

The Abraham Accords: The Force Re-shaping the Gulf–Red-Sea–Horn Energy & Geopolitical Architecture (Part 4/4: Assab, Sovereignty, and the Endgame)

Mefkereseb G. Hailu (PhD)*

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Recap of Parts 1–3: From Architecture to Internal Constraint

Part 1 established that the Abraham Accords function as a transactional security platform restructuring the Gulf–Red Sea–Horn architecture around Israeli strategic primacy, operationalised through Netanyahu’s “Hexagon” concept of networked partnerships. Operation Epic Fury validated the Accords under fire and produced an alignment of winners through the Netanyahu–Abiy–MBZ triangle. The legal foundation for Ethiopia’s sovereign coastline was traced from the Wuchale Treaty (1889) through UN Resolution 390(V) (1950), which explicitly preserved Ethiopia’s maritime rights irrespective of Eritrea’s political status.

Part 2 reframed the “permissive disorder” thesis: the United States has not abandoned the Horn but is re-engaging through the convergent alignment’s Somaliland node. AFRICOM’s monthly delegations, General Anderson’s personal inspection of Berbera, and Somaliland’s offer of exclusive basing and mineral access transform the western Red Sea littoral into a potential US–Israel–UAE–Ethiopia strategic complex. American presence is therefore *partisan rather than moderating*: it strengthens the convergent alignment while the balancing coalition (Egypt–Turkey–Somalia–Saudi Arabia, with rising Saudi–Turkish accommodation) operates without American constraint. The Saudi–UAE divergence—de-escalatory developmentalism versus pre-emptive activism—has fractured Gulf unity, and Eritrea was identified as a vulnerability node whose weakness makes it a launching pad for any hostile power to attack Ethiopia. Considering its history and behaviour, Eritrea remains a persistent threat to Ethiopia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Part 3 established that the binding constraint on Ethiopia’s four singular interests is internal political economy. The “monkey habit of ethnic entrepreneurship” was named as the operational mechanism by which external opportunities are squandered: ethnic entrepreneurs across every constituency act as a guild that profits collectively from inter-group mistrust, while followers receive the crumbs. Three further analytical foundations were laid. *First*, the legal record on Eritrea: Italy never held absolute sovereignty in perpetuity (the October 1887 Antonelli–Menelik treaty contained Italy’s renunciation of any intent to annex Ethiopian territory; Article 6 of Wuchale embedded Ethiopian transit rights at Massawa; Menelik denounced Wuchale entirely in

*The author, aka MGH, is a global technical expert trained at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom. The views expressed are his own and do not represent any institutional position. To editors who prefer word documents alone, an advance apology is in order as my Latex script could be only delivered as a pdf. MGH can be reached via: mefkereseb.hailu1990@gmail.com

1893; Adwa abrogated it in 1896; the 1947 Italian Peace Treaty had Italy renounce all colonial claims). The chain “Italy held the coast → Eritrea inherited the coast → Eritrea is sovereign over the coast” fails at its first link. Resolution 390(V)’s explicit preservation of Ethiopian sea access *irrespective* of Eritrea’s status would be juridically incoherent if Italy had held absolute sovereignty. *Second*, the OAU/AU is complicit in international injustice: at OAU formation in May 1963, Eritrea was Ethiopia’s fourteenth province; *uti possidetis* applied to that founding moment locks Eritrea in as Ethiopian territory. The 1993 acquiescence in secession was the principle’s abandonment, not its application. The TPLF-led Transitional Government that signed away sovereign sea access in 1993 had no electoral or constitutional mandate to do so; that abandonment, and the 2000 Algiers continuation by the same Meles government, were performed *ultra vires*. The AU owes Ethiopia an apology. *Third*, the strategic-track synthesis on reclaiming Ethiopia’s sea sovereignty by any means: the difference between politician and military strategist is timing; the strategist registers the closing window before Egyptian cover crystallises at Assab, while the politician builds the civic compact, macroeconomic depth, and global-capital integration that make any action survivable.

Across the four interests, this final instalment must address the most decisive: **Assab, sovereignty, and the endgame**. The argument is not for war and not against war. It is for the construction of the political, military, and diplomatic architecture in which sovereignty is recovered—through the most appropriate combination of diplomatic offence and force projection that the conditions allow—and for the delivery of an ultimatum that has been deferred too long. The architecture does not wait. The window is closing. There is no second chance to be sovereign and united.

1 The Ultimatum: To the People, To the Government

This series has, across three previous instalments, analysed an external architecture and an internal constraint. It must end with an ultimatum, because analysis without addressee converts strategic clarity into political theatre. Two addressees, two distinct messages, one shared horizon.

To the Ethiopian people. The geopolitical architecture analysed across this series will not produce Ethiopian sovereignty as a by-product. Sovereignty is produced only by populations that demand it and discipline themselves to the institutional behaviours that make it sustainable. The monkey habit of ethnic entrepreneurship is not the work of a malign elite operating against a virtuous population; it is the operational outcome of a population that has, in places and at times, found ethnic mobilisation more comfortable than civic discipline. The ethnic entrepreneur survives because his constituency rewards him for the mobilisation. Defund the entrepreneur by refusing the mobilisation; reward the programmatic candidate by voting on substance; refuse the comfort of ethnic grievance in favour of the discipline of national citizenship. This is not a moralist’s lecture; it is the operational mechanism by which the four singular interests become attainable. No leader, no party, no coalition can deliver GERD’s developmental promise, the coastline’s recovery, the economy’s stabilisation, or internal unity if the population that elects them does so on identity rather than programme. The responsibility is not Abiy’s, not the next Prime Minister’s, not the AU’s, not Israel’s, not the convergent alignment’s. It is yours. The bananas are refusable. The crumbs can be left on the floor. The feast above can be questioned, contested, and—through the slow, demanding, unglamorous work of civic citizenship—redistributed.

To the Ethiopian government, and to whichever government emerges from the 1 June 2026 election: legitimacy is not retained by holding office. It is earned, transaction by transaction, through the demonstrated capacity to advance the manifesto that brought it to power and through the integrity

with which it governs every community across the country. On my part, the four singular interests on which these articles have centred—GERD (the engine of urbanisation and industrialisation), Red Sea sovereignty (self-defence before economics), economic development, and internal unity—must be pursued on the merits, with transparency, with cross-regional buy-in, and with institutional discipline. A government that wins office on programmatic promises and proceeds to govern through ethnic patronage forfeits the mandate the moment it begins to act. A government that articulates a coastline strategy in the campaign and abandons it in office betrays both the strategic interest and the constituency. A government that channels GERD revenues through ethnically coded networks, that staffs the foreign service through factional pipelines, that conducts security policy through clan calculations, will discover that it has no standing to negotiate with Cairo, Asmara, Riyadh, Ankara, Tel Aviv, Abu Dhabi, or Washington—because the credibility deficit at home becomes the negotiating deficit abroad. The government that emerges in June 2026 must be told, on the day it takes office, that the ultimatum applies to it as much as to its predecessor: deliver on the four singular interests through institutional process and cross-regional legitimacy, or be replaced by a coalition that can. The Ethiopian electorate is no longer powerless; the geopolitical environment makes its discipline indispensable.

The shared horizon is sovereignty, secured by sea access that no future government can renegotiate away through executive caprice as the 1993 abandonment was performed without electoral mandate. The horizon is internal unity that no future ethnic-entrepreneur generation can extract rent from. The horizon is an Ethiopia that, by 2030, is the dominant economic and military power in the Horn, the indispensable partner of the convergent alignment and the credible bridge to the balancing coalition, and the regional anchor through which Africa's Red Sea–Horn future is decided rather than to which it is dictated. There will not be another chance. The architecture is moving with extraordinary speed. The window will close.

2 Self-Defence: Sovereign Sea Access - the Primary Imperative

The conventional framing of Ethiopia's sea access question treats it as an economic problem. This framing, while factually correct, is strategically insufficient. Sovereign sea access is, for Ethiopia, a self-defence imperative. The economic case is secondary, and the priority order matters because policy follows priorities.

The self-defence logic has three dimensions. *First*, naval deterrence: a landlocked Ethiopia cannot project naval power, secure its maritime approaches, or deter attacks on its trade routes; in an order attuned to force and transactional interest, dependency is not a security guarantee. *Second*, GERD protection: an Egyptian air or naval facility on Eritrea's coast would place precision-guided munitions and cruise missiles within approximately 500 kilometres of GERD; Egyptian capability, motivation, and an available Eritrean platform now coexist, and that combination is the threat against which sovereign control of the Doumeira–Beilul corridor is the structural answer. *Third*, denial of Eritrea as a hostile-proxy platform: Eritrea's dwindling population, economic failure, and authoritarian governance make it precisely the kind of state whose strategic assets the global transactional logic exploits, and the UAE's 2016 Assab base—ostensibly for Yemen but operationally available for any aligned interest—demonstrated the principle. Ethiopia has no interest in eliminating Eritrea as a political entity; it has an absolute interest in ensuring that the approximately 200 kilometres of coastline adjacent to its northern frontier are not available as a launching pad for threats to its sovereignty, infrastructure, or territorial integrity.

The self-defence framing does not replace the economic case; it subordinates it. The economic benefits—reduced transport costs, independent corridors, naval shipbuilding, port revenue—are substantial conse-

quences. But they are consequences. The cause is survival.

3 The Legal Foundation: Residual Rights, Continuous Chain

The detailed legal record was established in Part 3, §9.2. The summary required here is brief because the foundation is now load-bearing for the strategic argument that follows.

The chain of Ethiopian sea sovereignty is continuous: the October 1887 Antonelli–Menelik treaty, in which Italy renounced any intention of annexing Ethiopian territory; the 1889 Wuchale Treaty whose Article 6 embedded Ethiopian army transit rights at Massawa; Menelik’s 1893 denunciation of the entire treaty; Adwa (1896) and the Treaty of Addis Ababa that abrogated Wuchale entirely; Italy’s 1935 invasion that voided that abrogation under the elementary international-law principle that an aggressor cannot benefit from its aggression; the 1947 Italian Peace Treaty (Article 23) by which Italy renounced all rights and titles to its colonial possessions, transferring disposal authority to the Allied Powers and ultimately to the United Nations; UN General Assembly Resolution 390(V) of 1950, which federated Eritrea with Ethiopia and explicitly preserved Ethiopian sea access *irrespective* of Eritrea’s political status; the 1962 dissolution of the federation, by which Eritrea became Ethiopia’s fourteenth province six months before the OAU was constituted in May 1963 with Eritrea *as Ethiopian territory*; and the 2000 Algiers Agreement, which addressed the land boundary alone and left the question of sovereign sea access *juridically live*.

The decisive analytical points must be restated because they do strategic work in the sections that follow. *Italy never held absolute sovereignty in perpetuity*: the chain “Italy held the coast → Eritrea inherited the coast → Eritrea is sovereign over the coast” fails at its first link. *The OAU’s uti possidetis principle, applied to the moment of OAU formation, locks Eritrea in as Ethiopian territory*; the 1993 acquiescence in secession was the principle’s abandonment, not its application. *The TPLF-led Transitional Government had no electoral or constitutional mandate to alienate sovereign sea access in 1993*; that abandonment was performed *ultra vires* of any constitutional authority the body possessed. *The Algiers silence preserves rather than extinguishes Ethiopian residual rights*; sea sovereignty remains juridically available for assertion through every avenue international law makes available to a sovereign state.

The AU therefore owes Ethiopia an apology—not as rhetorical flourish, but as the institutional self-correction that the historical record requires. The legal-diplomatic offensive must take this argument to every multilateral forum: AU summits, UN Security Council debates, Non-Aligned Movement meetings, BRICS engagements, AU–EU summits, Indian Ocean Rim Association sessions. If the message embarrasses the OAU/AU, that is not a strategic loss; it is a strategic gain. The legal foundation is the platform from which the political, military, and diplomatic strategy is launched.

4 What are the voices from the government corner?

The Prime Minister has been courageous and vocal about Ethiopia’s sea sovereignty for over two years now. The public position is, of course, political rhetoric in part—but the diplomatic and military strategy that supports it must have been in motion for much longer. What is visible to the public is the voice from the government corner: government-aligned media outlets, the most prominent of which is the Horn Review.

Across late 2025 and 2026, a sequence of four substantial pieces published in the Horn Review reads like a close-to-policy contribution toward Ethiopian sovereign sea-access policy.[16, 17, 18, 19] Read in sequence,

these pieces—an ambassadorial position paper on maritime sovereignty (November 2025), a deep treaty-history analysis of residual rights (December 2025), an analysis of state-leadership misrecognition that depoliticises landlockedness (January 2026), and the Saudi-engagement piece (April 2026)—together constitute the most extensive Ethiopian policy-track articulation of the maritime question since 1991. They establish certain points so clearly that no serious Ethiopian strategy can ignore them. However, they hedge on others in ways that, if absorbed into operational policy, would surrender the strongest arguments Ethiopia possesses. This section reads them as that policy track and assesses where it converges with our four singular interests and where it stops short.

4.1 Strengths and alignment points

The track’s strengths align directly with the central argument of this series. Read across the four pieces, six points are now established in government-aligned discourse and can be deployed as documentation of what the Ethiopian state itself has begun to acknowledge.

First, the maritime question is reframed as a structural state imperative, not a routine policy choice. Sovereign sea access is named explicitly as a question of state survival—historical, legal, geographic, security, and economic dimensions converging—rather than the commercial inconvenience that EPRDF-era policy treated it as. Ethiopia is the world’s most populous landlocked nation; 95 per cent of its trade transits a single Djibouti corridor; transport costs are among the highest for any major African economy; permanent landlockedness is incompatible with long-term national security. This is the threshold below which the four singular interests cannot operate, and the policy track now states it without equivocation. *Second, the legal record on Ethiopia’s continuous claim is laid out with rigour.* The treaty-history piece traces the Wuchale–Adwa chain (1889 dual texts, Article XVII fraudulence, Menelik’s 1893 repudiation, Adwa 1896, the Treaty of Addis Ababa abrogating Wuchale entirely); identifies Italy’s 1869 Assab acquisition as a commercial transaction with non-sovereign Afar leaders that conferred no title; identifies Massawa’s 1885 Italian occupation as exploitation of an Egyptian-withdrawal vacuum rather than legitimate cession; establishes that no political entity called “Eritrea” existed before Italy’s unilateral 1890 proclamation; and analyses the 1900, 1902, and 1908 boundary agreements as technical refinements imposed on a coercive structure rather than genuine renegotiations between equal sovereigns. These conclusions are decisive for our argument: Italy never held what its successor regimes claimed to inherit, and the inheritance chain on which exclusive Eritrean coastal sovereignty rests fails at its first link.

Third, Resolution 390(V) is correctly characterised as preserving Ethiopian sea access irrespective of Eritrean status. The policy track states the operative point with admirable clarity: the United Nations was unequivocal that, regardless of the Eritrean populace’s choice, Ethiopia’s right to access the sea was to be explicitly preserved; had Eritrea opted for full independence, Ethiopian coastal territory would have been demarcated to ensure continued sovereign access. *It was not the federation that granted Ethiopia a coastline; Ethiopia’s access to the sea was guaranteed irrespective of Eritrea’s political status.* This is the foundation on which the entire residual-rights argument rests, and the policy track now articulates it in government-aligned discourse with no further hedging required.

Fourth, the 1962 incorporation is correctly characterised as restoration rather than annexation. On 14 November 1962, Eritrea was incorporated as Ethiopia’s fourteenth province through act of the Eritrean Assembly itself, at the request of Eritrean representatives concerned about secessionist tendencies. The policy track defends this as a restoration of historical sovereignty correcting structural vulnerabilities created by coercive treaties, Italian occupation, and the ambiguities of the federal arrangement. This is the foundation for the further argument our series develops in §3: when the OAU was constituted on

25 May 1963, six months after the incorporation, Eritrea was Ethiopian territory, and the *uti possidetis* principle the OAU codified at its founding locks Eritrea in as Ethiopian territory.

Fifth, the 1993 referendum is named for what it was. The policy track states explicitly that the population was presented with an artificial binary obscuring the complex realities of sovereignty, federal obligations, and strategic interdependence; that the remainder of Ethiopia, whose national interests were directly affected, was actively silenced and made to have no substantive role; that the protest by Addis Ababa University students in January 1993 against Boutros Boutros-Ghali's pre-referendum visit ended with over a hundred students shot dead and wounded by government security forces; that Boutros-Ghali's UN oversight was compromised by his historical connections with the EPLF; and—decisively for our argument—that the process was authorised and legitimised by a transitional Ethiopian government that *lacked a popular mandate or broad-based representation for decisions of such magnitude*. This is the constitutional irregularity our series has named as *ultra vires*, now articulated within government-aligned policy discourse.

Sixth, the post-1991 “depoliticisation” of landlockedness is correctly diagnosed. The policy track names the EPRDF elite-bargain origin of 1993; the political-cultural conflation of state and party that converts every strategic question into a partisan referendum; the social-media polarisation that frames sea access as the property of a governing party rather than an enduring state interest; and the diaspora dynamics through which historical grievances and party opposition shape positioning. The diagnosis is correct, and it confirms a central premise of our series: the path to sustainable maritime recovery runs through the civic-citizenship transition, because a population that organises politics on identity rather than substance cannot defend a sovereign right that requires sustained collective discipline.

4.2 Weaknesses and divergent points

The track's weaknesses are four, and each one, if absorbed into operational Ethiopian policy, surrenders ground our four singular interests cannot afford to surrender.

First, the AU's complicity in the 1993 abandonment goes unnamed. The policy track stops at the constitutional-irregularity point: the 1993 referendum was authorised by an unmandated transitional government and conducted under conditions favouring a single political faction. It does not draw the further implication that the OAU's acceptance of the referendum result—when Eritrea had been Ethiopia's fourteenth province at the moment of OAU formation, when *uti possidetis* on the OAU's own founding terms would have locked Eritrea in as Ethiopian territory—was the abandonment of the principle the OAU was constituted to defend. The continental institution's silence in 1993 was not the application of *uti possidetis*; it was its betrayal. *The cost of leaving this unnamed is direct:* Ethiopian diplomacy that goes to AU forums to discuss sea access without naming the AU's foundational hypocrisy enters those forums as petitioner rather than as complainant against an institution that owes Ethiopia an apology. The legal-diplomatic offensive our series calls for cannot proceed if the policy track stops at constitutional irregularity inside Ethiopia and accepts the AU's legitimacy in policing the consequences.

Second, the offered settlement menu hedges toward conciliatory aspiration where assertion is required. The ambassadorial paper closes its argument by listing “shared sovereignty, guaranteed maritime corridors, special economic zones, or internationally supported access agreements” as the arrangements through which Ethiopia “will regain its place on the Red Sea responsibly and in partnership with those who seek stability and prosperity in the Horn of Africa,” framing the maritime aspiration as “peaceful, principled, and inevitable.” The deep legal-history piece concludes with Ethiopia's “residual rights to negotiate sovereign sea access with Eritrea,” framing recovery as a negotiated outcome rather than an asserted right.

The polarisation piece defers to the National Dialogue Commission as the consensus-building mechanism. *The cost is structural*: an Ethiopian state that approaches Asmara, Cairo, the AU, and the international community offering “shared sovereignty” or “joint port administration” as opening positions, framing recovery as “negotiation” rather than “recovery,” and deferring to a National Dialogue Commission that has no juridical standing on the maritime question, signals that its objective is settlement on whatever terms are available rather than recovery on the legal terms the record requires. The opening position becomes the closing position. The offered menu is the menu adversaries will accept; what is given up is the sovereignty itself.

Third, the question of the Eritrean state’s continued existence on Ethiopian-claimed territory is left untouched. The policy track is meticulous on Italian non-sovereignty, on Resolution 390(V), on the 1962 incorporation, on the 1993 illegitimacy. It then accepts, without further argument, that Eritrea is now an independent state with which Ethiopia must negotiate. The series accepts this framing because the alternative is rhetorical maximalism that closes diplomatic space, but the policy track’s hedging cuts the other way: by accepting Eritrean independence as settled while challenging only the conditions of its acquisition, the policy track foregoes the structural argument that the 1993 abandonment, performed *ultra vires*, can be challenged in its entirety by a future legitimately mandated Ethiopian government. *The cost is operational*: the policy track’s posture forecloses the maximum negotiating position before negotiations begin, conceding what could be conceded at the table in exchange for what is being demanded now. This is the elementary error of opening with one’s reservation price. Our series does not advocate annexation of Eritrea; it argues that Ethiopia must enter any negotiation able to credibly assert that the entire 1993 settlement is contestable, so that what is finally agreed—sovereign access through Doumeira–Beilul, formalisation of corridor arrangements at Assab, recognition of Afar continuity across borders—is settled at terms favourable to the four singular interests rather than at terms favourable to the encirclement coalition.

Fourth, the Saudi engagement piece reproduces the supplicatory frame. The April 2026 piece concludes that “should Saudi Arabia conclude that a Red Sea access arrangement for Ethiopia serves regional stability and, by extension, its own security interests, Addis Ababa would gain a weight of support for its position that has previously been absent.” The passive construction does the strategic work: Ethiopian rights are positioned as something Ethiopia “would gain” through Saudi diplomatic conclusions. The empirical observations underlying the piece are sound—Saudi recalibration on Sudan is real; Saudi structural interest in Ethiopian stability is documented; Ethiopia’s multi-partner positioning is an established asset. But the piece’s reading of the Saudi–UAE divergence as decisively softening is contestable: the UAE’s exit from OPEC in early 2026, the Trump administration’s increasingly contemptuous public posture toward Riyadh, and the conspicuous Israeli silence on Saudi accession to the Accords all point toward fracture managed transactionally rather than closed durably. *The cost is direct*: Ethiopian foreign policy that bets on Saudi-led architectural consolidation, predicates sovereignty on Saudi conclusions, and hedges on the legal record because a partner-cultivation strategy has been chosen instead, reproduces the operational posture that produced the 1993 abandonment in the first place—the assumption that Ethiopian rights are properly subordinated to a more powerful regional partner whose goodwill is contingent on Ethiopian concession.

4.3 Implications to Protect Ethiopia and the Warnings

The position advanced across our series protects Ethiopia in three ways that the Horn Review articles, read on their own terms, do not. *It anchors sovereignty in the legal record applied to its full extent—*

Italian-claim contingency, Resolution 390(V), the OAU's foundational hypocrisy, the *ultra vires* character of the 1993 abandonment, the Algiers preservation of residual rights—rather than at the constitutional-irregularity threshold the track stops at. *It treats Ethiopia as the bridge actor in the convergent architecture*, with structural Saudi and Gulf dependency on Ethiopian stability working in Ethiopia's favour, rather than as the petitioner whose maritime ambitions await Saudi conclusions. *It opens negotiations at the maximum position*—the entire 1993 settlement (not primarily the political independence of Eritrea) is contestable—so that what is finally agreed lies inside the four singular interests rather than at the boundary the Horn Review policy track has already conceded.

The warning the Horn Review track carries is institutional. The publication has the ear of the Ethiopian government; its analyses circulate in policy circles; its framings shape how senior officials describe the maritime question to themselves and to interlocutors. *The Horn Review policy track therefore has consequences beyond any single article*. If the government absorbs the track's hedges—accepting that recovery is a “negotiation” rather than an assertion, that “shared sovereignty” is the opening position, that the AU is a venue for petition rather than for confrontation with its own foundational record, that Ethiopian rights “gain support” through Saudi conclusions—then Ethiopian foreign policy operates on a foundation that surrenders the strongest arguments the four singular interests possess.

The interpretation cuts two ways. *If the government takes the maritime question seriously*, it must extend the policy track beyond where these pieces stop: name the AU's complicity, frame recovery as the assertion of a juridically live right rather than the negotiation of a settlement, open at the maximum position, and engage Riyadh from leverage rather than supplication. *If the government does not extend the track*—if the hedges are allowed to define operational policy—then the inference is harder to escape: the government may not have been serious about recovering sovereign sea access in the first place, and the green-paper track is the rhetorical apparatus through which the appearance of seriousness is maintained while the operational concessions to the supplicatory frame are quietly built in. There is no third reading. A serious government cannot accept a frame that operationally surrenders the strongest arguments it possesses while claiming to pursue the objective those arguments support.

The four singular interests stand. The empirical record laid out across the four pieces is welcome where it confirms what we have argued. The hedges and stops-short are rejected where they deviate, because what is at stake is not stylistic preference but Ethiopian agency—and Ethiopian agency is the precondition for everything the four singular interests require.

5 The Mature, Self-Interested, Winning Strategy

The strategy that follows is mature in tone, brutal in clarity, self-interested in design, and unsentimental about means. It is the only strategy consistent with the analysis developed across this series, and it is the only strategy that produces sovereignty rather than another generation of Ethiopian dependency.

5.1 Political: Civic Mandate and Discipline

The June 2026 election is the constitutional moment at which the political track is operationalised. The detailed analysis of the election—its conduct, its possible outcomes, the programmatic test for every candidate, the meaning of a Pan-Ethiopian mandate, and the voter's strategic choice—is developed in Part 3 and will be the subject of a separate companion article. The ultimatum here is shorter and sharper.

A civic mandate, anchored across multiple regional constituencies and won on a programmatic platform

that includes explicit positions on the four singular interests, gives the resulting government the legitimacy to pursue sovereign sea access as a national project rather than a factional gambit. A factional mandate built on Oromo-bloc voting, supplemented by clientelist returns in regions under federal administrative pressure, reproduces the conditions of 1993 and Algiers in a form that the encirclement coalition is currently engineered to exploit. The choice is operationally consequential, not symbolic. Vote on programme. Hold the winner to programme. Defund the ethnic entrepreneurs whose business model the civic transition is designed to destroy.

The Ethiopian people understood this in 2018. The arrival of Abiy Ahmed and the popular reception across regional and ethnic lines that followed demonstrated that ordinary Ethiopians do not, in fact, organise their lives around ethnic mobilisation when their rights, culture, and aspirations are credibly respected. The brutalisation of the population by EPLF and TPLF for nearly three decades, the experience of Derg militarisation as a shared trauma rather than an ethnic grievance, and the popular memory of an undivided Ethiopian polity remain available as the cultural infrastructure on which civic citizenship can be rebuilt. The ethnic-entrepreneur class has spent thirty years denying this; the 2018 reception briefly demonstrated otherwise. The June 2026 election is the institutional opportunity to convert that demonstration into durable political architecture.

5.2 Diplomatic: Offence, Not Defence

The diplomatic track operates in three concentric circles. *The first circle is the convergent alignment:* Israel, the UAE, the United States (engaged at Berbera), and India. Ethiopia must convert the Hexagon's southern arc from a peripheral relationship into a central strategic partnership, with Ethiopian sovereign sea access embedded in the architecture's design rather than tolerated as an Ethiopian preference. The Berbera complex (US monthly delegations, Israeli intelligence facilities, Emirati logistics, Ethiopian MoU coastline) is the model: the Doumeira–Beilul corridor must become its mirror on the Red Sea's western shore. *The second circle is the bridge actors:* Saudi Arabia (engaged through BRICS and bilateral developmental channels, on terms that respect Saudi religious authority while refusing Saudi suzerainty over Ethiopian Muslim citizens), India and the Indian Ocean Rim Association states, the European Union and individual European partners with developmental interests, and the BRICS framework as a multilateral venue for global-South positioning. *The third circle is offensive engagement of the balancing coalition's institutions:* the AU and UN multilateral forums must be confronted with the legal record of Italian-claim contingency, the OAU complicity in 1993, and the *ultra vires* character of the TPLF-led abandonment. The diplomatic offensive does not require AU consensus; it requires only the authoritative placement of the legal record in international diplomatic discourse, where individual states will calibrate their positions on the merits rather than on continental reflex.

Egypt must be engaged as the principal adversary it has chosen to become, not the partner the Nile-basin diplomacy has tried to construct. The April 2026 *National* reporting on Cairo's continent-wide encirclement strategy—15,000 troops in Somalia, military access at Assab and Doraleh, arms deals across the continent—is operational, not theoretical. Cairo's coercive-diplomacy pattern (float a proposition, register pressure, retract while preserving leverage) is a documented method that Ethiopian counter-diplomacy must expose and counter through visible diplomatic resilience, alliance building among African states whose own water-security interests are misaligned with Cairo's, and direct legal-historical engagement that frames Egypt's posture as a continuation of Nile-basin imperialism rather than a defence of legitimate water rights.

Global capital as defensive infrastructure. Even in conditions of partial diplomatic isolation,

Ethiopia must ensure that the safety, contracts, and freedom of movement of internationally invested capital—Israeli technology firms, Emirati construction and logistics, Indian pharmaceutical and IT operations, Chinese infrastructure contractors, Turkish manufacturers, European development financiers, American mining and digital interests—become woven through the Ethiopian economy at scale. When global capital is invested across sectors and geographies, the constituencies that defend Ethiopia’s stability *become* those capitals’ constituencies in their own home countries. This is the operational principle that has protected Israel itself in the international system for decades, that protects Singapore, that even Vietnam now leverages against great-power pressure. The greater the global capital embedded in Ethiopia, the more deliberate the diplomatic isolation strategy must become for adversaries to construct, and the higher the cost they must absorb to sustain it.

5.3 Military: Credible Deterrence, Prepared Option

The military strategist’s calendar runs on the deterioration curve of the strategic balance. Each month brings Egyptian forces closer to operational positioning at Assab, deepens US–Eritrean tactical engagement, allows the Saudi–Eritrean–Sudanese alignment to mature, and gives the Houthis more time to complicate Red Sea operations. The strategist’s professional duty is to flag the closing window and to prepare the operational option while it remains open. This is not advocacy of war; it is the preservation of the option that the politician needs as the credible threat behind any peaceful negotiation. Without that option, negotiation becomes supplication; with it, negotiation has weight.

The operational architecture required is specific. *First*, conventional capability: air superiority over the Doumeira–Beilul–Assab theatre, ground-force preparation for limited corridor operations, naval and amphibious capability sufficient to establish defensive positions, and integrated air-defence networks against Egyptian retaliation. *Second*, asymmetric capability: drone capability comparable to the Bayraktar TB-2 systems Turkey has exported, anti-drone defences against Egyptian and Eritrean platforms, signals intelligence capacity that does not depend on external partners, and cyber-offence capacity sufficient to disrupt Eritrean command-and-control during any limited operation. *Third*, doctrinal preparation: “attack, hold, and negotiate” is the formula—a limited operation seizing the Doumeira–Beilul corridor as the minimum viable sovereign access; defensive consolidation that establishes the territorial fact; and immediate negotiation that converts the fact into a settled outcome. The strategic logic is the same as the 1967 Israeli seizure of Sinai and Golan as bargaining capital, the Turkish 1974 operation in northern Cyprus, and the Russian 2014 seizure of Crimea: operations that establish a territorial fact and then negotiate have a higher success rate than operations that attempt to negotiate without prior establishment.

The objective is *not annexation of Eritrea*. The objective is recovery of the sovereign maritime access that Resolution 390(V) preserved, that the Algiers silence kept juridically live, and that the AU’s complicity has wrongly permitted to be extinguished. Eritrea’s continued separate political existence is preserved in any post-operation settlement. The Eritrean people are not the adversary; the Eritrean garrison-state’s availability as a hostile-proxy platform is.

5.4 The Synthesis: Convergence at 2027–28

The military strategist’s calendar (the closing window) and the politician’s calendar (the construction curve of the civic compact, macroeconomic depth, and global-capital integration) converge at 2027–28. By that point, if the June 2026 election produces a Pan-Ethiopian civic mandate, if the macroeconomic stabilisation has taken effect, if global-capital integration has reached the threshold that makes adversary

diplomatic isolation prohibitively expensive, and if the legal-diplomatic offensive is sustained, the politician's preconditions converge with the strategist's still-open window. That convergence is the moment of maximum Ethiopian leverage—the moment at which Asmara faces the choice between a negotiated settlement that preserves Eritrean political existence on terms that include Ethiopian sovereign access, or the confrontation that the strategist has prepared to win.

If Asmara, reinforced by Egyptian cover, refuses negotiation in that window, the strategic case for action becomes both more urgent (because the cover continues to mature) and more sustainable (because the political conditions are in place). The mature strategy is the parallel construction of all three tracks until the convergence point; the brutal strategy is the willingness to act when the convergence arrives; the self-interested strategy is the refusal to defer indefinitely on the comfort of moralism. There is no second chance to be sovereign and united.

6 Eritrea: The Brutalisation, Separation, and Path Ahead

Any honest Ethiopian engagement with the Eritrea question must reckon with the historical record that produced the 1993 separation and the conditions under which it took place. The TPLF and EPLF brutalised both populations for nearly three decades; the Derg's militarisation alienated Eritrean populations and provided the secessionist movement with its recruitment narrative; the EPLF and TPLF were widely understood, at the time, as separatist movements operating against a brutal Derg regime—and that framing, in an information-controlled environment, led many Ethiopians to mistakenly view the Derg as the greater enemy and to underestimate the depth of the post-Derg agenda the EPLF and TPLF were preparing to execute. What Ethiopians did *not* expect, and never consented to, was that Eritrea would be ceded without any meaningful say from Ethiopia itself. This is the injustice. The 1993 acquiescence was not active national consent to landlockedness; it was the silence of a population that had no parliamentary, electoral, or constitutional channel through which to register its position, and whose understanding of the agenda being executed in its name was systematically obstructed by the new federal centre.

This historical reading reinforces, rather than weakens, the constitutional argument developed in Part 3. The 1993 abandonment was performed by an unmandated transitional government acting against the strategic interest of a population that had been brutalised into political exhaustion. The recovery of sovereign sea access is not a nostalgic restoration of a Derg-era or Haile Selassie-era empire; it is the correction of a constitutional irregularity performed against the long-term interest of the very population that was forced into silence—through the brutal massacre of hundreds of university students and the imprisonment of many others—and that never publicly accepted the separation. What occurred was not popular consent but a rebel-group's brutal imposition.

The Eritrean population is similarly brutalised and similarly entitled to a future better than its current garrison-state offers. Indefinite military conscription, economic collapse, mass emigration, and a political system frozen since 1993 have produced a state whose survival model is parasitic on its own people. Ethiopia's strategic objective is not to liberate Eritreans from Isaias—that is a question for Eritreans themselves—but to ensure that both Asmara and Addis Ababa enjoy sovereign access to the sea and form a respectful, collaborative neighbourhood through deeper economic and cultural ties that benefit the two nations equally. It is for Eritrea, in turn, to recognise that it cannot indefinitely cling to what is neither legitimately nor structurally its own; that recognition, far from threatening Eritrean existence, is the condition on which Eritrean existence and prosperity become durable. The post-operation settlement envisaged in §5 preserves Eritrean separate political existence and establishes the economic relationship

with Ethiopia that addresses its developmental crisis. The objective is sovereign Ethiopian access to the sea *alongside* sovereign Eritrean access to the sea, anchored in the recovery of approximately 200 kilometres of coastline that was never legitimately surrendered; the consequent benefit, for which Ethiopia takes no specific responsibility but should welcome, is the creation of conditions under which Eritrean society can begin its own political reconstruction once the garrison-state's external survival model collapses.

7 The Endgame: Sovereignty or Dismemberment

The series' answer is now complete in statement.

If Ethiopia builds civic institutions through the June 2026 election; if the resulting government holds the convergent alignment to delivery on the four singular interests; if the legal-diplomatic offensive on the AU complicity argument is sustained; if global-capital integration reaches the threshold that makes adversary diplomatic isolation prohibitively expensive; if macroeconomic stabilisation gives the country fiscal depth; if Saudi engagement is conducted on terms of Ethiopian leverage rather than supplication; if military preparation maintains the credible deterrent option through 2027–28; and if Asmara is offered serious bilateral diplomacy that preserves Eritrean separate political existence in exchange for sovereign Ethiopian sea access—then Ethiopia recovers the coastline through the combination of diplomatic offence and military preparation that the convergence moment makes available, protects GERD as the engine of industrialisation and urbanisation, absorbs the mutual economic dividend that the alignment of winners offers, and achieves the national unity that makes all three durable.

If Ethiopia fails any one of these conditions—if the election returns a factional mandate, if the convergent alignment loses interest in an unreliable partner, if the legal-diplomatic offensive is not pursued because of timidity in international forums, if global-capital integration is undermined by patronage capture of investment opportunities, if Saudi engagement is conducted from a posture of supplication, if military preparation is allowed to atrophy because peace is comfortable, or if Asmara is offered diplomacy without the credible alternative of force—then the geopolitical architecture amplifies the internal fractures that the failure produces. GERD becomes a factional prize. The coastline remains permanently lost. The alignment of winners becomes a dependency trap. The encirclement matures. Ethiopia's demographic trajectory produces a fragmented territory in which 130 million people are governed by competing oligarchies that external patrons arm, finance, and exploit. The 2027–28 window closes. The next opportunity, if it arrives at all, arrives in a strategic environment Ethiopia will face from a position of structural weakness rather than the relative strength that current conditions still permit.

The architecture does not wait. The window is closing. The ultimatum stands. There is no second chance to be sovereign and united. Ethiopians who hold an ounce of Ethiopianness, who carry the dignity of the Adwa generation, who understand that GERD was built with their pennies and that the coastline was never legitimately surrendered—and the government that emerges from June 2026 to govern them—must choose now.

The choice is binary and it is operational: bananas for the few and dismemberment for the many, or sovereignty for the nation and prosperity for the generations that follow.

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