similarly, its real and perceived adversaries are preoccupied with regional political crisis due to the Saudi-Iranian rivalry, the Islamist (important to make the distinction that it is not Islamic!) terrorist phenomenon and declining economic fortunes. The paper argues Ethiopia should continue to develop and fine-tune its strategic pillars of foreign policy towards the global powers and regional forces as a pre-condition for safeguarding its sovereignty and creating an environment conducive for its internal development, both economically and politically.

3. The Horn of Africa & Middle Eastern Geo-Politics and Ethiopian Foreign Policy

For most of the second half of the twentieth century, the geo-politics of Middle Eastern countries was fundamentally and strategically hostile to the sovereignty of Ethiopia. The main drivers were Egypt’s historic meddling in Ethiopia’s internal affairs; Greater Somalia Irredentism; the threat of Jihadist terrorism and the propagation and infiltration of Wahhabist Islamist ideology into the socio-politics of the country; and the regional and external dimension of the Eritrean national movement. Eritrea has been a major geo-political focal point for regional interventions in the internal affairs of Ethiopia, in particular since the Ethio-Eritrean war of 1998-2000. ***The Eritrean liberation movement was based on a historically legitimate and just struggle for self-determination and had popular support amongst its peoples and Ethiopia at large.*** Despite the historic opportunities for unity presented by the victory of Ethiopia at Adwa against the Italian colonialists in 1896; the Federation of Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1952; and the seminal Ethiopian Revolution in 1974, the ***Eritrean Question*** was resolved by secession in 1991-93 due to the intransigence and inherent inability of the ruling classes of Ethiopia to resolve what was essentially a national self-determination and democratic question. Externally and historically, the Eritrean national movement was backed by Arab nationalist and Baathist regimes in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Yemen as well as conservative Arab nations that were hostile to Ethiopia. The reasons were complex, varied and included: the diplomatic presentation of the Eritrean liberation movement as an “Islamist struggle” to the religious and conservative Arab regimes by Saleh Sabe of the EPLF and the leadership of the ELF. Alternately, the EPLF presented the Eritrean liberation struggle as progressive, nationalist or Baathist to the then dominant political forces in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. Furthermore, Egypt’s support for the Eritrean national struggle was based on its ulterior motive of weakening and dismembering Ethiopia due to its existential fear of Ethiopia controlling the flow of the Blue Nile. Similarly, Egyptian and Middle Eastern Arab support for Greater Somalia irredentism and the threat of Jihadist terrorism against Ethiopia was predicated on the same logic and motives.

Yet, in the new Millennium the alignments of forces and ideologies in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East are significantly different and do not present too strategically hostile geo-politics for Ethiopia. The major regimes that were strategically hostile to Ethiopia: Libya, Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Eritrea and Yemen, have become “failed states”, not in positions to undermine Ethiopia’s internal and external dynamics in fundamental ways. Ethiopia has a good foreign relation with the Sudan as demonstrated by the latter’s support for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and its recent security agreement with Ethiopia. Saudi Arabia is in a predicament of a zero-sum game of political struggle with its arch regional rival, Iran, as well as being immersed in an unwinnable war in Yemen. Challenged by drastically falling oil revenues, internal dynastic succession problems, rifts within the GCCs, the all-consuming Sunni-Shia schism, Islamist terrorism, and increasingly embolden Iran, Saudi Arabia and the GCCs are in no position to pose fundamental and strategic threats to Ethiopia, at least in the short to medium-term. The recent acquisition of the use of Asab port is mainly motivated not by a strategic, compelling imperative to destabilise Ethiopia, but by a tactical need to use the port for their war effort in Yemen and their strategic fear of and a rear-guard action to pre-empt Iranian presence and influence in Eritrea. Unlike the Isaias Regime, Ethiopia should avoid, by following a principled non-alignment and respect for national sovereignty policy, a zero-sum game of political entanglement in the nexus of Saudi-Iranian rivalries and its attendant destructive ramifications in the region and beyond. However, the new situation requires a policy response by Ethiopia, including the verifiable assurance by Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries that the use of Asab port does not pose a strategic threat to Ethiopia’s interest and does not alter the strategic balance between Ethiopia and Eritrea militarily, or diplomatically. The stationing of Egyptian forces in Eritrea and any direct threat and action against Ethiopia’s sovereignty should be considered crossing a triple “*red line*” for Ethiopia, requiring a calculated and planned response, including the option of a strategic defensive military action against the rogue Eritrean regime forces. Tactically, Ethiopia should press all diplomatic buttons to ensure the arms embargo imposed on Eritrea by the UN Security Council is vigorously enforced.

Strategically, Ethiopia should employ vigorous “*economic diplomacy*” to maximise opportunities presented by the current Middle Eastern geo-political equilibrium, or deadlock to pursue a non-aligned foreign policy with a view to promoting its and the region’s political and economic interests by maximising Middle Eastern trade with and investment in Ethiopia. Between 2006 and 2017, Middle Eastern FDI in operation in Ethiopia equalled 28 billion Birr, accounting for 31% of all FDI in operation in the country, including Saudi Arabian investment amounting to 14 Billion Birr and Turkey’s 11 Billion Birr. Similarly, the UAE, Qatar and Kuwait have expressed strong desire to invest in Ethiopia. Over the last decade, Middle Eastern operational investment in Ethiopia provides permanent and temporary employment for over 60,000 people. Moreover, according to the latest estimate by MOFA, over 1 million Ethiopians work in the Middle East, a significant proportion of whom as undocumented immigrants. The value of remittances to Ethiopia that originates from the Middle East is close to \$US 1.5 billion per annum. The increasing economic links and co-operation between Ethiopia and Middle Eastern countries are positive and create an environment conducive for the promotion of cordial diplomatic relations and a sustainable Middle Eastern foreign policy.

Ethiopia's economic diplomacy, however, needs to go beyond securing foreign direct investment by putting increased emphasis on regional economic integration and co-operation in Africa. Ethiopia's current regional trade and economic linkages with countries in Eastern Africa are under-developed and below their potential as evidenced, for example, by the relatively low volume and value of trade with neighbouring African countries. Moreover, Ethiopia is not a member of the East African Community (EAC), or the Free Trade Area of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Regional economic integration is vital and impacts on geo-politics, since economic development, regional co-operation and internal unity based on diversity and democracy are the foundations for a strong defence and foreign policy. In contrast, engaging in regional political machinations and interventionist posturing in response to transient and unstable regime behaviour could not and should not be the basis for Ethiopia's strategic policy-making. Tactical and short-term policy positions need to support and be subordinated to the imperative of the strategic interest of Ethiopia and the big-picture geo-politics of the near Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

A vital component of Ethiopia's foreign policy in the Middle East is its relation with Israel, which could be characterised as very cordial; and is anchored on historical ties and a mutual strategic and security interest, in particular in combating Jihadist terrorism. The 150,000 Ethiopian Jews, known as "Bete Israel", residing in Israel have further deepened the cultural ties between the two countries. Over the last decade, Israeli investment in Ethiopia totalled over 600 Million Birr and is growing. Israeli investment and transfer of technology, in particular in agriculture conditioned by semi-arid climate, has the potential to contribute to Ethiopia's quest for rural transformation. On the politico-military front, whilst acknowledging the strategic and tactical value of Ethio-Israeli relation as a countervailing force against Ethiopia's potential geo-political adversaries in the Middle East, it should not be posited as an "alliance or block" against Arab nations, or least of all, Muslim countries, because Ethiopia is a country of many faiths. Strategically, Ethiopia should advance its interest by pursuing just, non-aligned and even-handed policies on issues that blight the Middle East, such as, for example, the Israel-Palestine conflict, or the nexus of Saudi-Iranian-Israeli hostilities.

4. Ethiopian Foreign Policy Towards Egypt

The case of Ethio-Egyptian relation is fundamentally different from those with other Arab nations, and is anchored on historical hostilities, primarily driven by Egyptian fear of Ethiopia's potential ability to control and regulate the flow of Abay, the Blue Nile River. Hence, Egypt's default position has been to seek to destabilise, or even dismember Ethiopia to ensure the non-occurrence of this eventuality. Policy tools that Egypt has used include: supporting opposition and secessionist nationalist forces in Ethiopia; veiled and unveiled military threats; and an active policy of preventing Ethiopia from acquiring external development finance that impacts on the Blue Nile.

Yet, Ethio-Egyptian relations have evolved significantly over the last two decades, in particular during the last ten years when Ethiopia broke the mould by beginning to build a strong economy; addressing the centuries-old internal nationality conflicts; and emerging as a strong, credible and trusted force for peace in the region and Africa at large. ***Ethiopia's ability and will power to build the GERD is a game-changer and is a true measure of the changing metrics of Ethio-Egyptian relations.*** The hitherto one-track, intransigent and hostile Egyptian policy towards Ethiopia has

given way to, at best, a two-track policy, which is both co-operative and hostile and is dictated by internal and external conditions and realities faced by Egypt and its neighbours. ***The GERD is a fact on the ground. Egypt has no other viable strategic option other than the “Win-Win” policy of co-operation and a pursuance of mutual benefits from the Nile basin.*** Moreover, Egypt knows that Ethiopia has the ultimate physical ability to control and regulate the flow of the Blue Nile River. One does not need to have a PhD in Hydrology to figure out how physically and technically feasible this is. Ethiopia does not even need for that end to build dams to control the flow of the Blue Nile. It could be achieved, for example, by using hundreds of small diversionary canals along the long course of the Blue Nile, or/and by mobilising hundreds of thousands of farmers with small, affordable water pumps. This is akin to a “salami-slice strategy”, or rather the crude and cruel analogy of “death by a thousand cuts” strategy. These “measures” are practically immune from military actions by Egypt, for example, by using war planes, or long-range missiles. The only strategic option left is, which is totally unrealistic and non-feasible, an Egyptian occupation of a country of 100 plus million people and a proud history of successfully resisting occupations throughout many millennia of its existence. Of course, this scenario is completely contrary to Ethiopia’s professed policy of a “Win-Win” policy of co-operation and a pursuance of mutual benefits. Moreover, it could be contrary to ethical and international law, unless justified, if ever, by Ethiopia’s existential imperatives, including the protection of its fundamental sovereignty. The onus is on Egypt to reciprocate to Ethiopia’s “Win-Win” position on sharing the benefits of the Blue Nile.

The much bigger point the paper seeks to make and advocate is that Ethio-Egyptian relation is best served through co-operation and mutual-advantage. In the long-run, rationally, morally and strategically, it is the best option for Egyptian self-interest to drop its twin-track policy of both co-operation with and hostility towards Ethiopia. The direction of travel so far towards the single-track policy of co-operation by Egypt is mixed at best and poor at worst. However, the defeat of the Moslem Brotherhood parties and the internal economic, social and political upheavals in Egypt; the multitude of failing Arab regimes; the toll of the Sunni-Shia schism and Islamist terrorist phenomena; and the regional rivalry amongst Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey suggest that Egypt is in a relatively weaker position to pose a strategic threat to Ethiopia in the short to medium term. Yet, an old habit hardly dies and adversaries are worst when they are desperate and internally challenged, and Egypt is likely to continue its two-track policy of hostility against and co-operation with Ethiopia, at least in the short to medium term. In this situation, Ethiopia’s policy towards Egypt should be both a strategic stance of co-operation and a pursuance of mutual benefits whilst at the same time countering vigourously Egyptian policy of hostile acts, wherever and whenever they happen. The broad approach of a “Win-Win” diplomatic policy of the Government vis-à-vis its regional geo-political adversaries appears to have delivered, at least in respect of Ethiopia’s determination to build the GERD. ***This defining national project has cast aside centuries-old colonial and neo-colonial manoeuvres to deprive Ethiopia from rightfully benefiting from the Abay River.*** The machinations and manoeuvres of geo-political adversaries, however, are strategic threats that require active and robust responses, in particular when they cross the “red line” and become direct threats and collude with internal antagonists in order to fragment the unity of the country and its people.

5. Ethiopian Foreign Policy Towards Eritrea

The single major challenge for Ethiopia's foreign policy is its relation with the rogue Eritrean regime. A pertinent issue that needs addressing is the dangers of the machinations and manoeuvrings of the failing Eritrean state and its geo-political sponsors. What is more, there is a clear collusion between the Eritrean regime, Al-Shabaab, domestic adversaries and certain quarters of global neo-liberal forces that seek to undermine the federal democratic polity and the developmental state progress in Ethiopia. Eritrea's leader seeks "political salvation" by dragging Ethiopia into a protracted war with Eritrea, although he fears the outcome of such a war with Ethiopia will end his regime. The Eritrean regime intentionally works to instil enmity, sow distrust and break the historic, ethnic, cultural and strategic ties between the Ethiopian and Eritrean peoples with the sole purpose of rationalising and perpetuating its despotic rule. Furthermore, the rogue Regime, in collusion with internal adversaries of the Ethiopian Government (e.g. Ginbot 7 and ESAT, OLF, ONLF, TPDM), instigates civil disturbances in the country, although the social unrest in the country are primarily driven by internal issues related to bad governance; rent-seeking and corruption; and socio-economic hardships. Similarly, the Eritrean government relentlessly schemes with regional foes to entangle Ethiopia into geo-political manoeuvrings and conflicts.

Given the underlying problematic nature of the behaviour of the Regime, a long-term, evidence-based and strategic perspective is paramount when formulating and evaluating policies on Eritrea. By all objective and subjective measures, the Eritrean regime is a failing state economically, politically and diplomatically and its eventual demise is a matter of when, not if. The broad strategy of the Government vis-a-vis the Eritrean Regime is correct and is yielding its desired results when evaluated against the outcome of the policy that rendered the Regime a failed state, although it is partly the result of Isaias own strategic follies, including falling into the trap and black-hole of ***"Unconditional Badme and Border Demarcation, or Nothing"*** policy. The policy, sadly, has retarded development in the country and the welfare of its people at ground-zero with devastating economic, social and political outcomes domestically and a pariah-state reputation internationally, where the regime is invariably characterised as a "Failed State", "Africa's North Korea", a "Secretive and Closed Dictatorship", or a "Mafia State". Since the Ethio-Eritrean war of 1998-2000, Ethiopian foreign policy has deterred the rogue Regime militarily and diplomatically as well as from being a road-block to Ethiopia's peaceful internal economic and political development. Moreover, the successful outcomes of the policy have been achieved at relatively minimal costs for Ethiopia in terms of blood and treasure.

Yet, the current, so-called "No Peace, No War Policy" is not sufficiently strategised, or adequately articulated in terms of the details of the goals and objectives the policy aims to achieve; the stated policy outcome measures; the strategic and tactical plans for achieving the set objectives; and the time-frame for achieving the objectives in the short, medium and long terms, including the Post-Isaias period. Moreover, given Eritrea is a focal point for regional interventions in Ethiopian internal affairs, the policy towards the Eritrean Regime needs to be contextualised within and dovetailed into Ethiopia's foreign policy pertaining to the geo-politics of the Horn of Africa and the near Middle East. At the very least, the current policy requires strategic overhauling and fine-tuning. The policy urgently requires supporting actions, such as co-ordinated and concerted programmes of

support for Eritrean opposition forces and credible and effective propaganda channels (cf. ESAT and Ginbot 7). Moreover, *it is vitally important to develop an arsenal of robust tactical measures and policy tools in the military, intelligence, security, political and diplomatic fields in order to accelerate the downfall of the rogue Regime*. Furthermore, in fighting the Eritrean regime, differentiating the people from the regime and keeping and respecting the long-term interests and unity of the two peoples are paramount. Farsightedness in the potential for unity of the two peoples and countries must override the negative experience of historical anomaly and recent separation. However, it is not inconsistent for the Ethiopian Government current tactical posture to be much more effective; and its measures to counter threats from the Eritrean regime need to be resolute and overwhelming without resorting to regime-changing (which implies occupying the country and installing a “puppet” government), or a full-scale and protracted war, unless of course, in response to a full scale war declared by the Eritrean regime. The Government’s response to Isaias’ provocations must have the calculated effect of hastening the demise of the Regime, which, ultimately, is *the sole responsibility of the Eritrean people*. *It is critically important to underscore that the political and diplomatic machinations and military manoeuvrings (such as the stationing of potentially adversarial foreign forces in Asab) of the Eritrean despot and ruling cliques are very dangerous and must never be underestimated, or given the luxury of time and space to meddle in the internal affairs of Ethiopia, and they must therefore be countered by all legitimate means possible. The rogue Eritrean regime is the soft-belly of present Ethiopian foreign policy; and, hence, the development and execution of an optimum strategic and tactical response is critical for addressing the principal challenge of current Ethiopian foreign policy.*

6. Ethiopian Foreign Policy Towards Somalia

Somalia’s irredentism in past decades, having fought three wars against Ethiopia, and the threat of Al-Shabaab terrorism in recent years have been major thorns on Ethiopia’s foreign policy. Moreover, the fragility of the Somali state has created a destabilising influence in the Horn Africa and adverse consequences for Ethiopia. The first strategic pillar of Ethiopia’s foreign policy towards Somalia begins internally, which is resolving the nationality question in the Ethiopian Somali region, the Ogaden, in accordance with the federal and democratic constitution of Ethiopia. To date, this has been addressed successfully. Secondly, Ethiopia’s decisive intervention in Somalia to help remove from power and defeat Al-Shabaab is strategically correct and is bearing results, if slowly. Thirdly, nation-building in Somalia is strategically viable and brings in “Win-Win” policy dividends for Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa in the long-term.

It is important to underscore that willy-nilly, tactical intervention to balkanise Somalia by aligning with factions in the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), Somaliland, or Puntland to pursue perceived tactical advantage or to counter perceived short-term threats by clan warlords could and would undermine Ethiopia’s strategic policy pillars towards Somalia. Of course, strategic foreign policy needs to be supported by dynamic, short-term tactical measures, but these must support and strength the strategy and not undermine it. For example, when the UAE invests billions of dollars to build a modern port in Berbera, Ethiopia could and should use it as an opportunity to diversify it access to ports and strengthen the economic integration of the region, rather than seeing it primarily as threat and meddle by pitting one Somali faction against another. Such actions invariably would

invite and give a rationale for Somali forces to align against Ethiopia, or immerse it into internal Somali civil wars. The yet unresolved and failing nature of the Somali state provides opportunities for various regional forces, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, or Iran, to intervene in Somalia. A concrete example of such an intervention is Turkey's increasing presence in Somalia. In such situations, Ethiopia should evaluate concretely adversaries' intents, the nature of the alignment of forces in Somalia and implications of such interventions in order to develop appropriate and robust measures that are based on its strategic foreign policy pillars and with a view to safeguarding its interests in Somalia on a sustainable basis.

7. Ethiopian Foreign Policy Towards South Sudan

The independence of South Sudan is an important event for its peoples and nationalities, Ethiopia and Africa at large. However, unresolved internal conflicts (with nationality, economic and political dimensions) and external interventions have led to a civil war and strife in the country. The resolution of the fundamental problems South Sudan is facing is vitally important for the development, peace and security of the country and the neighbouring countries.

Ethiopia's foreign policy towards South Sudan is based on respecting national sovereignty, promoting mutual benefits, and peaceful and good neighbourliness. Ethiopia has a lot to advise and offer South Sudan, including its experience of resolving national self-determination issues on the basis of the principle of unity with diversity. Ethiopia, through the good offices of the AU and IGAD and in co-operation with the UN, is playing an honest broker role to bring the various antagonists to agree to a lasting peace in South Sudan. This fundamental and strategic approach is critically important and should not give way to a sectarian and interventionist policy by seeking favour from one faction against the others to pursue short-term tactical advantages, regardless of the long-term consequences for the country and its neighbours. Interventionist policies that are not based on the interest of the peoples and countries involved bring about blowbacks by way of counter-measures and being submerged in civil wars. The main antagonistic factions led by Salva Kiir and Riek Machar are seeking factional favours from would be interventionist forces, such as from Uganda, Sudan, Egypt, or Eritrea. In contrast, Ethiopia should continue to play a non-aligned and honest broker role in partnership with the AU and UN institutions, whilst at the tactical level remaining vigilant and countering the scheming motives of factionalist and interventionist forces. Principled non-alignment should be the strategic approach of Ethiopian foreign policy towards South Sudan rather than the winning of these or those sectarian and separatists forces, which ultimately are doomed to fail, since, in the long-run, no country win in a civil war, or benefit from failing regimes.

8. Ethiopian Foreign Policy Towards Djibouti

Ethiopia's foreign policy towards Djibouti is vital, in spite of the latter being a relatively small regional player. In addition to being a friendly neighbour, over 90% of Ethiopia's foreign trade passes through ports in Djibouti. The Country is a hot-spot of global and regional geo-politics, where major powers, such as the USA, France and China, have, or are planning to set up, strong military presence in the country. Moreover, regional players, such as Saudi Arabia, are seeking influence, and there is the added dimension of Djibouti's border dispute with Eritrea. Furthermore,

the country is prone to the destabilising effects of the civil war in Somalia, although it is primarily driven by an internal Issas-Afars power dynamics in Djibouti.

Djibouti's interest is inextricably connected with the peaceful development in Ethiopia. It could be reasonably argued that the two countries are increasingly being integrated economically, where Djibouti relies almost exclusively on Ethiopia for water, fresh food and energy, as well as billions of dollars in revenues from the use of its ports. Similarly, Ethiopia is dependent on Djibouti for its external trade. Hence, it goes without saying that Ethiopia's foreign policy toward Djibouti needs to be strengthened and taken to higher levels. Given the strategic position of Djibouti to the global powers, it is very unlikely for any of the potential regional adversaries of Ethiopia to have a full control of the *Strait of Bab el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Eden-Suez Canal Trade Route*, or assume dominant positions within Djibouti in order to work against the strategic and economic interests of Ethiopia. A bold policy for Ethiopia would be to promote multilateral initiatives in order to help guarantee Djibouti's sovereignty, in particular from the bullying tactics of the Eritrean regime.

9. Conclusion

The strategic pillars of Ethiopia's foreign policy positioning globally, regionally and locally are based on the principles of respect for national sovereignty, non-alignment, pursuance of mutual benefits and the creation of peaceful environments conducive for internal and regional development and progress. These policies have yielded dividends for the country in terms of safeguarding its national interests economically, politically, diplomatically and militarily, which are the outcomes of pursuing a "Win-Win" foreign policy. The favourable multi-polar world order and the relatively less hostile regional geo-politics have provided the background for the success of its foreign policy. However, Ethiopia also needs to develop robust and dynamic policy options that are consistent with its strategic pillars and with the changing global, regional and local power alignments in order to strengthen and sustain its hitherto successful foreign policy. It is imperative that the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are continuously, robustly analysed and articulated with a view to strengthening the strategic pillars and further developing additional, smart policy options.

The pitfalls that Ethiopia could and should avoid are short-term, opportunist, interventionist policies that are based on support to one or another anti-people, anti-nation building, factionalist forces in countries experiencing civil wars, or regime failure. Falling to such temptations would lead to immersion in civil wars and provide justifications for intervention by Ethiopia's regional adversaries. Moreover, such an approach is a recipe for "Win-Lose" policy options at best, or "Lose-Lose" policy outcomes at worst. The lessons of the second half of the twentieth century and the early decades of the twenty-first century are that regime-changing and interventionist foreign policies are doomed to fail, even by the economically and militarily strongest powers. Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine, Syria, Libya and closer to home Eritrea, Somalia, Yemen and South Sudan are living examples of the futility of such policies. It is, however, vitally important to underline that, ultimately, a country's foreign policy is as good and strong as its domestic policy. A principled, pro-people, pro-nation-building, pro-democracy, pro-development and pro-peace anchored strategy buttressed by dynamic, robust and smart policies is and should be the foundation for an effective and sustainable Ethiopian foreign and defence policy.