

**Somaliland's Foreign Policy Analysis:
*The First Four Administrations In Perspective***

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to dominant paradigms of international relations theories, a country's foreign policy consists of the self-interested strategies chosen by the state to protect its national interests, and the deployment of the various tools of diplomacy and statecraft in order to achieve these objectives within the international relations milieu.

Since Somaliland re-asserted its independence on 18 May 1991, its main foreign policy objective has been the attainment of international recognition. Somaliland has made tremendous strides toward this end by building a functional state with all the legal attributes of a modern state. Notwithstanding the enormous challenges Somaliland has faced under the status of being diplomatically unrecognized for the last 27 years, the state apparatus has continued to evolve internally and externally. Somaliland has conducted foreign relations with the international community in its various shapes and forms, and has continued to welcome the international community cooperate on issues such as development, investment, social reform and consular relations inside Somaliland. In the modern international order, the recognition of statehood is administered by a number of different legal, political and economic factors that include *(a) a permanent population, (b) a defined territory, (c) a functioning government, and (d) the capacity to enter into agreements with other states*. Somaliland has a strong case for satisfying all of these conditions.

It is worth acknowledging that successive Somaliland administrations have done an impressive job with respect to Somaliland's international relations, given the many international and domestic constraints it faces. Nevertheless, observers of Somaliland's foreign policy over the past 27 years have seen it as a more of reactionary and self-explanatory approach (*merely a differentiation from Somalia*), rather than entirely pragmatic.

It is the theme of this paper to examine Somaliland's foreign policy goals and decision-making as they evolved under the leadership of Somaliland's previous four presidents. Doing so involves presenting how these respective administrations dealt with Somaliland's neighboring states as well as regional and other global organizations. This paper will also focus on the present foreign policy challenges. It will conclude by offering recommendations with respect to current foreign policy arrangements.

2. FOREIGN POLICY SURVEY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1. The Leadership of President Abdirahman, Somaliland's First President (1991—1993)

In 1991, the Somali National Movement (SNM) was the only political organization in Somaliland with sufficient authority to establish law and order and oversee a process of recovery and reconciliation in Somaliland. The SNM was formed in 1981 in London by a group of northern politicians and activists from what was once known the Somali Republic. The SNM was born out of the profound marginalization felt by northern clans from former British Protectorate, which existing since union with Somalia but which was exacerbated during the dictatorial military junta government and its campaign of terror, division and violence orchestrated against the civilians of northern clans. After a long struggle, the SNM, with the help of USC, finally succeeded in overthrowing the military government.

On 18 May 1991, representatives from a wide variety of Somaliland clans met in Burao for a reconciliation conference, where they agreed to a resolution that annulled the northern territory's merger with the former Italian colony, and declared the reassertion of Somaliland's independence. The meeting also led to the collective decision to appoint Abdirahman Ahmed Ali (Tuur) as Somaliland's first President of the modern era.

President Tuur's presidency occurred at a very turbulent time politically. His political weight and high leadership caliber, as well as the financial resources and inclusive government he formed, were insufficient to overcome the enormous responsibility he was handed—including daunting challenges such as establishing security from the scratch; inclusively accommodating non-Isaaq clans within the government; building institutions; drafting a constitution as the basis for the country's first democratic government; resurrecting the collapsed economy and restoring all basic services. All of these daunting tasks had to be accomplished within brief two-year tenure.

The aim of President Abdirahman's foreign policy was to translate the decision of restoring Somaliland's independence into a language that could be agreed to by the international community. To this end, President Abdirahman appointed Sheikh Yusuf Sheikh Ali Madar, former SNM Chairman, as his Foreign Minister. Once appointed, Madar and a government delegation were quickly dispatched from Somaliland to Europe and North America. Their mission was to deliver Somaliland's message to the international community.

One of the historic achievements of that trip was hiring two lawyers specializing in international law based in Washington, USA.

Mohamed Bihi Yonis, a Somalilander living in the United States at that time who would later become Somaliland's Foreign Minister succinctly elucidated the meeting between the Somaliland diaspora in New York and the new government delegation led by its head diplomat (foreign minister) in the following terms:

“The Somaliland community in New York received Minister Sheikh Yusuf Sheikh Ali Madar and exchanged views on how best to promote Somaliland’s quest for international recognition. During the meeting, we agreed to hire two international law lawyers who would prepare a legal document on Somaliland’s justification for de jure recognition¹”.

The international lawyers who engaged in this colossal task were Anthony J. Carroll and B. Rajagopal, and what they produced ended up being one of the most significant legal analyses written about Somaliland’s Case to date. The paper was entitled “The Case for the Independent Statehood of Somaliland”, which was published in the American University International Law Review in 1993. This document has served as the legal and academic base for any publication on the subject up to the present.

However, beyond this, President Abdirahman Ali’s government had minimal success in establishing relations with Somaliland’s neighboring states, one of the major reasons for this being divisions within SNM political and military leadership. This discord would only increase as the presidency passed to Abdirahman’s successor, becoming the main factor instigating the large-scale clan feuds of 1994-1995.

2.2. The Leadership of President Egal, Somaliland’s Second President (1993-2002)

It is important to note that when Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal was elected in Borama in 1993 as the second President of Somaliland, he took leadership of a country that was without a state for all practical purposes and ruled by the gun rather than the law². The political climate of the time was highly polarized because of the political differences between SNM’s military and political leaders.

¹ Somaliland Government. (2001). *Somaliland: demand for international recognition policy document* [web log post]. Retrieved 15 May, 2016, from www.somalilandlaw.com

² Bradbury, M. (2008). *Becoming Somaliland*. Indiana University Press.

This was made worse by the fact that the SNM veterans, *who liberated the country and remained loyal to their commanders rather than the government*, had not yet been disarmed.

From the beginning, President Egal's administration had taken an integrated approach to reconciliation and peace-making, which it later extended to institution-building, democratization and development. While internal conflicts hindered the process of state building, such infighting was not enough to thwart Egal's administration in its pursuit of a proactive foreign policy, even if it did have a negative impact.

Egal's foreign policy was based on the political dictum "The best foreign policy is a good internal policy", and, for this reason, Egal emphasized internal nation-building programs, which he contended were essential for Somaliland's quest for recognition.

Because there are a number of legal conditions for statehood which any aspiring state must fulfil— particularly a country seeking to remake itself while in a critical condition—President Egal focused his efforts on undertaking the kinds of social reforms that would enable Somaliland to meet this criteria. The tasks he had to perform mostly related to the state building that his government was expected to firmly establish.

Looking externally, President Egal's foreign policy initiative involved clarifying and affirming Somaliland's political stand against United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) in 1993. The political analyst, Matt Bryden (2003) explains how Egal dealt with UNOSOM during his first months in power³:

"He [Egal] got his first high profile opportunity soon after taking office in 1993. When the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), an international nation-building mission with over 30,000 troops deployed in the south, began courting opposition figures from Somaliland as part of its efforts to form a new national government, Egal took the top UN official in Somalia to task for undermining Somaliland's peace and stability.

³ Bryden, M. (2003). *Is banana test: is Somaliland ready for recognition? Annales d'Ethiopie*, 19, 341-364.

His protest earned a contrite reply from the UN Secretary General via his Special Envoy, Admiral Jonathan Howe. But within a matter of months UNOSOM was back at its political intrigues, and Egal ordered the expulsion of the UNOSOM representative in Hargeysa”.

Mr. Bryden further adds that President Egal saw written diplomatic communication as an important tool in making a case to regional and global leaders: “Colorful orator in

both Somali and English, Egal’s campaign for international recognition took the form of a kind of literary stream of consciousness: a flow of idiosyncratic letters and faxes often under his own signature to foreign diplomats, UN Officials and heads of states.”

The relationship between Somaliland and the United Nations was shaky and tense for many years. This is evidenced by the fact that President Egal declared representatives of the UNOSOM office in Hargeisa persona non grata on several occasions in the early 1990s. A Somaliland government policy paper put out in 2001 characterised the relationship between Somaliland and the United Nations as follows:

“Have borne the mark of polite, sometimes anguished enmity of their respective assertion on Somaliland’s independence”.

Similarly, the late renowned Ethiopian Scholar, Dr Kinfu Abraham, explains why Somaliland’s relations with the United Nations remained difficult in the early years of President Egal’s rule⁴:

“Somaliland’s relations with the UN remained tense throughout the period of 1991-1997 for a number of reasons.

Chief among them is the erstwhile UN Secretary General’s position on Somaliland’s independence because Secretary Boutros Ghali’s position was influenced by his foreign

⁴ Abraham, K. (2002). *Somalia calling: the crisis of statehood and the quest for peace*, Ethiopian International Institute for Peace and Development.

policy doctrine during his time as a Foreign Minister for Egypt, which was mainly not to accept the breakup of Somalia”.

With regards to President Egal’s foreign policy toward Somaliland’s neighboring states, Egal maintained peaceful diplomacy, the premises of which were based on the notion that Somaliland’s stability and security are dependent on the stability of its neighboring states. In light of that, one of the primary foreign policy goals of Egal’s administration was to establish cordial relations with Ethiopia. Egal was well aware of Ethiopia’s diplomatic influence over other African nations, as well as its close ties with western powers.

As a result, Egal fostered an atmosphere of diplomatic understanding with Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, and succeeded to convince him to establish formal diplomatic representative offices within Somaliland. Nasir Ali, academic and analyst on the Horn of Africa, elucidates how relations between the two neighboring states started:

“In May 1993, when late Egal came to power, relations between the two sides started to take shape. The activities carried out by Egal was the foundation stone on which current bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Somaliland were built....This move also caused the military commanders of the Ethiopian armed forces in Hararghe to contact their counterparts in Somaliland to collaborate in order to maintain peace and stability along the border areas between the two sides⁵”.

President Egal’s diplomatic relations with Ethiopia strengthened following Egal’s milestone agreement with Prime Minister Zenawi in 2000 in Addis Aabab, Ethiopia.

Professor Iqbal Jhazbhay (2007), renowned African Scholar and diplomat, elaborates further:

“Toward the end of 2000, Somaliland signed agreements with Ethiopia, aimed at boosting trade and communications. This was announced following a visit by the late President Egal on three days official visit to Addis Ababa. The core of the agreement centered

⁵ Ali, N. (2015, September). *Personal interview*

on enabling greater use of the strategic port of Berbera, on the Gulf of Aden, by improving the road link to the Ethiopian border. Ethiopia would install a microwave communication link between Buroa, Hargeisa and Berbera.

Ethiopia and Somaliland Central banks were intended to facilitate trade by providing links to the outside world. From Hargeisa standpoint, the agreement was seen as a significant boost for Somaliland in its efforts to gain international recognition⁶”

With respect to Egal’s foreign policy towards Djibouti, there are number of important issues that need to be explained carefully. First, as we argued previously in another paper examining Somaliland’s relations with its neighboring countries, friendly cooperation with Djibouti was seen as crucial to achieving the broader foreign policy pillar of maintaining peaceful and cordial relations with neighboring countries⁷. With that in mind, President Egal paid one of his first diplomatic visits to Djibouti. Prior to that, there had been military confrontations between SNM fighters that were based on the border with Djibouti and Djiboutian military forces. During Egal’s visit to Djibouti, President Abtidon requested that President Egal do what he could to address the SNM fighters’ role in the military confrontation. President Egal immediately took action on the issue by removing the troops, who had yet to be demobilized, from the border in order to avoid further military clashes.

From 1994 to 1999, relations between Somaliland and Djibouti were therefore very stable, even though there was no formal exchange of diplomatic representatives between the two states.

This low-key diplomatic relationship deteriorated in early 2000 when Djibouti hosted the Somali Peace Conference in Arta, which the Somaliland government in the end boycotted. The Arta Conference had originally been proposed by Egal during a visit with his new

⁶ Jhazbhay, M. (2008). *Somaliland: post-war nation-building and international relations, 1991-2006 (doctoral dissertation)*. Retrieved from...

⁷ Duale, M. & Ahmed, S. (2014). *Re-examining Somaliland’s relations with neighboring states*. Pambazuka News 679.

counterpart, President Ismail Omar Guelleh, in Djibouti, who envisaged the event as the means to secure a detailed peace plan for Somalia, with Djibouti—the only Somali majority populated country that enjoyed international recognition—using its influence to bring the warring parties to an agreement.

Egal believed Djibouti could play a significant role in reconciling the warring factions in Somalia by using its positions at the UN, OAU and Arab League to secure the diplomatic, economic and political support of the international community. Unfortunately, however, Guelleh betrayed Egal by inviting Somaliland to the conference as one of the warring groups of Somalia in direct contravention of their private agreement that Somaliland would not participate at the conference under such an arrangement. After this incident, Egal's relations with Djibouti became very tense and challenging.

With respect to his foreign policy towards neighboring Somalia, Egal initially tried to collaborate with Somalia on a fraternal basis, believing that mutual collaboration could advance the interests of both countries. He invited influential southern politician Abdulqasim Salad to Hargeisa, meeting him prior to Qassim's appointment to the presidency of Somalia at the Arta Conference in Djibouti. At the time, he suggested that if Qassim won his bid for the presidency, that Somalia and Somaliland would recognize each other and agree to settle outstanding issues between the two, such as the division of foreign assets of the Somali Republic, ownership of assets in each country owned by the citizens of the other, on an amicable and fraternal basis. Egal also pledged to support the government of Somalia in its efforts to defeat the warlords that were fomenting anarchy and violence in that country, as well as to mediate political disputes between various clans in Somalia.

Unfortunately, these efforts at establishing cordial and collaborative relations were met with hostility and double-dealing by Qassim once in office. In effect, President Qassim's stance towards Somaliland became more aggressive and belligerent, most significantly when

he declared Somaliland a ‘rogue’ province of Somalia under his authority, rather than as an independent state. The government of Djibouti supported Qassim including his claims against Somaliland. Negative and hostile relations between Somaliland and its two neighbors were set in motion. In short, Egal extended an olive branch of friendship and mutual cooperation to both Djibouti and Somalia, only to be betrayed by political calculations.

Coming to President Egal’s foreign policy towards Arab states, Egal was concerned from the beginning that Arab states might present a serious obstacle to Somaliland’s bid for recognition, and sought to counter this by extending the hand of friendship and mutual collaboration early on. However, Egal’s enthusiastic pursuit of support from Arab states would be scrapped when he came to learn the efforts of Boutros Ghali—UN’s Secretary General, had taken to block recognition of Somaliland’s independence. Jhazbhay (2007) describes Boutros Ghali’s aggressive policy against Somaliland in the following manner:

“Former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali tried everything in his power to prevent and reverse Somaliland’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). Boutros-Ghali went to the extent of making a bid via the UN to have Egyptian troops deployed in Berbera as part of a ‘peacekeeping’ presence that would have given Egypt a major strategic military foothold in the Horn of Africa”.

It is worth mentioning that after Boutros Ghali left the United Nations, Egal attempted again to repair diplomatic relations with Egypt.

However, Egal’s fraternal overtures were met with resistance, a result of Egypt’s decision to pursue an active campaign in support of a united Somalia.

This strong stance on Somali unity was based on a calculation that a powerful Somalia would serve as a regional counterweight to Ethiopia, and that such regional antinomy could force Ethiopia to abandon its plans to build hydroelectric dams on the Nile, an issue of vital importance Egypt’s survival. Egypt persuaded the Arab League to let it determine the body’s

collective policy towards Somaliland/Somalia, and this led to the ban on Somali livestock by Saudi Arabia in 1997. The aim was to starve Somaliland into capitulating to the demands of Egypt on Somali unity. However, Egypt and its allies had not reckoned upon the determination and resolve of the people of Somaliland and their political leaders in remaining faithful to their commitment to national independence, and, in the end, Somaliland was able to weather the storm until the livestock ban was lifted in 2005.

With regards to Egal's foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Mohamed Saeed Gees⁸, Egal's former minister of finance and foreign affairs, has argued that Egal had extended the hand of friendship to most Gulf countries, notably Egypt and Saudi Arabia, only to be met with hostility and antagonism. Dr. Gees has further mentioned that Egal met with the leadership of both states to appeal to them based on a common history and religious affinity, which with Saudi Arabia extended back to the early years of Islam when the first known mosque on the African continent was built in Zeila, and with Egypt the relationship dated back to Ottoman times. Egal sought the support of both states for Somaliland's bid for recognition, and pledged that Somaliland would be a reliable partner in all efforts to resolve the region's problems, including the Nile water dispute and the growth of terrorist networks, while also working to enhance the relationship between Africa and the Arab League.

When it comes to the wider continent of Africa, President Egal did not manage to establish significant relations with states in the African Union who could add value to Somaliland's efforts at garnering support for recognition.

⁸ Gees, M. (2016, January). *Personal interview*.

2.3. The Leadership of President Dahir Rayale Kahin, Somaliland's Third President (2002-2010)

President Rayale became president of Somaliland with less political knowledge and foreign policy experience than his predecessors. Yet, during his period in power, which began when he won the presidential election of Somaliland in 2003 by a small margin, he could be seen to demonstrate political maturity and ethical leadership.

After President Egal's sudden death, Rayale was quick to start the process of uniting the country and reducing the political tensions that prevailed at that time. He quickly supported the process of holding the democratic elections that his predecessor initiated, creating a political environment that paved the way for one man-one vote.

President Rayale inherited the foreign policy environment that Egal had forged, and thus had to navigate the challenges that the preceding decade had left behind.

Even though he tried to redeem Somaliland's relations with Djibouti, the country's political leaders remained reluctant to deepen ties with Somaliland.

Rayale's most significant achievement with respect to foreign policy was his ability to strengthen Somaliland's diplomatic relations with Ethiopia, particularly in the areas of security and anti-terrorism cooperation. This cooperation was very effective and productive, and led to Somaliland's security services earning the trust, collaboration and training of Western security services. In addition, Rayale expanded Egal's outreach to African states and the AU, where the Rayale administration was able to secure the unofficial and tacit support of several important African states in pushing for greater consideration of Somaliland's claims for independence and recognition.

Based on these diplomatic successes, President Rayale followed up in December 2005 by writing a direct application for admission to the African Union, after an African Union fact-

finding mission report had made strong arguments in favor of the legal and political basis for Somaliland's independence.

Equally, Rayale established close relations with the British Government, paying a historic visit to London where he delivered a landmark speech to British Lawmakers. Yusuf Roble, Somaliland scholar and author of the book *Somaliland: "A Nation Reborn"* has further explained the significance of President Rayale's visit to the UK in 2004 in the following terms:

*"Rayale's visit to London has opened a new line of communication between the British government and its former Protectorate of Somaliland, which apparently attracted other EU states to adopt a similar policy"*⁹.

Nevertheless, there are some analysts who heavily criticized Rayale's foreign policy, and characterised his foreign policy as isolationist and overly focused on the security dimension.

2.4. The Leadership of President Ahmed Silanyo, Somaliland's fourth president (2010 to 2017)

President Ahmed Silanyo came to power on 26 June, 2010 after successfully defeating Dahir Rayale in presidential elections. A unique element of President Ahmed Silanyo's foreign policy was the change he brought to Somaliland's relations with Somalia, particularly by entering Somaliland in talks with Somalia. Unlike the Silanyo government, Somaliland's previous administrations had always avoided engaging and dialoguing directly with the administrations of Somalia.

For example, the administrations of Egal and Rayale consistently insisted that Somaliland would never open talks with any government in Somalia that lacked the legitimacy and the

⁹ Roble, Y. (2006). *Somaliland: a nation reborn*. Druckhaus Späth GmbH.

democratic representation of the people of Somalia—instead they were waiting for a credible counterpart with which to negotiate.

However, when President Silanyo came to power, he immediately accepted the UK government's invitation to have his Foreign Minister attend and participate in the Wilton Park Conference on Somalia's state-building.

Foreign Minister Mohamed Omar's participation of that conference engendered widespread criticism from the public in Somaliland, leading to massive debates over the rationality of President Ahmed Silanyo's foreign policy regarding Somaliland's quest for international recognition.

However, Silanyo would maintain this course, and in February 2011 accepted the British invitation to attend a major donor conference in London, in which the primary objectives concerned the security and political process in Somalia. This again aroused the ire of the people of Somaliland, and raised further questions concerning the foreign policy of the Silanyo government. However, the President was successful in mobilizing Somaliland's two houses of parliament to amend laws that prevented Somaliland dealing in diplomacy that related in Somalia, thus giving a mandate to the Somaliland government to participate in the London conference in 2011. The communique of that conference urged Somalia and Somaliland to enter into dialogue of the future status of relations of the two entities, which President Silanyo and his counterpart within the transitional government, Sheikh Sharif, followed up with in Dubai soon after.

These talks would continue throughout Silanyo's tenure in a stop-start and ultimately fruitless manner, and as such constituted the mainstream of Silanyo's foreign policy agenda. Among the broader society, there has been a great deal of interesting debate on the talks. Many analysts have contended that these talks were unlikely to produce any tangible results given that Somalia has no competent central government that has the mandate of its people as

well as its federal member states to negotiate with. Instead, they warn that entering the dialogue risks opening a Pandora box, in which Somaliland slowly gets sucked into Somali politics, thus losing its unity and resilience in the face of outside pressure. Nevertheless, the other side of the debate has argued that Somaliland needed to start thinking out of the box in such a manner, and that, further, the negotiated path to independence has historically been more successful—as in the cases of Eritrea and South Sudan—than the unilaterally declared path.

Critics against Silanyo's foreign policy argue that Silanyo had made risky maneuvers regarding issues existential to Somaliland, and yet did not have the pragmatic and robust foreign policy vision and strategy to back it up or do navigate the geopolitics of it.

De Waal (2016) is among those who think Somaliland's foreign policy rests on a precarious geopolitical foundation, and that the fluidity and lack of guarantee within the situation means that vigilance, adaptability and strategy is needed:

“The regional environment will also be crucial: it is unclear whether the current benevolent protection afforded by Ethiopia and the neglect by other regional powers will prevail, or whether Somaliland will become the cockpit for regional rivalries. But, at the very least, Somaliland has demonstrated that it is possible to snatch stability and relative prosperity from violent turmoil¹⁰”.

Nevertheless, one important area which President Silanyo's foreign policy has shown success is its newly accelerated engagement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which can arguably be characterised as the most significant foreign policy move in Silanyo's time.

As a result of extensive diplomacy, Somaliland and the ports management company Dubai Ports World Company in 2016 agreed to a deal in which the company would invest in the expansion of the Berbera Port in order to transform it into a regional trade hub, while

¹⁰ De Waal, A. (2016). *The real politics of the Horn of Africa*.

government based in Abu-Dhabi secured access to Somaliland's territory to establish a military base.

On 1 March 2018, Ethiopia joined the agreement as a 19% shareholder (DP World owns 51% of shares and the Somaliland government 30%, respectively), which includes a commitment to the financing of the Wajale-Berbera Corridor connecting Ethiopia to the port.

From the beginning, the Berbera Port deal has generated heated discussions among the public. The idea of partnering with UAE and DP World was welcomed, although concerns were raised over the transparency of the process as well as its potential geopolitical impact, at a time when political divisions in the Horn and the Gulf have increased tensions between transregional rival blocs. However, it is not the contention of this piece to critically analyze the Berbera Port deal, and time will tell how Somaliland takes advantage of it. Nevertheless, it is our firm belief that Somaliland's new government needs to capitalize on UAE's diplomatic weight as well as Ethiopia's active role in the region for the interest of its state and people.

3. PRESENT FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES

Currently, Somaliland's foreign policy is facing complex challenges in a number of areas. Firstly, many analysts claim that Somaliland's foreign policy approach has been mainly following on self-elucidation approach—which from one perspective achieved remarkable success in achieving the objectives of making the world more aware of Somaliland's historic, political and legal quest for recognition.

However, this approach has lacked a comprehensive policy with workable strategy, one that, looking externally, targets and builds support among regional organizations such as AU, IGAD and other important regional bodies, and, looking internally, embeds foreign policy decision-making, execution and support into the very fabric of government institutions. Somaliland, as a small developing country, has limited financial and human capacity resources to dedicate to a vast array of governance challenges, and it needs to be strategic in its

deployment and mobilization of these resources. This requires a highly feasible and strategic foreign policy that targets spaces and moments of opportunity and possibility where they appear.

Secondly, and relatedly, it is widely believed that Somaliland's foreign policy has been mainly reactive rather than pragmatically proactive. The Foreign Ministry has spent more time dealing with threats to the nation's territorial integrity and legitimacy in recent years than it has going out into the world to make its case.

This is in large part a result of the changing geopolitical circumstances and the international community's renewed attempts to build a united Somali state, which has placed greater external pressure on Somaliland to fall in line. However, Somaliland has the opportunity to transform this increased attention on the region into renewed attempts to make its case, and must have a well thought-out plan for how to do so.

Thirdly, presently, Somaliland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not structured as an institution that can be entrusted with leading the nation's foreign policy as well as securing long overdue recognition.

It remains too top-heavy, and lacks a committed team of mid-level officers who can track changes in the international environment, maintain regular contact with important allies, follow up on diplomatic opportunities, and provide strategic input.

The ministry also lacks the capacity and will to mobilize and engage with civil society, the academic community, domestic officials, traditional leaders and the diaspora to create unified and widespread political momentum in support of foreign policy campaigning and execution.

In addition, the budget allocated to the ministry is very meagre, not nearly sufficient enough to attract knowledgeable diplomats as well as efficiently finance Somaliland's missions abroad.

The ministry has also failed to organize strong and capable missions abroad that, if put in place, could play a significant role in promoting Somaliland's quest for recognition and

building deep relations with important friends and supporters of Somaliland's cause. Diplomacy requires constant contact and visibility within the circles of decision-makers, so as to get the country's argument across on a wide variety of ever-changing matters. So far, Somaliland's missions abroad remain poorly equipped in terms of financial and human resources, thus limiting their ability to provide such levels of influence.

Fourthly, the other significant foreign policy challenge that Somaliland presently faces is the issue of failed talks with Somalia. Since 2013, a number of rounds negotiations have been held in Turkey between Somaliland and the post-transition government in Somalia. However, to date, these talks have achieved little in the way of success. While a code of conduct and general technical mechanisms have been agreed to in principle, the former has regularly been violated (with commitments to regular meetings and against inflammatory language not adhered to) and the latter never materializing. Furthermore, political conflicts over airspace management, border issues and representation (*i.e. whether negotiators originating from Somaliland could be part of the Somali negotiating team*) have derailed negotiations, demonstrating that the Federal Government in Somalia remains unready and unwilling to act as a credible dialogue partner.

Analysts have placed the blame for the failure of the talks on several related factors. First, some believe that Turkey, who has single-handedly dominated the mediation role in the dialogue since 2013, has demonstrated a lack of in-depth understanding of the political history of Somaliland and Somalia, and thus the depth of the political division separating the two sides. As a result, they have not deployed enough of their diplomatic clout to helping both sides overcome the long-standing mistrust and ideological disagreement between them, which is the precondition to any meaningful discussion. These critics similarly hold Turkey at fault for not allowing the participation of technical support actors, such as aviation experts or civil

society that could provide the technical capacity necessary to negotiate complicated matters of practical cooperation.

Second, it is argued that the Silanyo Administration had not prepared a strategic framework on how to navigate the talks with Somalia. As a result, instead of making strategic use of the dialogue process to win concessions and further the institutionalization of discussions of Somaliland's independence, the government has only acted to reactively push back against Somalia's provocations. Third, another important factor behind the failure of the talks is a lack of commitment on the part of the Somali Government. This has included the abrogation of agreements reached during the talks as well as provocative violations of Somaliland's authority in managing its own territory and assets.

4. CONCLUSION

President Silanyo's predecessors adjusted their foreign policy goals to the issues that prevailed at the time and adapted different methods to achieve them. President Egal adopted a pro-Africa foreign policy, in which he established cordial relations with Ethiopia and attempted to do similarly with other regional players. Similarly, President Rayale built on this policy by engaging with other important African states.

On the other hand, President Silanyo became the first Somaliland president to directly negotiate with Somalia, and, as a result of these talks, Somaliland's cause became politically bound up in and domesticated this bilateral affair, rather than remaining proactively engaged with the wider world. For these reasons, the authors have argued that Somaliland's foreign policy in its current form lacks philosophical thought and visionary imagination.

With the election of a new president, Musa Bihi, in November 2017, and the end of the Silanyo era, Somaliland now has an opportunity to turn the page on a new era in its foreign policy. However, having inherited the reins of the Somaliland government at a difficult time in the country's foreign policy, when regional geopolitics are more unstable and volatile than in

most times in recent memory. Despite this, President Bihi's first hundred days has demonstrated a commitment to major public policy reforms aimed at strengthening Somaliland's foundations on good governance, economic growth and the sustainability of its statehood. Only time will tell whether the actions he makes during his tenure will materialize or annul the pledges he made during his campaign for presidency.

In the light of the above analysis, the paper makes the following recommendations:

1. Somaliland should consider institutionalizing a proper scenario management approach to its foreign policy, one that looks at the implications of different approaches through understanding the given constraints and enablers for each scenario. Adopting such an approach will allow Somaliland to adopt a dynamic foreign policy based on strategies through which it can address the changing global realities in their various political, economic and security dimensions.
2. Somaliland's foreign policy approach should graduate from the self-elucidation and should henceforth incorporate an aggressive dual-track approach that focuses more on identifying and cultivating relationships with the regional and global actors who can play the strongest role in supporting Somaliland's quest for recognition, while also expanding trade cooperation with a view to transforming these relationships into long-term diplomatic assets.
3. The Foreign Ministry should set up area-focused departments, which would allow for specialized strategies and diplomatic engagements to be cemented for each important region, including emerging powers, (such as the UAE, Turkey, Qatar), regional actors, (Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya), and traditional powers (the UK, USA, EU, Sweden, Germany, etc.).
4. Somaliland's foreign policy message must better incorporate historical arguments, so that neighbors and the wider international community can appreciate the full significance of

the failure of the Greater Somalia project. This means developing an understanding that the mass violence and war crimes committed against Somalilanders was not a concern of the past, but remains an acute concern for the stability and security of the region in the present.

5. The internationally-backed dialogue between Somaliland and Somalia has been going on for nearly six years, and it has yet to yield a significant positive result. In this regard, Somaliland needs to be very careful, smart, strategic and proactive in how it proceeds. The timing of any resumption of the dialogue is very important, as is the decision on which countries and other diplomatic players should lead any future instances of mediation. Hence, it is our recommendation that Somaliland to reorganize itself and reconsider its vision and intentions regarding the dialogue, and that a special entity should be established and institutionalized to carry out these tasks. Furthermore, the authors recommend that President Bihi's government: (a) engage key political, traditional and civil society leaders for guidance and technical support, (b) establish an inclusive commission mandated to lead the dialogue, and (c) mandate the Foreign Ministry and other diplomatic entities to continue making the diplomatic case to international partners that final resolution to Somaliland's quest for independence is in the interest of all. In the course of its negotiations with Somalia, Somaliland must be convincing and demonstrate the advantages that Somalia might gain from a sovereign Somaliland.

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