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From Security Provider to a Security Risk? The Abrupt Withdrawal of Ethiopia's a Decade-Long Peacekeeping Mission in UNISFA

Abstract

This paper aims to offer an overview of a unique and decade-long Ethiopian peacekeeping deployment in Abyei, where Ethiopian contingents comprise almost the entire force, where the deployment ended in an ungraceful manner because of disapproval from the government of Sudan. The paper reveals that the Tigray conflict which resulted in the desertion of the Ethiopian peacekeepers and Egyptian pressure on Sudan because of the GERD have contributed to the withdrawal of Ethiopian peacekeepers and the Ethiopia–Sudan border dispute brought a dark shadow on their relations in addition to the disruption of the peacekeeping deployment. The paper concludes that unless Ethiopia makes a progress on internal stability and reboots its relations with its neighbours, Ethiopia's role as a peace mediator and peacekeeper in the region becomes an ignominy.

Keywords: *Abyei, Ethiopia, peacekeeping, South Sudan, Sudan, UNISFA*

Introduction

Ethiopia has been participating actively in UN peacekeeping missions since the 1950s up to now. The reasons were based on the sending regime's intention, the nature of the armed forces and the focus area of the deployment. The Imperial Ethiopian Government under Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930–1974) sent peacekeeping troops to Korea, Congo, and to the contested region of Jammu and Kashmir of India and Pakistan. The socialist military regime (1974–1991) did not participate in any peacekeeping missions at all. The post-1991 Ethiopian Government mostly focusing on peacekeeping

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missions in Africa contributed peacekeepers to Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and also in Haiti and Yemen. Lastly, the new reformist government, which came to power in 2018, has made no policy change from the aforementioned regime towards participating in peacekeeping missions.

The Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) therefore acquired a paramount peacekeeping capability with the regional standard in training and experience gained through previous international peacekeeping deployments. This resulted for Ethiopia to play an important role in regional stability as the prevalent contributor to UN and AU peacekeeping missions especially in Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.² Even though Ethiopia's military (peacekeeping) and peace mediating role is not without criticisms it became "a formidable force for peace, security, and stability in the Horn of Africa, and in Africa in general".³ This is especially true concerning Ethiopia's interventionist role in Somalia.⁴ Ethiopia's first unilateral action in Somalia was in 1995 to remove the Islamic insurgent, Al-Ittihad Al-Islamiya (AIAI). In 1998 Ethiopia launched a second military intervention at the time of the Ethiopia–Eritrea war, following Eritrea's effort – in collaboration with a Baidoa-based Somali warlord Hussein Aideed and involving the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) to open a second front.⁵ Ethiopia's third intervention was in 2006, against the threat from the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and supporting the Somali Transitional Federal Government. Lastly, Ethiopia joined AMISOM in 2014, simultaneously deploying troops outside the AMISOM command to support its troops under AMISOM.

Likewise, Ethiopia has been a part of the peacekeeping missions in Sudan and South Sudan for more than a decade. Ethiopia contributed police personnel for the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) from 2005 until the independence of South Sudan in 2011. It is also a part of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), which is still optional since 2011. Since joining in 2014 Ethiopia has contributed around 2,000 troops to UNMISS making it one of the top five largest contributor.⁶ It also contributed around 20,000 mainly continent troops, in different rotations for the African Union – United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), (2007–2020) in Sudan.⁷ Moreover, Ethiopia contributed the entire contingent troops to the United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA), at the disputed border region between South Sudan and Sudan, which is the focus of this paper and discussed below. All missions make Ethiopia a 'security provider' in most of the

² Christopher Clapham: *The Horn of Africa. State Formation and Decay*. London, Hurst & Company, 2017. 179.

³ Tekeda Alemu: The Conundrum of Present Ethiopian Foreign Policy. In Search of a Roadmap for Ethiopia's Foreign and National Security Policy and Strategy. CDRC, January 2019.

⁴ Debora V. Malito: *The Persistence of State Disintegration in Somalia Between Regional and Global Intervention*. Doctoral Thesis. Università degli studi di Milano, 2013.

⁵ Abdeta D. Beyene – Seyoum Mesfin: The Practicalities of Living with Failed States. *Dædalus*, 147, no. 1 (2018). 129.

⁶ United Nations: UNMISS Factsheet. United Nations, 10 June 2022.

⁷ Kaleab T. Sigatu: *Military Power as Foreign Policy Instrument: Post-1991 Ethiopian Peace Support Operations in the Horn of Africa*. PhD Dissertation in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Military Sciences. Budapest, University of Public Service, Doctoral School of Military Sciences, 2021.

conflict region in the African continent, which is compounded by intra-regional and international intervention.⁸

South Sudan and Sudan and the conflict over Abyei

The north–south conflict in Sudan was between the mostly desert, largely Muslim and culturally Arabic North Sudan and the tropical, largely Christian or animist and culturally sub-Saharan Southern Sudan. The first Sudanese civil war happened between 1955 and 1972; it begins before the independence of Sudan from the Anglo–Egyptian colony and ended at the signing of the Addis Ababa Accord, an agreement that gave Southern Sudan autonomy, signed in Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia. However, in 1983, the government enforced Shari'a law on the south when President Nimeiry declared all Sudan an Islamic state, terminating the autonomous status of Southern Sudan, which triggered the second Sudanese civil war.⁹ It was the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005 that ended the civil war.

The CPA was signed between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/SPLA) after having continuous negotiations since 2002 under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the government of Kenya.¹⁰ The CPA established a six-year interim period during which the southern Sudanese will have the right to govern affairs in their region; one of the major agreements of the CPA was the fact that Southern Sudan will have the right to vote for the referendum. The other CPA agreement was the resolution of the contested border region of Abyei, which gave Abyei special administrative status during the interim period. At the end of the six-year interim period, Abyei residents will vote in a referendum either to maintain special administrative status in the north or to become part of the south. The government of Sudan and SPLM/SPLA also agreed to share oil revenues from Abyei, to be split between the north and south with small percentages of revenues allocated to other states and ethnic groups.¹¹

Consequently, South Sudan separated from northern Sudan and became an independent state after six years as per the agreement of the CPA on 9 July 2011. However, the demarcation of the border of the oil-rich Abyei region between South Sudan and Sudan became contentious because both states claimed it their own territory.¹² In addition, the South Sudanese referendum did not take place in

⁸ Redie Bereketeab: Introduction. In Redie Bereketeab (ed.): *The Horn of Africa. Intra-State and Inter-State Conflicts and Security*. London, Pluto Press, 2013. 3.

⁹ John R. Crook: Introductory Note to the Government of Sudan and the South Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army Abyei Arbitration Award. *International Legal Materials*, 48, no. 6 (2009). 1254.

¹⁰ Marina Ottaway – Amr Hamzawy: The Comprehensive Peace Agreement. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 04 January 2011.

¹¹ Crook (2009): op. cit. 1257.

¹² Crook (2009): op. cit. 1257.

Abyei because both sides failed to put it into practice, as they could not agree who was eligible to vote.¹³

Political scientists argue that there is the likelihood of conflict between the secessionist or newly established and the former 'mother' state or rump on the territorial issue.¹⁴ This is true in the Horn of Africa in case of Ethiopia and Eritrea and Somaliland and Puntland/Somalia. When a territory of a state breaks away and becomes an independent entity, the new land boundaries that emerge are often violently contested.

Jaroslav Tir in his study on interstate relations especially territorial disagreement between rump and secessionist states after a separation, put his argument as follows:

Through the secession, the rump state has lost some of the territories it previously controlled to the secessionist state and may want a portion or all of it back. Conversely, the secessionist state may not be satisfied with how much land it has received and may desire even more of the rump state's land. Finally, the secessionist state may set its sights on another secessionist state's territory.

Land's strategic value arises from its characteristics and/or location. Losing a high ground or an impenetrable swamp or desert may make the country easier to invade and thus undermine its defensive ability. Losing a piece of land containing resources such as ore deposits, ports, and so on undermines the rump state's economic, and, by extension, military, capability. The desire of countries to pursue power is one of the cornerstones of the realist school of thought, and at least some realists view the role of territorial control as crucial to a state's power.¹⁵

On the other hand, resource-related conflicts rose because of the geographical location of the resource. Anderson and Browne argue that the vast majority of the most significant oil fields so far identified in the Horn of Africa lie in troubled border areas and disputed territories. In addition to the case of this study, Abyei, the Ilemi Triangle and northern Kenya, the Lake Albert basin, the Ogaden and the Sool region between Somaliland and Puntland are unresolved international disputes.¹⁶

In the case of Abyei, the indigenous populations are the Ngok Dinka who supported the south Sudanese rebels during the civil war (1983–2005). However, every year Northern Misseriya pastoralists, who are aligned with Khartoum, migrate to Abyei in search of pasture. This migration and sharing of land and pasture created conflict between the two communities over scarce resources.¹⁷ The root causes of the Abyei conflict go back to the early 1900s, when the people of Ngok Dinka were transferred in 1905 by British colonial authorities from Bahr el Ghazal to Kordofan (a northern

¹³ Nadia Sarwar: Post-Independence South Sudan: An Era of Hope and Challenges. *Strategic Studies*, 32, nos. 2–3 (2012), 177.

¹⁴ Sophia L. R. Dawkins – Bart L. Smit Duijzentkunst: Stable and Final? Arbitration of Land Boundary Disputes in Cases of State Secession. *Proceedings of the ASIL Annual Meeting*, 106 (2012), 143–146.

¹⁵ Jaroslav Tir: Keeping the Peace after Secession: Territorial Conflicts between Rump and Secessionist States. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 49, no. 5 (2005), 717.

¹⁶ David M. Anderson – Adrian J. Browne: The Politics of Oil in Eastern Africa. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 5, no. 2 (2011), 395.

¹⁷ Amira A. Osman: Conflict over Scarce Resources and Identity: The case of Abyei, Sudan. In Ulf Johansson Dahre (ed.): *Resources, Peace and Conflict in the Horn of Africa. A Report on the 12th Horn of Africa Conference*. Lund, Sweden, 23–25 August 2013. 250.

province) for administrative reasons.¹⁸ During the first civil war that erupted in Southern Sudan in 1955, the people of the Abyei area joined the Southern resistance movement known as “Anyanya” with the aim of returning the administration of Abyei back to Southern Sudan.¹⁹ Later, the governments of both Sudan and South Sudan became heavily involved in the Abyei conflict, fighting to control oil fields in the area.

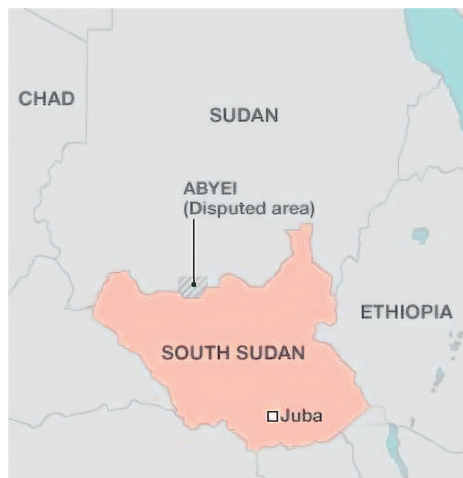


Figure 1: South Sudan, Sudan and the contested area of Abyei
Source: Sudan Tribune (2022b): op. cit.

The Abyei region is referred by some as “an area which had been a symbol of peaceful coexistence and cooperation has become a point of confrontation and conflict that is both identity-based and resource-driven”.²⁰ Others say Abyei is “Sudan’s ‘Kashmir’”,²¹ and “a breaking point of Sudan’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement”.²² The Chief of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, Deng Majok said “the thread that stitches the north and south of Sudan together through Abyei”.²³

¹⁸ Luka B. Deng: Justice in Sudan: Will the Award of the International Abyei Arbitration Tribunal Be Honoured? *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 4, no. 2 (2010). 299.

¹⁹ Deng (2010): op. cit. 299.

²⁰ John Prendergast – Brian Adeba: Abyei: Sudan and South Sudan’s New Chance to Solve Old Disputes. *African Arguments*, 21 October 2019.

²¹ Roger Winter – John Prendergast: Abyei: Sudan’s ‘Kashmir’. *American Progress*, 29 January 2008.

²² Douglas H. Johnson: Why Abyei Matters. The Breaking Point of Sudan’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement? *African Affairs*, 107, no. 426 (2008). 1–19.

²³ Francis Deng: *The Man Called Deng Majok: A biography of power, polygyny, and change*. New Jersey, Yale University Press, 1986. 229.

United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA) and the Ethiopian Deployment

The Security Council passed a Resolution on 27 June 2011, based on the agreement between the government of Sudan and the SPLM on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area reached on 20 June 2011 in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. The 2011 resolution established UNISFA with the strength of 4,200 military personnel, 50 police personnel, and appropriate civilian support.²⁴ The resolution also pointed out that both the government of Sudan and the SPLM is requested for the assistance of the Ethiopian Government, which resulted in the exclusive responsibility of Ethiopian troops to monitor the area by contributing the leadership with both the head of mission and force commander for UNISFA.²⁵

The reason was that Sudan would not accept non-African troops and South Sudan had thus asked IGAD for additional mediation support, and the need for a third party to monitor the flashpoint border, troops from Ethiopia.²⁶ This can be considered a diplomatic success for Ethiopia to have smooth relations with both states and both accept Ethiopia's singular mono-nation mission to deploy its contingent.

The resolution decided the demilitarisation of the Abyei area except for forces other than UNISFA and the Abyei Police Service. At the beginning of the mission, as of August 2011, Ethiopia contributed a total of 1,707 personnel, 1,634 contingents and 73 experts on mission. At the beginning of the mission the total amount of personnel were 1,814; including Ethiopia only four countries contributed contingents: Egypt 11 officers, India 36 officers and Zambia 12 officers. This means Ethiopia contributed 97% of the total contingent.²⁷

UNISFA's deployment was on 22 July 2011, after one month of the authorisation of the mission. The UNSC Resolution 1990 also came out swiftly, three days after the conclusion of the Addis Agreement. Under normal circumstances, the deployment of peacekeeping missions takes a long time, as it requires convincing troop-contributing countries, mobilising resources required and deploying them on the ground.²⁸ However, in case of UNISFA, Ethiopia's contribution came swiftly. Osterrieder et al. describes the deployment as follows:

The deployment of troops for UNISFA took place significantly more quickly than is usually the case (with UN peacekeeping operations). Only one month after its authorization, almost 500 troops had been deployed to the Abyei region. Operations started on 8 August 2011, while patrols began at the end of August 2011. The fact that UNISFA troops were drawn from one country, Ethiopia, helps to explain this prompt deployment. Indeed, the Ethiopian troops were ready to be deployed even before the UN Security Council authorized the mission. The land route from Ethiopia to Abyei was used to transfer troops within a week. Some existing UNMIS facilities were also

²⁴ UN Security Council: Resolution 1990 (2011). *United Nations*, 27 June 2011.

²⁵ Sigatu (2021): op. cit.

²⁶ *Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Effort and Activities of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel on Sudan* (AU doc. PSC/PR/CCCI, 30 November 2011).

²⁷ United Nations: Troop and Police Contributors. *United Nations*, December 2018.

²⁸ Mehari Taddele M.: Keeping Peace in Abyei: The Role and Contributions of Ethiopia. *ISS Africa*, 28 October 2011.

used for UNISFA. The Ethiopian troops did not require the living standards normally necessary for UN missions. Temporary housing in tents was an efficient way to ensure the timely deployment of troops. Only a few months after its authorization, the UN Secretary General declared that the mission was "in a position to secure the Abyei area," and thus able to fulfill its mandate.²⁹

At the time, Ethiopian ongoing peacekeeping mission participation in both Sudan (Darfur) and South Sudan made the deployment prompt. In May 2013, the Security Council, by its resolution 2104, increased UNISFA's military strength up to 5,326 peacekeepers, requested by Sudan and South Sudan.³⁰ By the end of the year, 4,102 military personnel were deployed, 17 individual police, 129 experts on mission and 3,956 contingents. Ethiopia deployed 7 individual police, 78 experts on mission and 3,930 contingent troops. This means 99% of the contingents are from Ethiopia. Even though 20 countries contributed contingent troops, no state contributed more than two personnel.

In May 2018 Security Council Adopts Resolution 2416 (2018), extending the mandate of UNISFA in Abyei. It also decided to reduce UNISFA's authorised troop ceiling to 4,500 until 15 November 2018, and that as of 15 October 2018 that ceiling would decrease further to 3,959, unless the aforementioned mandate modifications were extended.³¹ However, the mission continued without the decline of size. As of December 2018, 100% of the contingent troops were from Ethiopia.

One of the main reasons Ethiopia took the initiative to deploy its troops to the disputed region right away, aside from the fact that Ethiopia has a long history of taking part in peacekeeping missions, was the fact that the negative effects of a full-fledged war between Sudan and South Sudan will not only be felt by the two countries, but also by the entire region, including Ethiopia. At the time, the Peace and Security Council of the AU acknowledged the Ethiopian Government for its effort in its communiqué in November 2011, as follows:

The Council also expresses its deep appreciation to the Government of Ethiopia, particularly Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Chair of IGAD, for its commitment and sustained efforts towards the promotion of peace and the resolution of the post-secession issues, including the speedy deployment of troops within the framework of the UNISFA.³²

Some experts argue that such peacekeeping involvement of a neighbouring state runs counter to a longstanding, although unwritten, principle that UN peacekeeping missions should seek to avoid deployment of troops or police from 'neighbours' in order to mitigate the risks associated with these countries' national interests in the host countries.³³ Moreover, in 1958, Hammarskjöld had warned about the dangers of deploying peacekeepers from states with direct interests in the conflict:

²⁹ Holger Osterrieder et al.: United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). In Joachim A. Koops et al. (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017. 821.

³⁰ UN Security Council: Resolution 2104 (2013). *United Nations*, 29 May 2013.

³¹ UN Security Council: Resolution 2416 (2018). *United Nations*, 15 May 2018.

³² African Union: Peace and Security Council 301st Meeting: Communiqué. *AU Peace and Security Council*, 30 November 2011.

³³ Paul D. Williams – Thong Nguyen: Neighborhood Dynamics in UN Peacekeeping Operations, 1990–2017. *International Peace Institute*, 11 April 2018.

In order to limit the scope of possible difference of opinion, the United Nations in recent operations has followed two principles: not to include units from any of the permanent members of the Security Council; and not to include units from any country which, because of its geographical position or for other reasons, might be considered as possibly having a special interest in the situation which has called for the operation.³⁴

However, UNISFA was able to manage effectively to keep the area of Abyei free from armed infiltration by Ngok Dinka activists, Misseriya cattle herders, or security forces from Sudan or South Sudan.³⁵ According to Osterrieder et al., the fact that Ethiopian troops understand the culture, local situation and the conflict helped them to accomplish the peacekeeping well. Moreover, it is simpler to coordinate missions with a single nation's military than it is to coordinate missions with numerous states that contribute forces.³⁶ Nevertheless, there has been much progress made on political mechanisms to determine the final status of Abyei, demilitarise, and demarcate the border.³⁷

Ethiopia's involvement in Abyei also emanates from its foreign policy. Ethiopia has a strong strategic interest in a peaceful coexistence of Sudan and South Sudan and in upholding its good relationship with both countries. Instability in Sudan and South Sudan and the possibility of renewed conflict between the two states pose a threat to Ethiopia's national security. Ethiopia also has economic interests in natural resources in Sudan and South Sudan. Ethiopia has been trying hard not to be involved in the internal affairs of the two countries. After the passing of the Meles Zenawi in 2012, the then acting prime minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, confirmed Ethiopia would "maintain its neutral and principled support to the two brotherly countries' effort towards resolving their dispute."³⁸

The Ethiopian Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy states Ethiopia's policy and strategy towards the Horn of African states as "...these countries have long-standing links with Ethiopia in such areas as language, culture, history, natural resources, and so on. Changes in Ethiopia affect them directly, and what happens to them has an impact on us".³⁹ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver also confirm that conflict between and within the two Sudans could have both a direct and indirect spillover effect on Ethiopia, thus Ethiopia can be seen to have a genuine interest in peace in and between the two countries.⁴⁰

³⁴ UN General Assembly: Summary Study of the Experience Derived from the Establishment and Operation of the United Nations Emergency Force. Report of the Secretary-General, UN Doc. A/3943, October 9, 1958, para. 60.

³⁵ Osterrieder et al. (2015): op. cit. 823.

³⁶ Osterrieder et al. (2015): op. cit. 826.

³⁷ Amani Africa: Briefing on the Situation in Abyei. *Amani Africa*, 29 September 2022.

³⁸ Sudan Tribune: Ethiopia maintains "neutral position" toward Sudan – South Sudan dispute. *Sudan Tribune*, 19 September 2012.

³⁹ Ministry of Information – Press and Audiovisual Department: *The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy*. Addis Ababa, November 2002.

⁴⁰ Barry Buzan – Ole Wæver: *Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003. 229.

The Ethiopian relations with South Sudan

Ethiopia's relations with South Sudan began in pre-independence days when both the previous governments of Emperor Haile Selassie I and Colonel Mengistu supported the southern Sudanese secessionist movements most importantly SPLM. Ethiopia played a very important role in the independence of South Sudan. After its independence, Ethiopia has been actively involved in peace processes with Sudan in case of Abyei and after the 2013 civil war broke out. Besides the spillover effect of the conflict to Ethiopia's Gambella region, Ethiopia has a great advantage in a stable South Sudan in using South Sudan's oil and market.

Ethiopia deployed more than 40,000 peacekeeping troops in both UNMISS, UNISFA and CTSAMM in different rotations. Moreover, Ethiopia was actively involved in the efforts of IGAD to bring peace in South Sudan by appointing its former foreign minister the late Seyoum Mesfin, to lead an international mediation process. In 2015, President Salva Kiir of South Sudan met rebel leader Riek Machar in Addis Ababa for the first time to start a peace talk. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed also hosted both Salva Kiir and Riek Machar in Addis Ababa to initiate the talk in 2018. During the meeting, the Ethiopian Prime Minister Chief of Staff said, "...faced with the continued suffering in South Sudan, Ethiopia simply can't stand by".⁴¹

The Ethiopian relations with Sudan

The relationship between Sudan and Ethiopia have been both harmonious and hostile. Though there is a long history of relationship starting from the time of Axum and Merowe, in the modern history of Ethiopia, the relations goes back to during the Islamist Mahdist state (1885–1898)⁴² and the Christian kingdom Emperor Yohannes IV of Ethiopia (reigned from 1872–1889). Because of the Hewett Treaty in 1883, in which Ethiopia assisted Egyptian troops in Sudan during the Mahdist resistance movement against the Ottoman–Egyptian administration, the Mahdists made a revenge attack against Ethiopia in 1889; burned churches and shattered the old capital Gonder. The emperor marched to Sudan with his army to fight back the Mahdists but died in the Battle of Metemma in 1889.

During the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I, the Ethiopian Government covertly gave aid to the Anya-Nya movement, a southern separatist rebel army formed from 1955 up to 1972.⁴³ On the other hand, in 1972 the emperor negotiated the Addis Ababa Agreement between the Sudanese Government and the Anya-Nya. Ethiopia was the sole active black African actor to intervene in the Sudanese war, during the

⁴¹ Al Jazeera: South Sudan rebel chief meets President Kiir in Ethiopia. *Al Jazeera*, 20 June 2018.

⁴² The Mahdists, religious and political movement, which overthrew the Ottoman–Egyptian administration (1821–1885) and ruled Sudan from 1885 until 1898 when they were removed from power by Anglo–Egyptian forces who ruled Sudan until 1956.

⁴³ Lovise Aalen: Ethiopian State Support to Insurgency in Southern Sudan from 1962 to 1983: Local, Regional and Global Connections. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8, no. 4 (2014). 631.

1980s and early 1990s.⁴⁴ The Ethiopian *Derg* Government (1974–1991) backed the SPLM/SPLA, hoping to retaliate against Sudan which served as sanctuary, rear bases and channels for the transmittal of military, food and medical supplies for Eritrean secessionist rebel forces fighting the government.⁴⁵ Besides having several safe houses in Addis Ababa for the SPLA leadership, military training was given to SPLA fighters at military camps in Ethiopia in addition to logistic support. The overthrow of *Derg* by the Eritrean and Tigrayan rebel groups in 1991 was a fortunate development for Sudan. The post-1991 Ethiopian Government led by the EPRDF had also an important part in the various mediation efforts through its role in the IGAD.⁴⁶

However, with the arrival of Islamists in power in 1989, General Omar Hassan al-Bashir, backed by Hassan al-Turabi, and the 1995 assassination attempt of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on visit in Addis Ababa, which was backed by the Sudanese Government, damaged the relationship. Sudan's involvement in Ethiopia to impose its Islamic ideology with the interest of creating its dominance in Ethiopia was another factor for deteriorating the relationship.⁴⁷ Later, the relationship between the two states improved after the visit of Omar Hassan Al-Beshir to Addis Ababa in 1999 "to normalize the relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan after passing through a period of difficulty in their diplomatic relationship".⁴⁸ This was followed by the visit of Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to Khartoum in 2002. In the same year Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen initiated trilateral cooperation, the Sana'a Forum for Cooperation. By 2003, Ethiopia began importing oil from Sudan, and by 2009, Sudan supplied 80% of Ethiopia's oil demand.⁴⁹ More importantly, President Omar al-Bashir said in March 2012, his country supports the controversial Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project, which both the downstream states Sudan and Egypt opposed when its construction was launched in 2011, claiming it will affect their water shares.⁵⁰ In recent years, Ethiopia played an active role in Sudan's political crisis after the military ousted Omar Al-Beshir in April 2019. Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed mediated between Sudan's Transitional Military Council and the civilian opposition.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Yehudit Ronen: Ethiopia's Involvement in the Sudanese Civil War: Was It as Significant as Khartoum Claimed? *Northeast African Studies*, 9, no. 1 (2002): 103–104.

⁴⁵ Aalen (2014): op. cit. 631.

⁴⁶ Kinfe Abraham: *The Horn of Africa: Conflicts and Conflict Mediation in the Greater Horn of Africa*. Addis Ababa, EIIPD and HADAD, 2006. 158–159.

⁴⁷ Molla Mengistu: *Ethio–Sudanese Relations: 1991–2001*. A Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations, Addis Ababa University, 2002.

⁴⁸ University of Pennsylvania – African Studies Center: Ethiopia–Sudan: Joint Communiqué. *University of Pennsylvania – African Studies Center*, 19 November 1999.

⁴⁹ David H. Shinn: Government and Politics. In LaVerle Berry (ed.): *Sudan. A Country Study*. Washington, D.C., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 2015. 281.

⁵⁰ Tesfa-Alem Tekle: Sudan's Bashir Supports Ethiopia's Nile Dam Project. *Sudan Tribune*, 5 April 2012.

⁵¹ The Irish Times: Ethiopian PM tries to mediate Sudan's political crisis after bloodshed. *The Irish Times*, 7 June 2019.

The rift between Ethiopia and Sudan

According to John Young, the biggest present-day threat to peaceful relations between the two states is internal instability, which has three components.⁵² First, the new governments in both nations are without a history of cooperating and uncertain of each other; second, a lack of full control by both countries over their shared border areas; and third, doubts regarding the unity of the governments in both Khartoum and Addis Ababa.⁵³ Moreover, historically Sudan's closest relations have been with Egypt, because the Nile encouraged similar forms of economy and trade, as well as the spread of the Arabic language and Islam; and noting Egypt nominally ruled Sudan in the Anglo–Egyptian Condominium.⁵⁴

Most recently, the Nile River hydro politics and the border dispute in Al-Fashaga has played a major role, which led to Ethiopia's untrustworthiness in the eyes of the new Sudanese Government in its peacekeeping operation in Abyei. These crises had a significant impact on Ethiopian peacekeeping operations and the reputation of the ENDF, as the Sudanese Government demanded that Ethiopian peacekeeping troops withdraw from UNISFA in Abyei. It was in April 2021 that Sudan's Foreign Minister Mariam al-Mahdi declared that because of Ethiopia's 'unacceptable intransigence' in the talks over the GERD and its decision to proceed with the second phase of the filling of its dam; and since the Ethiopian troops are massing on the eastern borders of Sudan, it is not conceivable for Ethiopian forces to be deployed in the strategic depth of Sudan.⁵⁵

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and the Nile hydro politics

The 2002 Ethiopian Foreign Affairs, National Security Policy and Strategy document indicates that the issue of the Nile's water poses an unsurpassable obstacle for establishing strong ties between Ethiopia and Sudan. The document states: "One of the causes for the deterioration of relations with the Sudan concerns the use of the waters of the Nile. In this regard, the agreement the Sudan signed with Egypt in 1959 that excluded Ethiopia from the use of the river..."⁵⁶ This is a clear indication that the Nile hydro politics has been a perpetual hiccup on Ethio–Sudan relations.

It was in April 2011 that Ethiopia inaugurated the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), which is the largest dam in Africa on the Abbay River (Blue Nile) which originates from the Ethiopian highlands and supplies about 85% of the Nile River. Egypt openly opposed to the project and requests more guarantees that the project will not

⁵² John Young: Conflict and Cooperation: Transitions in Modern Ethiopian–Sudanese Relations. *HSBA Briefing Paper*, May 2020.

⁵³ Young (2020): op. cit.

⁵⁴ Young (2020): op. cit.

⁵⁵ Arab News: Sudan demands expulsion of Ethiopians from Abyei UN peacekeeping forces. *Arab News*, 07 April 2021.

⁵⁶ Ministry of Information – Press and Audiovisual Department (2002): op. cit.

affect its share of the Nile water.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the Sudanese Government supports the GERD because there is a possibility that the dam prevents Sudan's annual flood and also it gets exported electricity generated by the dam.⁵⁸

The relationship between Ethiopia and Sudan started to deteriorate when Sudan openly opposed the filling on GERD, which it initially more or less supported.⁵⁹ It seems Sudan is caught between the competing interests of Egypt and Ethiopia. However, recently after the Ethiopian crises in the north begun and after Ethiopia announced the second filling of the dam, Sudan unambiguously took the side of Egypt and it started to confront Ethiopia diplomatically and militarily.⁶⁰ The two countries signed a joint military agreement in the fields of training and border security in March 2021 and conducted joint military ground and air exercises.⁶¹ Sudan went even further by claiming the ownership of Benishangul-Gumuz regional state in western Ethiopia bordering Sudan, where GERD is located, which was responded by a strong condemnation by Ethiopia.⁶²

The border dispute in Al-Fashaga

The borderline dispute between Sudan and Ethiopia is one of the fault lines that Sudan instrumentalised for depicting Ethiopia as untrustworthy in its involvement in UNISFA. Even though the Ethio–Sudanese confrontation has continued to flare up since early 1967,⁶³ the crises intensified in December 2020. Ethiopia accused Sudan's armed forces of crossing into its fertile border lands into the Tigray regional states in the north occupying the land, taking the advantage of Ethiopia's forces being preoccupied with the Tigray conflict and leaving the border area.⁶⁴ Sudan denied that its army had been redeployed on the border, and claimed that they did not go beyond the Sudanese territory.⁶⁵

Ethiopia insists that the Sudanese military withdraws from the area before it engages in negotiations, but Sudan refuses, saying al-Fashaga is historically within its territory.⁶⁶ Sudan claims the border has been demarcated, and only technical consultations are needed to fix boundary markers. It holds that successive Ethiopian governments have recognised al-Fashaga as Sudanese territory. Sudan says it allowed Ethiopian farmers to cultivate the land to maintain good relations with the previous

⁵⁷ Sudan Tribune: Egypt is always associated with Nile dam discussions between Ethiopia and Sudan: Ghandour. *Sudan Tribune*, 16 August 2017.

⁵⁸ Kevin G. Wheeler et al.: Cooperative Filling Approaches for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. *Water International*, 41, no. 4 (2016). 611–634.

⁵⁹ J. Mukum Mbaku: The Controversy over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. *Brookings*, 05 August 2020.

⁶⁰ Middle East Eye: Sudan Launches Assault on Ethiopia after Alleged Executions. *Middle East Eye*, 28 June 2022.

⁶¹ Mohamed Saied: Egypt deepens military ties with Sudan as Ethiopia moves forward with Nile dam. *Al-Monitor*, 22 March 2022.

⁶² Ethiopian Embassy in Washington, D.C.: *MoFA Condemns Sudan's Claim over Benshangul Gumuz Region*. 04 May 2021.

⁶³ Belete B. Yihun: Setit-Humera: A Blister on Ethio–Sudanese Boundary Disputation. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 31, no. 1 (2016). 107–122.

⁶⁴ Federico Donelli: The al-Fashaga Dispute: A Powder Keg in the Heart of the Horn of Africa. *Trends Research and Advisory*, 4 March 2022.

⁶⁵ Al Jazeera: Sudan denies occupying Ethiopian territory in contested region. *Al Jazeera*, 28 January 2021a.

⁶⁶ Shewit Woldemichael: Ethiopia–Sudan border tensions must be de-escalated. *ISS Africa*, 10 May 2021.

Ethiopian Government.⁶⁷ Sudan is accused by Ethiopian officials of invading its territory and exploiting the security vacuum created by its armed conflict with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the north.⁶⁸ It claims that third parties, referring to Egypt, are fuelling the conflict.⁶⁹



Figure 2: The al-Fashaga border region and GERD

Source: <https://issafrika.s3.amazonaws.com/site/images/2021-05-10-iss-today-ethiopia-sudan-map.png>

General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who heads the armed forces and the Sovereign Council, Sudan's highest executive body, made a security visit in December 2020, after the army issued a statement saying that a unit of the Sudanese armed forces was hit by an ambush by Ethiopian forces and militias.⁷⁰ In November 2021, several Sudanese soldiers were killed in an attack by Ethiopian forces at Al-Fashaga.⁷¹ Furthermore, Sudan accused Ethiopia of executing seven Sudanese soldiers and a civilian in June 2022, where as a result Sudan summons back its ambassador to Ethiopia and also summons the Ethiopian ambassador to Khartoum to directly condemn the killing.⁷² The Ethiopian Government denied the accusation.⁷³ Later in July, the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed met Sudan's General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in Kenya's capital Nairobi, on the sidelines of a meeting of the IGAD. After the meeting, Abiy said he

⁶⁷ Woldemichael (2021): op. cit.

⁶⁸ Addis Standard: Ethio–Sudan border dispute: Manageable or time bomb? *Addis Standard*, 20 May 2022a.

⁶⁹ Al Jazeera: Rising tension as Ethiopia and Sudan deadlocked on border dispute. *Al Jazeera*, 1 February 2021b.

⁷⁰ The Defense Post: Sudan Army Chief Visits Border Area after Ambush Blamed on Ethiopia. *The Defense Post*, 18 December 2020.

⁷¹ Al Jazeera: Sudan military says several soldiers killed in Ethiopian attack. *Al Jazeera*, 28 November 2021c.

⁷² Al Jazeera: Sudan recalls envoy to Ethiopia after execution of seven soldiers. *Al Jazeera*, 27 June 2022a.

⁷³ Africa News: Ethiopia again denies killing seven Sudanese soldiers at disputed border area. *Africa News*, 01 July 2022.

reached an agreement with General al-Burhan to peacefully settle the border dispute.⁷⁴ In addition, General al-Burhan came to Ethiopia for the Tana High-level Forum on security in Africa, where they discussed bilateral and regional issues.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, there is no clear settlement on the dispute.

The conflict in Northern Ethiopia, desertion and its implication on UNISFA

Since 1991, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the primary political party representing the northern Tigray regional state, has been dominating the leadership of the ruling coalition, the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the political and economic power in Ethiopia until 2018. Nevertheless, after Abiy Ahmed took office in 2018, TPLF left all its federal positions and retreated to its stronghold of the Tigray region.

In November 2020, TPLF attacked the Northern Command of the ENDF, claiming it was a preemptive attack because the federal government was planning an attack on the TPLF leadership in Tigray. Retired and functioning ENDF high-level military officers who were loyal to the TPLF orchestrated the attack. This led to a full-scale fight between the federal government including the ENDF, the Federal Police, regional states special police, the Amhara *Fano* and the Eritrean Government.

The conflict made a direct impact on Ethiopian peacekeeping missions. For instance, in late November 2020, the Ethiopian Government decided to disarm from 200 up to 300 peacekeepers from the Tigray region who are serving in Somalia over security concern.⁷⁶ Currently, Ethiopia contributes around 4,000 troops under AMISOM and has around 15,000 additional soldiers based on the bilateral agreement with the Somali Government.⁷⁷

In February 2021, fifteen members of a contingent of Ethiopian peacekeepers in South Sudan, UNMISS, originally from the Tigray region, refused to return home, citing their right to seek asylum if they fear for their lives.⁷⁸ According to Kirk L. Kroeker, a spokesman for UNMISS, a fight broke out between Ethiopian peacekeepers at Juba International Airport resulting in some minor injuries while some refused to go on board to return to Ethiopia.⁷⁹

In the same way, 120 former peacekeepers, who served at UNAMID in Darfur, also from the Tigray region, refused to go back and had applied for asylum in Sudan after the mission ended.⁸⁰ This is because since the war broke out, the government was taking thousands of ethnic Tigrayans into detention centres across the country on accusations that they were collaborators of TPLF.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Al Jazeera: Ethiopian PM says agreed with Sudan's al-Burhan to settle dispute. *Al Jazeera*, 5 July 2022b.

⁷⁵ Ethiopian Monitor: Abiy and Al-Burhan Discuss Bilateral, Regional Issues. *Ethiopian Monitor*, 15 October 2022.

⁷⁶ Katharine Houreld: Ethiopia says disarms Tigrayan peacekeepers in Somalia over security. *Reuters*, 18 November 2020.

⁷⁷ Houreld (2020): op. cit.

⁷⁸ News24: 15 UN peacekeepers from Tigray refuse to return to Ethiopia. *News24*, 23 February 2021.

⁷⁹ Benjamin Takpiny: Ethiopian peacekeepers in S.Sudan resist going home. *Anadolu Agency*, 23 February 2021.

⁸⁰ BBC: Ethiopian former UN peacekeepers seek asylum in Sudan. *BBC*, 10 May 2021.

⁸¹ Cara Anna: 'Clean out our insides': Ethiopia detains Tigrayans amid war. *The Associated Press*, 29 April 2021.

In April 2022, 528 Ethiopian troops in UNISFA requested political asylum in Sudan after refusing to return home.⁸² Regarding this, the Ethiopian Ministry of National Defence (MoND) stated the following on a press release:

It is known that the terrorist group [TPLF] attacked our army from inside and outside by infiltrating the Tigrigna speakers in the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and preparing them for their nefarious purposes.

When the national law enforcement operation started, it was known that the Tigrigna speakers, who were working with our defense forces, from private to the top management, were made to stay at home without interruption of their salaries and allowances in order to ensure the success of the campaign and not to get in the way of each other.

Before the attack on the Northern Command, the Tigrigna speakers who were sent abroad for peacekeeping missions were allowed to continue their duties being aware of that they would not cause difficulties to our army and the mission. However, TPLF has created confusion among troops and spread of false propaganda by TPLF agents abroad to prevent Tigrigna speakers from returning to their country.

There has been an effort to extort ethnic Tigrayan army members, who were serving their country and their institution by inciting racism and threatening lies that you will be arrested if you return home. The army members did not hate their institution and their country, but they were threatened by the destructive activities of the TPLF and some soldiers remained in the country where they went to maintain peace. It is known that the TPLF has created a few traitors in them [peacekeepers] and made them the executors of their evil deeds.⁸³

Even though the government made the statement, in addition to desertion, hundreds of ethnic Tigrayan soldiers who served in a United Nations peacekeeping in Abyei joined the *Samri*, an informal TPLF affiliated armed group, to fight against the federal government at the border town of Humera, which lies at an intersection between Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan.⁸⁴ In September 2022, the Sudanese Government has granted refugee status to 247 peacekeepers from Abyei and it indicated there are 649 former UN peacekeepers currently sheltered in Sudan's Umm Qarqour refugee camp.⁸⁵ For this reason, it is clear that there have been operational challenges of peacekeeping deployment and the geopolitical dynamics and internal vulnerabilities that have tarnished Ethiopia's successful operation in not only Abyei but also in all foreign deployments. *Aly Verjee* indicated the political miscalculation of Ethiopian leadership with regards to the Tigray conflict resulted its predicaments in the region as follows:

Ethiopia's loss of an even imperfect, regional hegemonic position has come about because Addis Ababa prioritized narrow domestic interests over those of the region and abandoned peace and security mechanisms that, though flawed, had their uses.

⁸² Sudan Tribune: 528 Tigrayan peacekeepers in Abyei refuse to return to Ethiopia. *Sudan Tribune*, 24 April 2022a.

⁸³ FBC: The Ministry of Defence Gave an Explanation Regarding Some Army Members Deployed in the International Peacekeeping Mission Who Did Not Return Home. *Fana Broadcasting Cooperation*, 27 April 2022 (translation from Amharic by the author).

⁸⁴ Simon Marks – Mohammed Alamin: Ex-UN Peacekeepers Battle for Control of Key Ethiopian Town. *Bloomberg*, 02 September 2022.

⁸⁵ Sudan Tribune: Sudan grants asylum to over 200 Ethiopian ex-UN peacekeepers. *Sudan Tribune*, 02 September 2022c.

In inviting Eritrea to join in its war in Tigray, Abiy hoped for a decisive and definitive defeat of the TPLF/TDF, and a consolidation of his power within the country. Instead, Abiy has lost the trust of other countries in the region for his handling of the Tigray situation and the second- and third-order consequences of a regionally resurgent Eritrea under Isaias Afwerki. It is striking that despite Ethiopia – and Abiy personally – having helped broker the transitional political settlement in Sudan after the overthrow of former president Omar al-Bashir, relations with Khartoum have deteriorated to the point where a war between Ethiopia and Sudan would not be a surprise.⁸⁶

Even though the Ethiopian Government made reconciliation with the TPLF by signing the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement on 12 November 2022,⁸⁷ the conflict made a colossal political, military and diplomatic damage for the ENDF. For example, Robert Menendez, U.S. Senator from New Jersey, in his official letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres calls to prevent all Ethiopian soldiers who have participated in military operations in the Tigray region of Ethiopia from being allowed to participate in UN peacekeeping operations.⁸⁸ He stated: “As the government of Ethiopia remains one of the largest contributors of troops for UN peacekeeping operations, we urge the United Nations to vet vigorously all Ethiopian troops to be deployed in UN peacekeeping operations to determine if they participated in military operations in Tigray.”⁸⁹ The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights accused the Ethiopian Government of crimes committed against humanity in the Tigray Region during the military operation.⁹⁰

The reconfiguration of UNISFA into a multinational peacekeeping and the waning of Ethiopian contribution

It was on January 2022 that the Sudanese Government announced that the UN agreed to replace Ethiopian forces within UNISFA with other UN forces.⁹¹ In April 2022, UNSC thanked Ethiopia for its long engagement in Abyei and welcomed incoming multinational troops for UNISFA. The Albanian representative in UNSC said: “I would like to thank Ethiopia for its leadership and engagement as the sole troop contributor to UNISFA over the past decade. Ethiopia has made a significant impact in supporting the safety and security of the people in Abyei and has ensured that the Mission could carry out its functions, as mandated by this Council.”⁹²

⁸⁶ Aly Verjee: The Crisis of Ethiopian Foreign Relations. *ACCORD*, 24 August 2021.

⁸⁷ African Union: Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF). *African Union – Peace and Security Department*, 02 November 2022.

⁸⁸ U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations: Chairman Menendez Calls on UN to Prohibit Ethiopian Troops in Tigray from Serving as Peacekeepers. *U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations*, 06 July 2021.

⁸⁹ U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (2021): op. cit.

⁹⁰ OHCHR: International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia Finds Reasonable Grounds to Believe that the Federal Government Has Committed Crimes against Humanity in Tigray Region and that Tigrayan Forces Have Committed Serious Human Rights Abuses, Some Amounting to War Crimes. *OHCHR*, 22 September 2022.

⁹¹ Addis Standard: UN agrees to replace Ethiopian forces within UNISFA: Sudan. *Addis Standard*, 20 January 2022b.

⁹² Permanent Mission of Albania to the UN: Remarks by the Political Coordinator Arian Spasse at the Security Council meeting on Sudan and South Sudan. *Permanent Mission of Albania to the UN*, 21 April 2022.

All this despite the fact that Ethiopia disputed the assertion of Sudan that it is not conceivable for Ethiopian forces to be deployed in the strategic depth of its territory, by maintaining that UNISFA was established following the joint agreement of the Sudan and South Sudan and both parties should agree with its drawdown, and South Sudan is comfortable with the presence of Ethiopian troops in UNISFA. As stated above, the UN has apparently agreed to Sudan's request and the Ethiopian contribution to UNISFA declined radically and the Force Commander/Acting Head of Mission for UNISFA, Major General Benjamin Olufemi Sawyerr of Nigeria has officially taken over from Ethiopia's Major General Kefyalew Amde Tessema on 15 March 2022. As of May 2022, as a result of the reconfiguration of the Mission into a multinational one, in addition to 252 contingents from Ethiopia, 271 contingents from Bangladesh, 86 contingents from China, 636 contingents from Ghana, 307 contingents from India, 77 contingents from Nepal, 314 contingents from Pakistan and 28 contingents from Vietnam were deployed.

Table 1: UNISFA's deployed military personnel as of December 2018 at the peak of its deployment and as of May 2022

Year 2018			
Personnel	Ethiopian contribution	Other 27 TCCs	Total number
Contingent troops	4,287	None	4,287
Experts on mission	78	59	137
Police	10	31	41
Staff officer	78	43	121
Total	4,453	133	4,586
Year 2022			
Contingent troops	252	1,719	1,971
Experts on mission	0	93	93
Police	0	42	42
Staff officer	1	73	74
Total	252		2,180

Source: Compiled by the author.

Conclusion

The involvement of Ethiopian troops in UNISFA was unique; a neighbouring power invited by both Sudan and South Sudan to provide an interposition force to keep the peace between them. This is seen as evidence of Ethiopia's good relations with both states and its neutral position in the conflict, and Ethiopia takes pride in this regional role. However, the tragic security and political development between Ethiopia and Sudan seems to hinder the peacekeeping operation in Abyei. Since the beginning of the mission in 2011, Ethiopia deployed more than 30,000 military personnel with

different rotations. As of May 2022, the total fatalities on the mission are 50 and 39 of them were Ethiopians.⁹³

Participating in peacekeeping missions has economic benefits both for the country and individual soldiers. It also has political implication and international prestige as a pillar of peace and security in the Horn of Africa – which attracts many allies globally. It also has intelligence advantage in the region and in the neighbourhood for monitoring the actions of Ethiopia's rivals and a good experience for its troops.

Today one thing is certain: Ethiopia's participation in a peace effort is hampered by internal vulnerabilities. Besides the foreign policy and political dynamics within Ethiopia, the war between the federal government and the TPLF forces has paved the way to manipulate Ethiopia's commitment to peace in Abyei. In less than two years, the pragmatic cooperation that formerly existed between Sudan and Ethiopia has given way to open hostility. Ethiopia, the region's central actor in peacekeeping roles, as mediator, peacekeeper and enforcer, has significantly weakened. Therefore, the Ethiopian Government should improve internal security and reboot its relation with Sudan to regain its hegemonic status in the region.

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⁹³ United Nations: Fatalities. *United Nations Peacekeeping*, 2022.

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