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## **The Impact of Civil War on National Diplomacy: The Case of the Ethiopian Civil War**

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### **1) INTRODUCTION**

Ethiopia is a multinational federation of over 110 million population and more than 80 ethnic groups. Emperor Menelik II shaped current Ethiopia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (1875-1900) through creative diplomacy and the wars of conquest. However, the country's future is still at stake because the successive governments could not transform imperial statecraft into a modern and integrated nation. Thus, it has always been in the vicious cycle of civil wars between groups with different competing views of history and identity, statehood, and the way forward: mainly those striving to build a strong central state and those inspiring to have more devolved regional powers.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to internal instability, Ethiopia has fought several external wars since its inception. During Emperor Menelik II, Ethiopia fought a war against Italian colonization and won the historic battle of Adwa in 1896. Ethiopia got leverage in dealing with international powers of the time to ensure its survival and territorial expansion beyond its landmark border. Consequently, European powers recognized Ethiopia and intensified diplomatic relations by sending advisors, guns, missions, and ambassadors. Fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia for the second time in 1935, where they ruled the entire country, including Addis Ababa, until 1941. They also forced emperor Haile Sellassie into exile, where he appealed to the League of Nations. However, the institution's attempt was not as productive as expected because the West did not have a significant interest in the country and, above all, UK and France wanted to win friendship with Italy at the expense of Ethiopia<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Ethiopia had to go to war against the newly created state of Somalia, whose agenda was to create "Greater Somalia," which includes Ogaden and other territories inhabited by the Somali population. The disagreement led to a major war in 1977. The Somalia government of Ziad Barre helped the West Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF) and occupied the Ogaden basin in 1977. On the other side, the Ethiopian government was supported by the Soviet Union, and its allies pushed the Somali government to regain its territory. Even after the fall of the central government in Somalia, the Ethiopian forces entered Somali territories twice to fight separatist militias and terrorists in 1996 and 2006.<sup>3</sup> The 2006 intervention against the so-called Islamic Courts with the full support and understanding of the United States. Ethiopia's intervention and presence had taken a new dimension after the advent of Al-Shabaab- a fundamentalist group accused of having ties with Al-Qaida. Consequently, the two countries have not been on good diplomatic terms until now, and their future relationship also seems fragile.

Eritrea, a former colony of Italy until 1941, then under British Military administration until 1945, was federated to Ethiopia in 1962, then was made the internal part of Ethiopia, which led to 30 years of war or separation.

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<sup>1</sup> "Civil War Has Pushed Ethiopia to the Brink. Its Future Is at Stake.," *Reuters*, accessed June 3, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/ethiopia-conflict-fractured/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Menilek II | Ethiopia, Contributions, Significance, & Emperor | Britannica," vv. 1–2, accessed June 5, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Adwa>.

<sup>3</sup> "Ethiopian-Somali War Over the Ogaden Region (1977–1978) •," March 21, 2016, <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/ethiopian-somali-war-over-ogaden-region-1977-1978/>.

Eritrea was part of Ethiopia until it held a referendum to form an independent country after 30 years of bloody civil war in 1993. Nobody expected the two sisterly countries to turn foes shortly. However, in 1998 the two countries fought over the Badime plain following the Eritrean soldiers entering the area under the administration of Ethiopia in northern Tigray. Though the conflict started over a piece of land, many scholars and politicians believe it was an economic and political confrontation between the leaders of both countries to become dominant regionally. Furthermore, the relationship between the two countries was based on the leaders' friendship and not institutionalized from the beginning. Therefore, as the harmony between Meles and Isaias turned hostile, the relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea turned into violence and bloody war with huge humanitarian ramifications.

The United Nations (UN), the international community, the then Organization for African Unity (OAU), and now African Union (AU) have strived to mediate and push the two sides to prevent thousands of lives from perishing. Furthermore, there were unsuccessful attempts at arms embargoes on each side. Regardless of those efforts, more than 70,000 people died, millions were displaced, and the economies of both countries were devastated.<sup>4</sup> Although the Algiers treaty was signed in late 2000, the two countries remained at war (no war and no peace situation) for 20 years until Abiy Ahmed became Ethiopia's prime minister in 2018. Abiy changed the course by defusing the tension and initiating the negotiation directly by contacting Isaias Afeworki. Perhaps with the full backing of Western powers. Furthermore, he won the Nobel peace prize in 2019 for his rapprochement and effort to redress the fearful situation between the two countries. However, the relationship between the two countries is still odd for two reasons; not institutionalized yet and ignoring the Tigray region, which is the main stakeholder, and which borders the conflict zone and the disputed territory.

The paper's main objective is to examine the impacts of the ongoing civil war on Ethiopia's diplomatic interests and international relations. It briefly assessed the internal and external factors that caused the civil war and the diplomatic leverages of the country in the region, continental, and internationally. It will develop a critical assessment based on the sources examined and reviewed. The study is limited to identifying the extent to which the civil war impacted Ethiopia's diplomatic relations; however, its implication's overall political and economic impact on the country's development is out of scope.

## 2) **THE CAUSE OF THE CIVIL WAR IN ETHIOPIA**

Civil wars have significantly hindered -national development for years without international attention. There is a reversal of economic and social development and persistent poverty where there is civil war. Consequently, it breeds more instability and factional clashes leading to vicious circles. Worse than this, a continuous civil war could spill over effects on the neighboring countries, regions, and even global poverty reductions and security efforts.<sup>5</sup>

Since the Tigray war started in November 2020, widespread human rights violations, crimes against humanity, severe economic ravages, infrastructure destruction, and diplomatic crises have been reported. The UN updated that hundreds of thousands of people were killed, more than 2.2 million people have been displaced, and security forces committed widespread human rights violations from both sides.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the US government called for an international investigation. Both internal and external factors triggered the civil war in Ethiopia. There are also other civil wars ongoing in Ethiopia, including in Oromia, but the following will focus on the Tigray regional state

### 2.1. **Internal Factors**

Following years of civil unrest for broader democratic changes in the most populated Oromia region, the government of Ethiopia decided to transform from within, and prime minister Hailemariam Desalegn transferred power peacefully in 2018. Subsequently, the government took positive measures to accommodate public demands.

<sup>4</sup> "Eritrean-Ethiopian War - New World Encyclopedia," 2-3, accessed June 11, 2022, [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Eritrean-Ethiopian\\_War](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Eritrean-Ethiopian_War).

<sup>5</sup> "Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy," 135-48, accessed August 23, 2022, <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/908361468779415791/breaking-the-conflict-trap-civil-war-and-development-policy>.

<sup>6</sup> Elliot Smith, "Ethiopia's 'Simmering Civil War' Threatens to Erode Economic Recovery Prospects," CNBC, March 12, 2021, 1-2, <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/03/12/ethiopias-simmering-civil-war-threatens-to-erode-economic-recovery-prospects.html>.

Some measures include releasing political prisoners, inviting outlawed opposition political parties committed to military options to overthrow the government, repealing some despotic laws, and permitting free media operations. Ethiopians and the international community hoped the newly appointed prime minister, Abiy Ahmed, would transform the country into a democracy through reforms, not repressions.

However, the hope for the transition gradually flopped when the ruling party broke apart on ideological differences in the political direction of the country's process. Abiy believes that strengthening a multinational federation threatens the unity and national cohesion of the country. Consequently, he inclined toward the right-wing nationalists that supported a unified state with a strong central government. Therefore, after consolidated power, Abiy pushed pro-federation forces to ditch, including the Oromo youth that brought him to power.

Abiy formed a unitary Prosperity Party (PP) in an attempt to reclaim a quasi-unitarist and hegemonic state. Ethio-nationalists believe that Abiy would recreate the mythical glory days of the Ethiopian empire. The glorious past for Ethio-nationalists is a strong and united Ethiopia that promotes a single culture, one language, and a centralized political system rather than multi-cultural pluralism under the cover of individual right and dismiss the current Multi-ethnic federation as racist. They are against the current Ethiopian constitution and federation and forcefully try to change the internal regional boundaries. The leading cause of violence in Ethiopia, including the ongoing civil war in Tigray, is that Ethio-nationalists are committed to all means, including forces to realize the unitary state they envisioned. Accordingly, through the transition off track, the proponent of centralized political ideology opened an aggressive media campaign, created civil unrest, and pushed Abiy to open war on Tigray. This aggressive attitude and antipathy towards TPLF are shared by the Eritrean regime, which joined the coalition and, as such, played an active role in the blood war. Its military has been accused of gross violations of human rights in Tigray

Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF), the dominant party in the Ethiopia People Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) since 1991, opposed the move by the prime minister to build a strong central government by weakening the multinational federation. Consequently, the TPLF fought the dissolving of EPRDF and fell out with Abiy's PP, the merger of the three EPRDF member parties, and the EPRDF coalition parties. Furthermore, other federalist forces also shared the concerns of TPLF and saw the PP as a restoration of repressive centralized government abolishing the federal system.<sup>7</sup> As the rift grew, Abiy pushed out most TPLF members holding national government positions, diplomats, and military officers. As part of this hostility, the Ethiopian parliament labeled TPLF and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) terrorists and cut a budget for the Tigray region.

Regardless of its ancient and considered unifying force in Africa, Ethiopia's internal state formation project is still incomplete because the country's unity is fragile, and most nations and nationalities have been politically marginalized and considered second citizens. The conflicting parties have different visions of the future state formation of Ethiopia. Federalist forces, including the Oromo nationalists in the ruling party, want more regional autonomy and self-government. On the contrary, the hardcore unionists assimilationists, including Prime minister Abiy Ahmed, envisage abolishing the multinational federation at any cost. In summary, internally, the failure of the Ethiopian state to accommodate naturally existing diversity is the leading cause of recurring upheavals, including the recent civil war in Tigray.

## 2.2. External factors

The political interests of external forces also fueled the civil war in Ethiopia. The Eritrea People's Liberation Front (EPLF) fought the emperor and the military junta (Darg) alongside TPLF and OLF (1962-1991), and Eritrea gained independence in 1991. Many hoped that Meles and Isaias would cement their relationship and build a more robust Horn of Africa based on the values they share as comrades fighting together for the freedom of their people. However, that hope evaporated after a few years, and the relationship between the two leaders turned into hostility. Consequently, friends turned into foes, and the two countries had a devastating war that claimed 70,000-100,000 lives from 1998 to 2000.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Awol Allo, "Why Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party Could Be Bad News for Ethiopia," accessed August 22, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/12/5/why-abi-ahmeds-prosperity-party-could-be-bad-news-for-ethiopia>.

<sup>8</sup> "Civil War Has Pushed Ethiopia to the Brink. Its Future Is at Stake.," *Reuters*, accessed July 6, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/ethiopia-conflict-fractured/>.

The animosity between the two countries lasted for two decades after Ethiopia refused to hand over the administration of Badime town, which an international arbitration gave to Eritrea.

Ethiopia adopted a diplomatic strategy to weaken Eritrea and worked day and night to isolate it from the rest of the world. Consequently, Eritrea's diplomatic relation with the rest of the world was significantly affected, especially the West and some Middle Eastern countries. In addition to political and diplomatic isolation, the country's economy significantly lagged behind the sanctions imposed on its aid, loans, international trade, and foreign direct investment. Consequently, Eritrea considered Ethiopia an existential threat under the hegemonic rule of TPLF. Eritrea kept building a strong military to overcome the potential threat from Ethiopia and border disputes with neighboring countries.

Abiy charted rapprochement with Eritrea after being appointed Ethiopia's prime minister in 2018. He turned Ethiopia's number one enemy into a loyal friend within months and diffused the hostility between the two countries. The rapprochement with Eritrea significantly earned Abiy international recognition, including winning the Noble Peace Prize in 2019. However, Abiy repeated Meles Zenawi's mistake by failing to institutionalize (Normalized) the relationship between the two countries, capitalizing on the international reputation he earned. For Isaias, that situation was a golden opportunity to revenge on TPLF and proposed a political cleansing in Tigray during the rapprochement. He widened the gap between TPLF and Abiy by advising the latter to marginalize Tigray until the TPLF weakened and the people of Tigray bowed down to his administration. Furthermore, the Eritrean government directly participated in Ethiopia's civil war, sending army divisions in support of the federal government of Ethiopia. The UN reported that the Eritrean forces committed atrocities that might amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to neighboring Eritrea, there is an apparent division of powerful countries into the East and the West blocks in the security council regarding Ethiopia. China and Russia provided military and diplomatic support to the Federal Government of Ethiopia. For example, Russia took the opportunity to reestablish its political hegemony, weakened by the disintegration of the Soviet Union in sub-Saharan Africa. Accordingly, China and Russia vetoed the UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions to stop the civil war in Ethiopia under the pretext of not interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. Furthermore, China and Russia blocked the international efforts to place Ethiopia's civil war issue on the UN General Assembly's agenda. China considered Ethiopia as Africa's power hub for being the seat of AU and has been investing in the country through Road and Belt Initiative (RBI) to control the global balance of power. Therefore, China has been influencing the AU as an organization and member states not to support the Western stand on Ethiopia's civil war.<sup>10</sup>

Other emerging states such as Turkey, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Iran also aggravated the civil war in Ethiopia by providing armaments, including drones, to the central government of Ethiopia to keep their national interests. Accordingly, many sources revealed that Ethiopia used Chinese Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs), Iran's Mohajer-6 UCAVs, Turkey's Bayraktar TB2 UCAVs, and other air-to-land missiles against the TPLF and other rebels like OLA. International war analysts believe that the utilization of these capable armaments massively changed the tie in favor of the central government in Addis after TPLF and OLA threatened to take the capital in 2021.

On the contrary, the US, UK, and the EU hold neutral positions and pressurized both sides to stop the civil war and come to negotiations. Regardless of the lack of actual evidence, the government of Ethiopia accused the West of de facto supporting TPLF. However, TPLF operatives, activists, and lobbyists have been very active in western chancelleries and diplomatic circles to sell the TPLF version of the story (victimhood narratives). Abiy Ahmed's government used the West's mischaracterization to influence ordinary citizens' perceptions politically and incite Ethiopians to defend the country from the group it labeled terrorists, TPLF, and OLA. However, it revealed that the main objective of the West is to avert human rights violations and economic catastrophe in the country. As the West warned, the government has been facing economic, security and political crises over the last few years. The country is at a crossroads due to drought, inflation, communal clashes, and civil war.

<sup>9</sup> "UN Alleges War Crimes in Ethiopia's Tigray, Urges Eritrea Exit," accessed July 10, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/5/un-alleges-war-crimes-in-ethiopias-tigray-urges-eritrea-pullout>.

<sup>10</sup> "Ethiopia in Conflict: Shifting Fronts, the Role of the External States and Airpower," accessed July 10, 2022, <https://trendsresearch.org/insight/ethiopia-in-conflict-shifting-fronts-the-role-of-external-states-and-airpower/>.

### 3) **THE NATURE OF ETHIOPIA DIPLOMACY**

Ethiopia is the second most populated African country and a diplomatic hub in the unstable Horn of Africa. Addis hosts many continental and international organizations, such as the African Union (AU) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). In Ethiopia, regional organizations like Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), and more than 500 embassies and councilors. Furthermore, the country is a critical ally to the West in anti-terrorist operations. Ethiopia has a long history as a founding member of the United Nations (UN) and participating in UN peacekeeping missions. Addis Ababa hosts many ministerial meetings and head-of-state summits every year. AU's annual state meeting accommodates about 700 diplomatic delegates and more than 40 heads of state.

Under Meles, Ethiopia seems to have been active in international and African politics. After the end of the cold war and the demise of the military regime, the Ethiopian foreign policy was changed from outward looking-externalizing national peace and security to inward-looking- overcoming poverty and lack of democracy. Rather than foreign enemies, abject poverty and lack of democracy are identified as national security threats. Therefore, the government became a “Developmental State” and devised commercial diplomacy to generate foreign direct investment, trade, tourism, soft loans, grants, and assistance to achieve sustainable economic development. According to Barston, contemporary diplomacy is no more a subject matter of foreign ministers.<sup>11</sup> A range of departments, agencies, and private personalities play significant roles in modern diplomacy. Experts from ministries such as defense, health, transportation, finance and trade, education, information and technology, and the environment have been participating in diplomatic activities.

Ethiopian Foreign Affairs and National Security and Strategy (FANSS), enacted in 2002, involved experts from different government sectors in its adoption and implementation. The ministry has engaged experts from other sectors, trained, and dispatched to targeted countries to gather information, create networking, locate potential investors and exporters, and encourage tourists to visit Ethiopia. Diplomatic institutions and administrative structures were also reshaped to accommodate the changes. Consequently, Ethiopia has become helpful in regional, continental, and international diplomacy. It has played a significant role in maintaining the peace and stability of the Horn region and beyond, regional development initiatives, and climate change bargaining. Furthermore, it overwhelmingly attracted foreign direct investment, developmental assistance, and loans from developed countries and international institutions.

### 4) **THE IMPACT OF THE CIVIL WAR ON ETHIOPIAN DIPLOMACY**

Following the civil war and consequent stubborn diplomatic relations with most of its trade partners, the Ethiopian government closed about 30 embassies and consulates and recalled staff from the embassies remain operational. Among the embassies and consulates closed is the Ethiopian embassy in Ireland, consulates in Los Angeles and Minnesota, and the Ethiopian embassy in Egypt are the main ones. The government recalled 18 members of the Ethiopian embassy in Washington DC and five staff of the permanent mission in the UN. Reducing the permanent mission's staff to three indicates diminishing the country's diplomacy. Most of the staff recalled did not go back to Ethiopia; many of them seem to be of Tigran Origins, and they are not surprised if they seek asylum in the host countries. Senior staff from the Irish foreign minister said that Ethiopia closed its embassy in his country in retaliation for Ireland's firm stand against human rights and international humanitarian law violation by fighting parties. Ethiopia needs more representation than before at this critical time to overcome diplomatic awkwardness.

The actions and decisions taken by Abiy Ahmed's government indicate that the country's foreign policy is returning to pre-1991. Therefore, rather than pursuing the hugely invested commercial diplomacy, Abiy is slanting to militarize and securitize the country's foreign policy. The retreat from commercial diplomacy would affect the country's capacity to engage in the global market. Furthermore, the Ethiopian government has banned some foreign NGOs and civic organizations, such as Norway Refugee Council (NRC), Medical San France (MSF), and the Al Maktoum foundation. The politicization of humanitarian organizations would affect Ethiopians that rely on the services of those organizations for livelihood, health, water, education, infrastructure, and communication services.

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<sup>11</sup> R. Barston, *Barston: Modern Diplomacy\_p3*, 3rd edition (Harlow: Pearson, 2006), 9–11.

The war damaged the country's infrastructure, weakened the national currency, spoiled its diplomatic reputation, and deterred foreign direct investments. Ethiopia is a nation of the young generation looking for job opportunities. The foreign direct investment that created job opportunities for thousands has been shut down due to a lack of security. The subsequent sanctions and cut in developmental and budgetary assistance from the West caused inflation to jump by 40%, the Growth of Domestic Product (GDP) to fall from 6.3% in 2021 to 3.8% in 2022, and a significant shortage of foreign exchange. The government pumped billions of dollars into the war, while 22 million of its citizens are looking for humanitarian assistance in 2022. The country's international reserve shrank to 2.2 months of import cover in 2021 from 2.5 months in 2020. The country's foreign reserve money is inadequate, and creditors do not feel confident buying the country's debt.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) ban affected the country's import, export, and foreign direct investment. Most of the investors running the textile industries used to export duty-free products to the US market are owned by foreign investors. For example, the manager of Best Garment, an Indian company, informed the researcher over the phone that they laid off about 3000 employees recently and halted the export. Consequently, the shortage of foreign currency, especially the US dollar, forced most industries to shut down because of a lack of raw materials from international markets. Safaricom, a telecom company recently entered Ethiopia's telecom market, has pushed its service beginning date a few times due to a lack of foreign currency.

#### 4.1. **Ethiopia's Diplomacy with the West**

Ethiopia has robust diplomatic relations with the West, especially during the emperor Haile Selassie and Meles Zenawi regimes. Emperor Haile Selassie was the closest western diplomatic partner in Africa during the formation of the league of nations, the UN, and the Organization for African Unity (OAU). Haile Sellase is known as the father of African diplomacy because he played a significant role in Africa's movement against colonization. The emperor helped to unify different strands of the Pan-African movement to join forces to create OAU in Addis Ababa in 1963. He mentored many of the freedom movement leaders in Africa. Furthermore, Ethiopia contributed troops for peacekeeping missions in Congo and South Korea during the emperor's regime. In return, the country got a political reputation and developmental assistance from the West during the emperor's rule and built particular diplomatic relations with the US.<sup>12</sup>

Despite his undemocratic rule and pro-Marxist-Leninist ideology, Meles Zenawi was also strong security and diplomatic partner to the West. Furthermore, EPRDF changed Ethiopia's foreign policy from a security-centered outlook approach to commercial and inward-looking diplomacy. Ethiopia's diplomacy was restructured to win on poverty by exploiting the potential advantages of globalization and world poverty reduction programs such as the millennium development goals. Accordingly, over the last 30 years, the country enabled many exporters and attracted foreign direct investments, soft loans, duty-free export chances, developmental loans and grants, technologies, and tourists.<sup>13</sup> The West, as neo-liberal sympathizers, is the largest partner and contributor in Ethiopia's commercial diplomacy.

The West also encouraged prime minister Abiy Ahmed to pursue a transition to democracy by granting his government loans, financial assistance, and aid. However, when Abiy departed from the track and started rolling back some of the measures he had taken during his early days in power, the West began criticizing him. Moreover, the diplomatic relationship between Ethiopia and the West reached its lowest level when the country entered its civil war in Tigray. The West, such as the EU, the UK, and the US, have opposed the civil war from the beginning and have been pushing for negotiations solely for peace.

##### i) **Ethiopia's Diplomatic relations with the US**

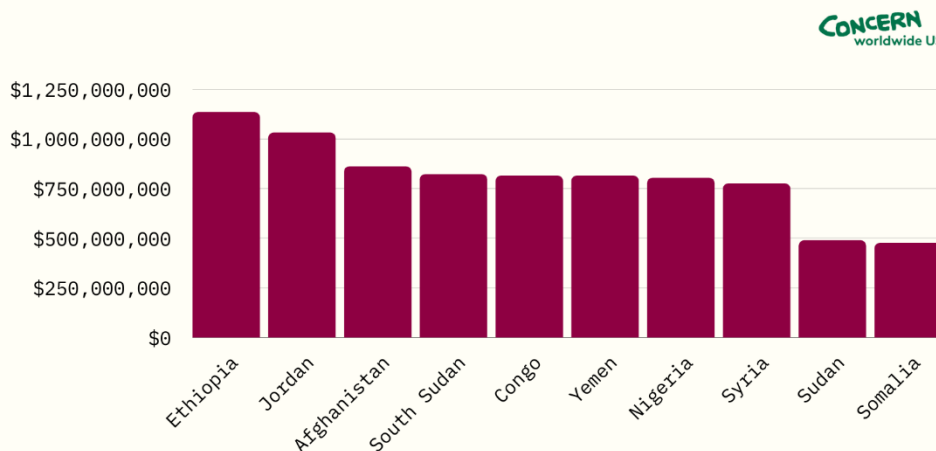
The US has more than a century of diplomatic relations with Ethiopia and has been helping the economic, health, education, and agricultural sectors by allocating billions of US dollars over the years as aid, grant, and loan. For example, regardless of the recent US sanctions, Concern Worldwide US indicated that Ethiopia was one of the top US aid recipients getting \$ 1.3 trillion in 2021 alone.

<sup>12</sup> "Ethiopia's Foreign Policy," *Ethiopian Foreign Policy* (blog), December 30, 2015, 3, <https://www.ethiopianforeignpolicy.com/ethiopias-foreign-policy/>.

<sup>13</sup> "Ibid."

## US Foreign Aid by Country: 2021

(\*PARTIALLY REPORTED AS OF FEBRUARY 2022)



Source: *Concern worldwide US*, 2022

However, the diplomatic relationship between the US and Ethiopia was a regional security partner during the cold war decades (1950-1989), where it had a military base in Asmara. The century-old diplomatic relationship has been at a crossroads since the end of 2020. Frustrated with the diplomatic efforts by its special envoys to bring the fighting parties to negotiations, the Biden administration withdrew some economic and technical assistance to the Ethiopian government. Accordingly, the US government paused \$272 million in budgetary and security support to the Ethiopian government linked to the deadly conflict in the Tigray region. According to the State Department, the aid withheld may affect \$23 million in security assistance and \$249 million in developmental support for health, economy, education, and democratization. However, the Biden administration de-links President Trump's previous \$ 130 million aid cut aimed at the Nile dam dispute with Egypt and Sudan. The aid cut is another big blow to the country relying on foreign aid and loans for its 50% annual budget. The long-due diplomatic relationship between Ethiopia and the US further culminated when the latter threatened to impose visa sanctions on the parties involved in human rights violations in the civil war, including the Ethiopian government authorities. The US placed the sanctions as the executive and public law (statutes) ordered executions.

President Biden signed an Executive Order (EO) NO 14046 targeting individuals and groups responsible for crimes, human rights violations, and obstruction of humanitarian aid. The EO 14046 authorizes the US Treasury Department and Department of State to impose sanctions on parties, military and security forces, government, and non-government entities involved in actions that threaten Ethiopia's peace and stability, human rights abuses, and violations of international humanitarian law.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the sanctions apply to the spouses and adult children of compliant authorities and individuals. The sanctioned personalities and entities would face complete blockage through Specially Designated National (SDN). Moreover, blocking properties in the US and interests related to the properties of sanctioned persons, prohibitions on investment and purchase of debts of sanctioned persons, abstracting the US financial institutions from making loans, and obstructing foreign exchanges in US jurisdiction in which sanctioned persons have interests.

The US also set defense trade restrictions on its once close partner in fighting international terrorism and beneficiary of its latest military technologies. Ethiopia is one of the top security training and financial assistance receivers from the US and other Western countries.

<sup>14</sup> "United States: US Government Imposes Economic Sanctions on Ethiopia Targeting Certain Individuals; DDTC Announces Addition of Ethiopia to List of Countries Subject to Arms Embargo," Global Compliance News, October 30, 2021, <https://www.globalcompliancencnews.com/2021/10/30/us-government-imposes-economic-sanctions-on-ethiopia-targeting-certain-individuals-ddtc-announces-addition-of-ethiopia-to-list-of-countries-subject-to-arms-emargo-21102021/>.



The US also urged other partners in the West to follow in its footsteps in banning defense trade with Ethiopia. Furthermore, the US government blocked Ethiopia from African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) in January 2022. AGOA is the basis of the US commercial relationship with Africa and was signed by President Clinton in 2000. Its eligibility is based on the domestic policy of a beneficial country; mainly, it is granted to encourage African countries to adopt democracy and a market-based economy. Specific criteria include adherence to the rule of law and political pluralism and eliminating barriers to the US trade and investment policy abroad.<sup>15</sup>

Ethiopia was one of the beneficial countries of AGOA, exporting duty-free products such as textiles, apparel, artifacts, and agricultural products. However, there have been criticisms for having a low export share compared to other East African countries. For example, Kenya has benefited from the treaty exporting 98% of its quota in 2020, compared to Ethiopia, with doubled its size and only met 81% of its target.<sup>16</sup>

The table below indicates the value of duty-free commodities Ethiopia exported to the US from 2015 to 2021.<sup>17</sup>

| YEAR        | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | 2018   | 2019   | 2020   | 2021   |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| \$ Millions | 48.07 | 69.02 | 92.94 | 159.05 | 247.68 | 245.58 | 276.68 |

According to data from the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Union, more than 200,000 direct jobs and more than one million indirect jobs have been affected by Ethiopia being banned from AGOA since January 2022. The office indicates that 80% of the direct beneficiaries working in the industrial parks sending duty-free goods and products to the US are young women.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, Ethiopia's removal from AGOA would affect the livelihood of thousands of employees and the country's effort to extricate poverty by creating jobs for youth. Regardless of the criticism saying the country had been benefiting from AGOA, under the iron fists of TPLF for more than two decades, the US cited human rights violations and lack of political pluralism as the main reason to cut Ethiopia's AGOA benefits.

The US-led international community is looking for solutions to the civil war in Ethiopia, including calling for the UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions to stop the fight. For example, the US ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, asked the UNSC to meet publicly on Ethiopia's civil war. Greenfield asked the members of UNSC in public two striking questions, "What are we trying to hide? Do African lives not matter?" The UNSC has met several times formally and informally in Ethiopia since 2020. However, they could not reach a consensus because of the division between the permanent members. The US, UK, and France are on one side and pushed for a UNSC firm resolution to stop the civil war in Ethiopia. On the other side, China and Russia opposed the Western stand claiming it is the internal affairs of Ethiopia, therefore, against international law to interfere. The US Department of State (USDS) coordinated the G7 foreign ministers' call upon all parties involved in human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law in Ethiopia to refrain. The G7 also asked for the unconditional withdrawal of Eritrean forces from the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

The US House and foreign affairs committee voted to advance bipartisan legislation that would impose tough sanctions on parties that undermined an inclusive negotiated settlement in Ethiopia, committed gross human rights violations, attacked the UN staff, and hindered humanitarian aid. The legislation would further ask the US President to push international financial institutions such as World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to block loans to Ethiopia. The US recently established Development Finance Corporation (USDFC) to help private sector investment in geothermal, telecom, and logistics. The legislation requires president Biden to cut the fund to \$5 billion in a few years, and if so, it will be a significant setback to Ethiopia.

<sup>15</sup> Mamo Mihretu, "Do not Remove Ethiopia's AGOA Trade Privileges," *Foreign Policy* (blog), accessed July 4, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/10/13/ethiopia-agoa-trade-biden-abi-dont-remove-eligibility/>.

<sup>16</sup> "Ethiopia among Leading Countries in Benefits of AGOA Treaty," *Welcome to Fana Broadcasting Corporate SC* (blog), 1, accessed July 3, 2022, <https://www.fanabc.com/english/ethiopia-among-leading-countries-in-benefits-of-agoa-treaty/>.

<sup>17</sup> "AGOA+GSP Trade - Agoa.Info - African Growth and Opportunity Act," accessed July 3, 2022, <https://agoa.info/data/trade.html>.

<sup>18</sup> V. O. A. News, "In Ethiopia, Guinea, and Mali, Fears Rise Over Losing Duty-Free Access to US Market," VOA, accessed July 3, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/in-ethiopia-guinea-and-mali-fears-rise-over-losing-duty-free-access-to-us-market/6405813.html>.



ii) **Ethiopia's Diplomacy with the EU**

The EU has also been a key diplomatic partner to Ethiopia in economic, security, refugee control, and other aspects. For example, the EU and Ethiopia signed strategic engagement cooperation in regional peace and security, trade and investment, and migration and forced displacement in 2016. EU has been Ethiopia's most significant donor in aid volume and development assistance. For example, the EU announced humanitarian assistance of about 80 million euros in the education and health sectors in 2022. Ethiopia also received 815 million euros in development funds from the commission from 2014-2020. The following National Indicative Program for Ethiopia (NIPE) from 2014-2020 indicates the sectors prioritized by the EU with the development fund.<sup>19</sup>

Table two: Ethiopia National Indicative Program 2014-2020, by focal areas

| Number | Focal areas                               | EUR in Millions | Percentage |
|--------|---|-----------------|------------|
| 1      | Sustainable agriculture and food security | EUR 252.4       | 33.9%      |
| 2      | Health                                    | EUR 200.00      | 26.8%      |
| 3      | Energy and infrastructure                 | EUR 230.00      | 30.9%      |
| 4      | Democracy and good governance             | EUR 52.00       | 7.0%       |
| 5      | Support measures                          | 10.60           | 1.4%       |
| Total  |   | EUR 745.00      | 100%       |

In addition to the NIP, the EU allocates 257.5 million euros to Emergency Trust Fund (EUETF) from 2015-2018. The EU's humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia reached 381 million euros from 2014-2018. The EU plans to assist Ethiopia sustainably in human development, climate change, sustainable energy, governance, and peacebuilding.

EU has been working to end the humanitarian crises related to Ethiopia's civil war from the beginning. It expressed concerns about human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed by the security forces from both sides involved in the civil war. Therefore, the EU appointed a special mission to the Horn to address the circumstances. Ethiopia's commercial diplomacy mainly targets developmental assistance by developed countries, mostly in the EU, foreign direct investments, international trade, loans and grants by international institutions and nations, and technology transfers.

Like the US, the EU also cut off developmental and budgetary support for Ethiopia in late 2020. Diplomatic trouble between the EU and Ethiopia affected the developmental and fiscal assistance, indicating the failure of hard-built Ethiopian diplomacy. For example, the EU withheld 142 million euros from the budgetary assistance funds allocated to the country from 2014 to 2020. Even though the commission recently approved 81.5 million euros, mainly for health and education in conflict affect areas, the assistance is not directly released to the Ethiopian government. The EU expressed the amount as a portion of the one billion euros allocated to the country as MIP. The EU indicated the release is to encourage the Ethiopian government to improve humanitarian access, cease hostility, and ensure accountability for human rights violations. However, Joseph Borrell, the EU's foreign affairs high representative, firmly expressed that the relationship between Ethiopia and the EU would not be normalized until the Ethiopian government fulfilled the conditions above.

In general, the US and the EU's withholding of developmental and budgetary assistance, the US sanction on Ethiopian and Eritrean authorities, and the recent EU's decision to partially release developmental aid through the UN agencies, NGOs, and civic organizations indicate the diplomatic failure of the Ethiopian government lead by Abiy Ahmed. For a given government, there is no diplomatic fiasco than being treated as non-trustworthy by external donors for the development of its country.

The Ethiopian government and its supporters have been claiming that the West is using the Tigray crisis to create a submissive Ethiopia to contain the Chinese influence in the region. Some people in the government also accused the West of sabotaging to replace of the Abiy administration with TPLF.

<sup>19</sup> Vince Chadwick //June 18, 2021, "EU Teases Ethiopia Aid Plans amid Budget Support Freeze," Devex, June 18, 2021, <https://www.devex.com/news/sponsored/eu-teases-ethiopia-aid-plans-amid-budget-support-freeze-100180>.

Conspiracy theory maintains that if Ethiopia is not checked, it will become one of Africa and the world's superpowers, which would threaten its global hegemony. However, no tangible evidence shows that the US and the EU have been working to bring TPLF to power by deposing the Abiy government. The former US special envoy to the Horn of Africa, Jeffery Feltman, explained that the US strongly opposed the TPLF's move to siege Addis Ababa and overthrow Abiy to take power forcefully. According to Feltman, the true intention of the US and its western allies is mediation to encourage open dialogue. Feltman also falsified the claim of the intent to contain the Chinese move to control the region.

Any rational person cannot support starvation as a weapon, allowing foreign forces to commit crimes against humanity and their citizens, a country's government, and destroy hard-earned infrastructures and institutions. Reactions on international media, social media, and continuous protests by diaspora communities justify the calls and measures taken by the West. Therefore, most Ethiopians opposed the war and the internal cause of the war, which was wrapping up the multinational federation and moving back to a strong centralized government. But the Ethiopian nationalists in the diaspora supported this war directly or indirectly.

#### 4.2. Ethiopia's Diplomacy with the East

The pressure from the West and the UN forced Ethiopia to orient or focus its diplomatic relations toward authoritarian regimes with no positive records regarding democratic and human rights. The dynamic change in international diplomacy and global geopolitical rivalry between the West and East complicates the civil war in Ethiopia. Therefore, the diplomatic essential "Us and Them" game, as indicated by Carne Ross in the *Independent Diplomacy*, manifested itself in Ethiopia's case. The essentializing happened as the US, UK, and France organized on one side to defend international human rights laws and violations against human dignity, and China and Russia opposed others' intervention into the internal affairs of a sovereign state.<sup>20</sup> China, Russia, and the other non-democratic states defended the Ethiopian federal government's law enforcement claim during the beginning of the civil war in Tigray. The African countries and AU did not condemn the Ethiopian war in Tigray either.

Essentializing the case, China and Russia vetoed the UN security council's proposal to call on Ethiopia to end the civil war and defended the government's actions based on the principle of not interfering in a sovereign state's internal affairs. Consequently, the West's pressure to exert the Ethiopian government to negotiate with TPLF and others did not work as expected. Oddly, Ethiopia ignored the Western influences with total confidence in China, Russia, and other authoritarian states for economic, political, military, and diplomatic interests. In line with this, Abiy keeps buying artillery, including drones, from non-democratic states, including Turkey (which claims to be a democracy), UAE, Iran, China, and Russia.

Ethiopia is recently striving to upgrade its diplomatic, economic, and trade relations with the East and turning its back on the West. China, for example, is the primary source of foreign direct investment in Ethiopia and massively upgrades Ethiopia's infrastructures to realize its international belts and roads project. The Ethiopian authorities confidently supported China, whose direct investment in Ethiopia reached \$4 billion. China restructured its debt to Ethiopia to bail out the struggling economy. Furthermore, Chinese bilateral trade with Ethiopia reached \$5.4 billion, with a significant trade deficit on the Ethiopian side. Nevertheless, they cannot turn their back on international financial institutions controlled by the USA and EU, on which the country heavily relies for the continuities of its fragile economy.

Ethiopia also signed military agreements, including nuclear power deals with Russia, after Abiy Ahmed came to power. The military support from Russia enabled Abiy to resist the Western push for a peaceful resolution to the civil war. Russia also helped Abiy Ahmed maintain diplomatic dispensations in the UN, regardless of his forces' violation of international human rights declarations. Therefore, it sheds water for those who perceive the Ethiopian civil war as a proxy war between the West and the East. Dancing with the authoritarian regimes would benefit Abiy to withstand Western pressures in the short term. However, due to autocratic regimes' unstable and dishonest nature, they cannot be sustainable diplomatic partners to Ethiopia.

<sup>20</sup> Carne Ross, *Independent Diplomat: Dispatches from an Unaccountable Elite*, Illustrated edition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 53–70.

UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran have geopolitical interests in the Horn of Africa. UAE and Saudi Arabia supported the government of Abiy Ahmed, donating millions of dollars to contain the dominance of Iran and Turkey in the Horn of Africa. For example, UAE provided modern military equipment to Ethiopia in 2021.

However, Turkey has already occupied an unshakable position in Ethiopia, becoming the second biggest investor in Ethiopia next to China. Turkish textile companies occupy most of the industrial parks built over the last ten years. According to Al-Haram online, 200 Turkish companies operating in different sectors in Ethiopia have opened more than 20,000 job opportunities for Ethiopians.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Turkey provided war drones for the Ethiopian government that turned the battlefield in favor of Abiy Ahmed in 2021.

Regardless of the criticism from the West, the Ethiopian government scaled up its partnership with the autocrats signing a military agreement with China, Russia, and Turkey. While promoting commercial diplomacy, it is unwise to ignore the diplomatic relationship with the West, which has been assisting the country's economic development, infrastructural building, and substantial trade relationships. The global dynamics in diplomacy that cause significant interdependency among states complicate the nature of the violence in Ethiopia and identify the players to be addressed to overcome the problem. According to Leguey, due to the deepening nature of interdependence, nation-states could not solve some of their internal issues without the involvement of other states or international institutions such as the UN.<sup>22</sup>

#### **4.3. Ethiopia's diplomacy with Neighboring countries**

Ethiopia used to consider its neighbors as the enemy during the military regime. However, it built good diplomatic relations with most of them based on mutual benefits and a win-win approach over the last 30 years, except in Eritrea. Consequently, it exchanged economic cooperation, peace initiatives, and disaster early warning information with most of them. Ethiopia has a hegemonic diplomatic position in the continent as the headquarters of the AU and ECA. It influenced regional peace and security through IGAD and several regional military establishments. It had a dominant role in resolving the conflicts in Somalia and South Sudan. Ethiopia is also a member of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), with a strategic location to connect the member states and another world and a vast consumer market.

Furthermore, having military strength, Ethiopia has been playing a pivotal role in the peace and security of the Horn of Africa region. It played an immense role in stabilizing Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan during the recent transition. However, due to the ongoing civil war, those reputations have dwindled regionally and internationally. Inviting the Eritrean military into the internal affairs of Ethiopia aborted the diplomatic efforts to improve the relationship between the two countries, for which Prime Minister Abiy got Nobel Peace Prize. It became clear that Abiy devised a rapprochement with Eritrea to curtail TPLF; the powerful party divorced from the other members of EPRDF after the transition. TPLF is an enemy of the Eritrean government.

Eritrea's involvement complicated the civil war in Ethiopia. Eritrean autocratic leader, Isaias Afwerki, has a long-term ambition to become a regional hegemon by weakening Ethiopia. He caused instability in the Horn of Africa by playing the other countries in the region against each other. Ironically, Abiy was trapped by Isaias's ambition and allowed Eritrean mercenaries into Tigray, Ethiopia's sovereign state. Consequently, brutal Eritrean forces committed countless atrocities on Ethiopians and damaged the country's diplomatic reputation.<sup>23</sup> Regardless of the pressure from the international community, the Eritrean forces are still in west Tigray alongside the Ethiopian national army and Amhara special forces. The implication is that the repressive Eritrean leader is not satisfied with the atrocities his forces committed in Tigray and other parts of Ethiopia. Therefore, Eritrea is one of the main external forces fueling the civil war in Ethiopia and destabilizing the wider Horn of Africa region.

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<sup>21</sup> "Ethiopia's Brittle Diplomacy - World - Al-Ahram Weekly," Ahram Online, accessed July 31, 2022, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/50/1203/422184/AlAhram-Weekly/World/Ethiopias-Brittle-diplomacy.aspx>.

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Robert Leguey-Feilleux, *The Dynamics Of Diplomacy*, New ed. edition (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pub, 2008), 57–60.

<sup>23</sup> "UN: Ethiopia and Eritrea Troops behind Possible War Crimes in Tigray," accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.trtworld.com/africa/un-ethiopia-and-eritrea-troops-behind-possible-war-crimes-in-tigray-44721>.

Ethiopia is a Pan-Africanist country that supported many African anti-colonial and anti-apartheid movements. It helped the freedom movements in the continent by providing military training, material assistance, and, more importantly, diplomatically pushing for their independence. Furthermore, the country represented Africa on different international stages, including global climate change meetings, G20, G8, and China-Africa cooperation.

Therefore, those efforts-built Ethiopia's reputation as a trustworthy mediator in the continent and actively participated in UN peacekeeping missions. For example, Ethiopia played a crucial role in indicting the apartheid government of South Africa in the international court of justice. In the Horn of Africa region, it had a vital role in South Sudan's birth as a country seceding from North Sudan. The Ethiopian government also played a critical role in defusing the clash between the president and the deputy president of South Sudan, which turned into civil war and claimed many civilians' lives. Abiy also played an immense role in bringing the civilian and military leaders of North Sudan to chart a transitional roadmap towards democracy after ousting the long-time dictator Al-Bashir.

However, Ethiopia is quickly losing its diplomatic reputation, acceptance, capacity, and institutions after the self-destructive civil war in Tigray. Logically, no country can trust a leadership that cannot resolve the internal conflicts of its government and invites foreign security apparatus to massacre its citizens. Regardless of Abiy's offer to mediate Sudan's tension between the civilian and military rulers, the Sudanese side declined the request because the diplomatic reputation of Ethiopia is going down the slope. Furthermore, Sudan asked the UN to withdraw Ethiopia's peacekeeping mission in the contested Abiy region between Sudan and South Sudan.

Ethiopia has an undelimited border with most of its neighbors and consequently fought several border wars in the last half a century. Since mid-June 2020, Ethiopian and Sudanese security forces have repeatedly clashed over the disputed Al-Fashiga triangle border. The Sudanese military forcefully occupied most of the disputed fertile farmland after Ethiopia's security forces moved to contain the internal security unrest, including the civil war in the Tigray region. Sudan seized the momentum to regain the fertile farmland occupied by Ethiopian farmers when Ethiopia was internally weak and diplomatically lost its strong western allies due to the civil war.

Egypt is another strong player in the region and is nervous about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Nile river. Egypt has claimed that the GERD would squeeze its downstream water share. Therefore, it elevated the matter by inviting the UNSC and the US as a mediator after years of tripartite negotiations with Ethiopia and Sudan. Regarding GERD, Abiy committed another diplomatic blunder when he had a side talk with Egyptian president Al-Sisi, during the Russia-Africa summit in Sochi, Russia. Abiy accepted Al-Sisi's request to involve the US as a mediator without consulting with experts from the ministries of foreign affairs and water and irrigation. Indeed, Abiy offended the US, which is long-term Ethiopia's economic, diplomatic, and security ally, by declining its proposals after accepting the mediations. Ethiopian elites resisted the US proposal and pushed Abiy to retreat from accepting the US proposal regarding GERD. Consequently, the offended Trump administration cut \$130 million of Ethiopia's developmental assistance. Furthermore, President Trump indicated that Egypt would blast the dam, and the Ethiopian government took the comment as provocative, unfriendly, and discriminatory against Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian government accuses Egypt of supporting the rebels to destabilize the country. Egypt capitalized on the diplomatic blunder of the Ethiopian government. While Abiy's administration misplaced its priority on the self-destructive internal civil war, Egypt was working on strengthening diplomatic relations with countries in the East and Horn of Africa. Egypt recently signed security, intelligence, economic, and diplomatic agreements with Kenya, South Sudan, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, and the DRC. Furthermore, Egypt signed a military cooperation agreement with Sudan and conducted joint military training.

Furthermore, Egypt kept the diplomatic push calling the UNSC to abject Ethiopia's third filing of the GERD.<sup>24</sup> The misplacement of priority cost Ethiopia its regional diplomatic hegemony and made it a vulnerable state that invited the foreign military to retain its internal security.

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<sup>24</sup> "Egypt Rejects Ethiopia's Continued Filling of Nile Dam | CGTN Africa," accessed August 24, 2022, <https://africa.cgtn.com/2022/07/30/egypt-rejects-ethiopias-continued-filling-of-nile-dam/>.

Having a geostrategic position in the region, Kenya received international attention as an alternative diplomatic hub that could replace Ethiopia's role. Once the regional diplomatic hegemony, Ethiopia currently turned international pariah, running after Eritrea.

Facing mounting diplomatic hurdles from long-time allies, Abiy has been striving to grasp diplomatic support from African countries. Ethiopia sent shuttle diplomats to neighboring countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, and Somalia to get diplomatic help against the Tigray war in 2020. Consequently, some loyal African leaders blocked the African Union's proposal to discuss Ethiopia's civil war crisis on emergency bases.

The effort of AU's special envoy, Olusegun Obasanjo, did not bear the expected outcomes because of the hurdles from some African leaders convinced by Ethiopia's propaganda blaming the West for an attempt to colonize Africa indirectly. As the isolation mounts, Abiy himself visited Uganda, Rwanda, Ghana, and Senegal, in 2021. However, Ethiopia's diplomatic weight has deteriorated significantly over the last two years.

## 5) **CONCLUSION**

Ethiopia is the oldest independent country having over a century of diplomatic reputation in Africa and internationally. Until the civil war broke out, Ethiopia was one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. The World Bank (WB) data shows Ethiopia's economy grew by 9 % yearly for about a decade until 2020. However, the war and subsequent diplomatic calamities isolated the country regionally, continentally, and internationally. Ethiopia's bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations with many countries and international institutions have been severely affected over the last two years. Subsequently, the cuts in budgetary and developmental assistance, sanctions, and diminished foreign direct investment battered the country's economy.

Nonetheless, the civil war in Ethiopia is not a direct proxy war between the East (China and Russia) and the West (EU, UK, and the US); a change in geopolitical dynamism causes the indirect confrontation between the two sides in the region. Consequently, the pressure from the West, and the UN, on the Ethiopian government is less effective due to the authoritarian states' military, financial, and diplomatic support to the regime. Changes in the world dynamics, for example, deepening Chinese influence in Africa, Russia's confrontation with the West on Ukraine, and the emergence of new powers with multiple interests, would affect the course of African politics. For example, Abiy's nonalignment to the democratic West and preference for international dictators would affect the hope of Ethiopians to transform into democracy. Indeed, the precedent encourages other African leaders to envisage ruling their countries with an iron fist.

Ethiopia is too big to collapse for its 110 million population and the international community. The government of Abiy Ahmed is not in a position to solve the calamities peacefully, and other wars and bloodshed are imminent unless the international community intervenes. Therefore, the peace and reconciliation commission Abiy appointed and ratified by rubberstamped parliament is a joke. The UN, regional governments, and the international community must support the mediation process started by AU's special envoy to save Ethiopia. Regardless of the multitude of foreign interests, no military solution can benefit the internal and external actors in the conflict.

The win-win solution that can maximize the outcome for Ethiopia and the international actors is resolving the crises through negotiations. Diplomacy is the only way out of the trouble for Ethiopia. According to Berridge, negotiation can succeed if the parties have a common interest; the worst scenario is apparent if there is no negotiation, and a win-win solution is possible.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the parties in Ethiopia's civil war fulfill the above pre-conditions for negotiating. First, saving the country's lives of citizens and the economy is beneficial for all of them. Second, if the war continues, the possible consequences would be the country's disintegration, lawlessness, more bloodshed, and regional instability. Thirdly, the best way to overcome imminent crises is to have an all-inclusive and generous dialogue.

Ethiopia's diplomatic success in the last three decades is not only in the best interest of its citizens; it helped to realize the Horn region's peace and security. Therefore, the repercussion of failed Ethiopia would impact the political, security, and economic interests of the Horn of Africa and the rest of the world.

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<sup>25</sup> G. R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, 5th ed. 2015 edition (Houndmills, Basingstoke ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 29.

Accordingly, the foreign powers that have interests in Ethiopia should act together in putting pressure or incentivizing the conflicting parties to negotiate. For the talks to be meaningful, long-lasting, and credible, the Ethiopian government should accept the participation of all political forces, including OLA, labeled terrorists by the Ethiopian parliament. Unlike Eritrea, diplomatically isolated and economically weakened Ethiopia threatens not only its citizens but also its neighbors, the region, the continent of Africa, and the world. Therefore, the international community should keep pressing Abiy and Esaias to withdraw Eritrean forces from Ethiopia.

Ethiopia built robust diplomatic relations with countries along the Nile basin and managed to get the support of most of the upstream countries in building GERD. However, now, there is a balance shift towards Egypt, encircling Ethiopia and taking advantage of its internal weakness. For the international community, it is challenging to accommodate refugees from such a big country, control illegal transactions, and sustain the 110 million population with international aid. For example, more than 50 000 refugees entered Sudan during the beginning of the civil war, and the number is expected to increase if the war continues. Kenya also expressed concern about being overflowed by refugees from war-torn Ethiopia. Furthermore, the region will automatically become fertile ground for international terrorists if Ethiopia fails as a state.

Generally, the war significantly impacted Ethiopia's diplomatic influence and acceptance regionally, continentally, and internationally over the last three years. The manifestations include; a diminishing diplomatic relationship with the traditional diplomatic partners in the West that triggered a cut in the budgetary and developmental assistance to the country. The unusual US sanctions on indicted political and military officials, including their family members, indicate how worse Ethiopia's diplomacy has gone. The country's regional diplomatic hegemony as stabilizing force was flattered due to prime minister Abiy's blunder in priority choice. Furthermore, the government's decision to close 30 embassies and consulates indicate the country's diplomatic disaster. Indeed, the government would have benefited from opening more diplomatic corps than closing the existing ones during this challenging time.

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