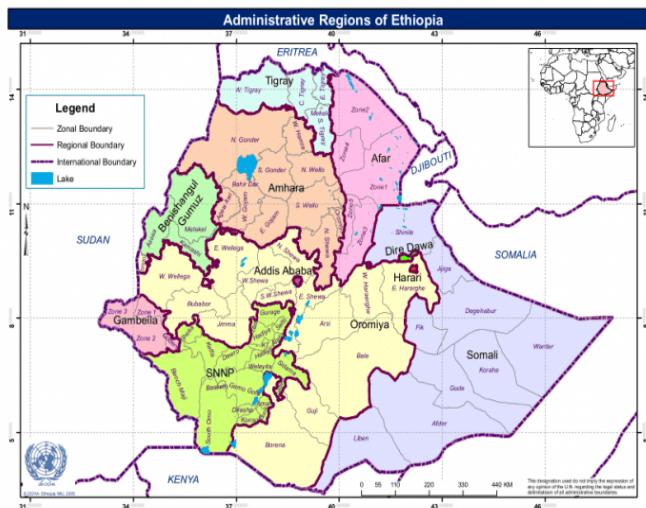


The Horn of Conflict: Inside Ethiopia's Democracy

Sarah M. Musau

PhD student, Department of Diplomacy and International Affairs, Euclid University, Bangui, Central African Republic



Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.¹

Abstract: The Horn of conflict? The Horn of Africa comprises Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, and by extension, Kenya and Uganda. The region is diverse in terms of geography, culture, religion, population, and politics. The region is known as a hotbed of conflicts due to its resource to cross-border to communal conflicts. The realist theoretical approach hold that states operate in a state of anarchy. They are after their self-interest and survival in the international system. This survival leads to a security dilemma. States will do what they can to secure their own security, which induces fear in others who, in turn, increase theirs. Ethiopia, the second-most populous country in Africa, is entrapped into different conflicts: interstate and cross-border conflict with Eritrea, conflict with Tigray People's Liberation Front, and Nile water conflict with Egypt. Why is Ethiopia entrapped into these conflicts? What is the role of the leaders/political parties in these conflicts? What are the reasons behind these conflicts? How can Ethiopia settle these conflicts? In all these conflicts, survival is Ethiopia's quest. This paper aims to respond to these questions using an interdisciplinary approach. Ethiopia is well placed to utilize the regional mechanisms to settle these conflicts. Otherwise, it will be a ground for complex conflicts that will spill over to other countries.

Keywords: Ethiopia, Conflict, TPLF, Eritrea, Nile water, Horn of Africa

¹OCHA, "Administrative Regions of Ethiopia - Ethiopia," *Relief Web*, last modified 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/map/ethiopia/administrative-regions-ethiopia> (accessed June 8,2021).

I. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, conflicts occur for different reasons. There is no comprehensive explanation of why nations engage in conflict; rather, conflict is a conglomeration of different factors. According to one of the leading scholars, nations fight for resources—population growth demands more of the limited resources available, and the “proliferation of ownership contests” leads to resource conflict.² Another author cites the leadership’s misperceptions of their adversary, distortion of their perceptions, and extreme fears and hopes.³ To another scholar, conflicts occur through a communal lens. Since the end of the Cold War, more than 95 conflicts are civil wars. These wars happen along “cultural lines such as language, religion, or similar characteristics—an ethnic group involves a group name, shared historical memories, and shared symbols.”⁴ Also, these wars are likely to occur when the “established mediating mechanisms for mediating conflict break down.”⁵ Factors such as economic hardships, illegitimacy, or foreign intervention accelerate these wars. To Constructivists, ethnicity does not inevitably lead to conflict. Instead, ethnicity is socially weaved into symbols, myths, and memories that are altered over the years. Some theorists relate ethnic conflicts to “deep and ancient hatreds or grand clashes of civilizations.”⁶ To Sigmund Feud, ethnic conflicts are “the narcissism of small differences.”⁷ Nye agrees that no two conflicts are the same; however, for ethnic conflicts, “symbols and myths create divisions, and economic rivalries or the weakening of state authority create fears for group survival.”⁸

The Horn of Africa is historically known for its conflicts, such as resources, communal, interstate, and electoral conflicts. The region has experienced colonial border disputes such as the protracted wars for independence, including the Eritrean war (1961-1991) and the South Sudan war (1983-2011), and inter-state wars between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998-2000). These conflicts result from poverty and economic inequality that marginalize some groups, climate change, environmental degradation, and economic

²Michael T. Klare, *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict*(New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2001), 23.

³John G. Stoessinger, *Why Nations Go to War*, 6thed.(New York: St. Martin's Press,1993), 21

⁴Joseph Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 6th ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007),158.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., 159.

mismanagement.⁹ Political instability, political greediness for power and influence, and ethnicity accelerate the conflicts in this region.

Situated in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia has experienced all manner of conflicts, including a conflict for Eritrea's independence, interstate wars with Eritrea, a conflict between Ethiopia's ruling regime and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and the Nile water conflict with Egypt. The conflicts have attracted international attention, with some powers intervening to protect their interests. According to the realist theoretical approach, states operate in a state of anarchy. They are after their self-interest and survival in the international system. This survival leads to a security dilemma.¹⁰ States will do what they can to secure their own security, which induces fear in others who, in return, increase theirs. This paper, therefore, aims to explore and understand the reasons behind these conflicts, why as a democracy, Ethiopia is entrapped into these conflicts, the roles of the leaders/political parties in these conflicts, and the recommendations thereof. In its theoretical framework, the paper applies an interdisciplinary approach through in-depth desk review, official reports and documents, and journal articles. The paper is divided into three parts: Introduction, the Horn of conflict (Definition of conflict, the Horn of Africa, and Conflicts in Ethiopia), and a Conclusion.

II. THE HORN OF CONFLICT

a) Definition of conflict

Conflict conveys different interpretations to different scholars. For instance, Wallenstein defines conflict as a "social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of resources."¹¹ To another scholar, conflict involves a change of behavior, action, and attitude towards another entity/group dependent on the context.¹² Conflict also involves both available resources and non-economic/non-material things such as territory, the position of power, acceptance of responsibility for destructive actions, psychological needs like retribution, and different intangible values.¹³ According to

Austin, conflict is a "disagreement between two or more individuals or groups, with each individual or group trying to gain acceptance of its view or objectives over others."¹⁴ To Ching and Megginson, conflict is the struggle between incompatible or struggling needs, wishes, ideas, interests, or among people. Ethiopia's conflict with Eritrea is over territory and independence. Its conflict with Egypt is over resources, and with TPLF is over resources, ethnicity, and territory. Therefore, conflict is a deep struggle for economic and non-economic resources by the available means to satisfy one's group desires. It involves antagonism, disagreement, and deep resentment towards another individual/group to pursue resources. This definition is well illustrated in the following pages.

b) The Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa comprises such countries as Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Somalia, and by extension, Kenya and Uganda. The region is diverse in terms of geography, culture, religion, population, and politics.¹⁵ On the one hand, we have Islam dominating some of the countries and, on the other, Christianity. The Horn of Africa is known as the hotbed of conflicts. Africa's longest civil war occurred in this region, that is, the Eritrean war of liberation against Ethiopian regimes. The civil war in Sudan, the external and internal conflicts ranging from resource conflicts to terrorism to banditry to ethnic wars entrap this region. Disintegration is the region's aftermath after decolonization. In the recent past, the independence of Eritrea and the years of statelessness in Somalia have caused anxiety among the Horn of Africa states.¹⁶ Each country faces the challenges of building a national identity. Within these states, there are different ethnic groups, with Somalia a clan-based. These different groups seek to be heard, and when this fails, different conflicts have erupted.¹⁷

According to a report released by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Horn of Africa's challenges is a complex mix of limited or uneven access to natural resources, social tensions among groups in society (regional, religious, and ethnic), poverty and economic inequality. The weakness of state institutions to

⁹Mehari Taddele Maru, "Evolving Peace Trends and Regional Integration: Opportunities for Revitalizing Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)," 3, last modified May 14, 2014, accessed June 8, 2021, <https://meharitaddele.info/2019/05/evolving-peace-trends-and-regional-integration-opportunities-for-revitalizing-intergovernmental-authority-on-development-igad/>.

¹⁰Jennifer Sterling-Folker, 14.

¹¹Alexandros Nafpliotis, "Peter Wallenstein. 'Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and the Global System' Sage, 2011," *Journal of Conflict Transformation and Security*, Vol. 2 n.2 (n.d.): 15, accessed June 9, 2021,

https://www.academia.edu/2409520/Peter_Wallenstein_Understanding_Conflict_Resolution_War_Peace_and_the_Global_System_Sage_2011.

¹²Sarah M. Musau, "From Treaty to MOUs: Analysis of the Eventuality of the 2018 Ethiopia-Eritrea Peace Agreement," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 9, no. 5 (May 6, 2021): 13, accessed June 8, 2021, <http://www.scirp.org/Journal/Paperabs.aspx?paperid=108956>.

¹³Seyoum Yohannes Tesfay, "Eritrea-Ethiopia Arbitration: A 'Cure' Based on Neither Diagnosis Nor Prognosis," 164, last modified 2012, accessed January

20, 2021, <https://www.google.com/search?q=ERITREA-ethiopia+arbitration%3a+introduction&oq=eritrea-ethiopia+arbitration%3a+introduction&aqs=chrome..69i57.696j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=utf-8>.

¹⁴Marita G. Sanchez, "Conflict Dimensions and The Causes of The Great Scism" (N.D.): 3, accessed June 9, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/36541151/Conflict_Dimensions_And_The_Causes_Of_The_Great_Scism.

¹⁵Alexander Rondos, "The Horn of Africa: Its Strategic Importance for Europe, the Gulf States, and Beyond," *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, no. 6 (2016): 150–161, accessed June 8, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48573620>.

¹⁶Samson S. Wasara, "Conflict and State Security in the Horn of Africa: Militarization of Civilian Groups," *African Journal of Political Science / Revue Africaine de Science Politique* 7, no. 2 (2002): 39, accessed June 8, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23489763>.

¹⁷Rondos, "The Horn of Africa."

provide physical security, including the basic good of citizens' survival, in combination with corruption, has resulted in ineffective governance, undemocratic practices, limited confidence, distrust in state authority and legitimacy, and insurgencies.¹⁸ Additional “megatrends” face the region, including the rapid growth of population and youth unemployment, increased public demand for economic delivery and constitutional democracy with stiff electoral contestations, climate change and a surge in demand for water, food, and energy security, fast information and technological connectivity and infrastructural development, increase in devolution and decentralization, rise in cross-border cooperation and mobility, a surge in exploration and extraction of natural resources (oil, gas gold, and minerals), transboundary natural resource disputes, and global geopolitical competition in the Red Sea strait.¹⁹ These megatrends will either determine peace and development or increased conflicts.

The region is also known for its cross-border conflicts, such as the water resource allocation and access struggle among Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan. Climate challenges that have affected the communities within these states are also catalysts to conflicts. The “academic community and policymakers are increasingly acknowledging the impacts of the environment, natural resources, and climate change on the region’s conflict and security landscapes, and disputes over who owns, controls or benefits from natural resources occur frequently.”²⁰ It is considered climate change increases the likelihood of migration, creating human security risks for migrants and security issues for communities. This means that climate change is increasing the probability of tensions and violence.²¹ Ethiopia is entrapped in all these conflicts.

c) *Conflicts in Ethiopia*

Ethiopia, the second-most populous country in Africa, is involved in different conflicts from within and outside its borders.²² From the 1950s to the 1990s, Ethiopia was engaged in a conflict that later led to Eritrea’s independence. The Ethiopian guerrilla organization that supported and facilitated Eritrea’s independence dominated Ethiopia’s government positions, and in the recent past, has been involved in grave clashes with the current ruling regime of Ethiopia. In the 1980s, Ethiopia engaged in a war with Somalia which left both states devastated.²³ Strikingly,

Somalia’s collapse led to its invasion by the Al-Shabaab-a terrorist group, which led to Ethiopia’s intervention under the African Union auspices. Ethiopia was also engaged in a violent conflict with Eritrea (1998-2000) over territorial claims. Moreover, Ethiopia is engaged in a conflict with its neighbor Egypt over the Nile water.

i) *The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea*

The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea began in the 1950s. Both countries are located in the Horn of Africa, share a border and painful history of conflicts. Before its independence, Eritrea was colonized by the Italians then later was united with Ethiopia. The borders were demarcated by the Italians, whose lack of definitive boundary later resulted in territorial conflict. In 1962, the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie annexed different parts of Eritrea, claiming they belonged to Ethiopia before Italian colonization.²⁴ Strikingly, the foreign powers, the UN, and the AU remained reluctant to condemn the annexation of Eritrea, which was in contravention of international law—

*All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.*²⁵

This reluctance and quest for an independent Eritrea led to one of the longest wars in the Horn of Africa. The hostility that has lasted for decades between these countries is attributed to differing political, economic, and historical factors. The political parties which ruled both countries since independence, that is, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and Eritrean Peoples’ Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), share a history of the armed opposition. The EPRDF is an umbrella body of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front representing many small ethnic groups, whereas PFDJ is a pan-Eritrean single-party organization (former Eritrean People’s Liberation Front).²⁶ Though both parties held significant differences over ideologies and military strategy, they were united by the quest to overthrow the Mengistu regime and the right to self-determination.²⁷ Important to note is that the right to self-determination is “firmly entrenched in the corpus of international law in only three areas: as an anti-colonialist standard, as a ban on foreign military occupation, and as a requirement that all racial groups be given full access to government.”²⁸ In 1991, after both parties came to power, they pursued different paths. The Eritreans retained their party as a

¹⁸Intergovernmental Authority on Development and IGAD Secretariat, eds., *IGAD Regional Strategy* (Djibouti, The Republic of Djibouti: Information and Documentation Section, IGAD Secretariat, 2016), 9.

¹⁹International Crisis Group, *Ethiopia’s Tigray War: A Deadly, Dangerous Stalemate* (International Crisis Group, 2021), accessed June 8, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep31601>.

²⁰Florian Krampe et al., *Background*, Water Security and Governance in the Horn of Africa (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2020), 7, accessed June 8, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep24527.8>.

²¹Ibid., 9.

²²Rondos, 153.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Farah Arbab, “Grappling for Peace: Border Conflict Between Ethiopia And Eritrea,” *Strategic Studies* 24, No. 2 (2004): 165, accessed June 9, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45242529>.

²⁵“UN Charter (Full Text),” 3, last modified April 15, 2016, accessed February 8, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/>.

²⁶Arbab, 165.

²⁷Ibid., 170.

²⁸Antonio Cassese, *International Law*. 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 61.

unitary entity upholding the cultural, language, and ethnic differences. The Tigrayans developed a federal structure for the Ethiopian State based on ethnicity. The independence of Eritrea meant that Ethiopia remained a landlocked country preventing its access and gains of exports and imports from the rest of the world.²⁹ It also led to the expulsion of Ethiopians from Eritrea, which accelerated the animosity between them. The TPLF, who occupied many positions in the government, sought to expand their borders to incorporate those inhabited by the Amhara ethnic group in Ethiopia and also annexed some of the sections which were initially inhabited by the Eritreans. This annexation created deep fears among Eritreans of the EPRDF's goal. The controversy over the delineation of the 620-mile common border further exacerbated tensions in the late 1990s. This border issue led to one of the gravest conflicts between Eritrea and Ethiopia (1998-2000).³⁰

Different scholars conclude that the conflict emanates from different factors. To one scholar, the conflict emanates from ideologies, military, and national questions. The conflict has emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions.³¹ Other scholars see the conflict to emanate from identity, state formation, history, mythologies, claims, and counterclaims of separate identities and concomitant sovereignty, and liberation era unresolved points of difference between the liberation movements.³² It is apparent that the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea is driven by a quest for identity, a quest for territorial control, differing ideologies, and historical mistrust.

ii) *The conflict between Ethiopia's ruling regime and the TPLF*

Ethiopia has been rattling an internal conflict, a civil war between the Amhara ruling forces and the Tigrayans located on the northern part of Ethiopia. Each side justifies their engagement, and as Stoessinger would put it, the leaders' perceptions are distorted.³³ The conflict has deteriorated since November 2020. The history can be traced back from the 1950s when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a front dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), seized, and dominated the Ethiopian power from the military government of Mengistu Haile Mariam.³⁴ This is the same Front that supported and facilitated the secession of Eritrea. TPLF's quest for power was driven by the need to "extract Tigray, and subsequently others of Ethiopia's multiple ethnic groupings from the

ethnocratic stranglehold of the centralized Ethiopian state to foster their diverse development in a radically transformed context."³⁵ When the TPLF took over power, they pursued a path to nationalism through a federalism system based on ethnicity. The TPLF has since been occupying significant positions in the government.

However, in 2018, Abiy Ahmed, who is of mixed Oromo-Amharic parentage, took over as Ethiopia's prime minister. The TPLF dismissively embraced his rise to power. Soon after he assumed the office, he began reshuffling most of the positions in the federal state institutions, most of whom were occupied by TPLF.³⁶ Tensions began building up after arrests were issued against most military and security forces, some of whom fled to the Tigray region and whom the TPLF protected from handover to the federal government due to its autonomy. The arrests and expulsion from significant positions of power were driven by Ahmed's belief that these leaders were deeply involved in the ethnic domination of Ethiopia. He also believed TPLF was unsatisfied with his nomination in 2018 and so had led sabotage efforts of his administration.

To the TPLF, "Ahmed turned against it when he decided to dissolve the coalition, after using it to gain power."³⁷ The Front also believes Elections Council eliminated it for Ahmed to remain in power uncontrollably. The animosity continued and accelerated "after the Supreme Council in Ethiopia, the Union Council, extended the terms of federal and regional governments for a few months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a step that the region considered unconstitutional."³⁸ This led to the Tigray region resorting to their own regional elections on September 9, 2020. Again, the TPLF won a large majority of votes in the region received negatively by Ahmed's administration. The refusal by the Tigrayan regional government to accept any of the changes suggested by the federal government to change some rules and arrests continue to cause extreme tensions. Unfortunately, the government has ceased to fund the executive authority in Tigray and instead is channeling it directly to local administrations, which continue to anger the region's leaders.³⁹

According to one of the scholars, leaders' misperceptions accelerate the war.⁴⁰ From the above case scenarios, each side has its own perception of power and about its adversary. Mistrust and ego are in play from both. This explains the escalation of the violence that began in November 2020, when the Ethiopian government accused the TPLF of attacking military bases across Tigray, a charge the

²⁹Musau, 12.

³⁰Arbab, 165-166.

³¹Tesfay, 171.

³²Redie Bereketeab, "The Complex Roots of the Second Eritrea-Ethiopia War: Re-Examining the Causes," *African Journal of International Affairs* 13, no. 1-3 (2010): 50, accessed January 20, 2021, <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajia/article/view/99572>.

³³Stoessinger, 21.

³⁴John M. Cohen, "Ethnic Federalism' in Ethiopia," *Northeast African Studies* 2, no. 2 (1995): 158, accessed June 9, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41931208>.

³⁵Arbab, 170.

³⁶Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, *From Hope to Hostility, Ethiopia's Tigray Crisis*: (Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, 2020), 3, accessed June 9, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27610.4>.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 2.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁴⁰Stoessinger, *Why Nations Go to War*.

TPFL has denied. With Tigray's military capability, it has attacked the federal government because the government is marginalizing them. To the federal government, it is cracking down on criminals who are destabilizing the regime. The conflict continues to escalate with Ahmed on a hard stance to negotiate with the "criminals." Elements of marginalization, mistrust, deep resentment against each other, ethnicity, and disobedience of the law are apparent in this conflict.

iii) *The conflict over the Nile water*

According to the realist theoretical approach, states operate in a state of anarchy. They are after their self-interest and survival in the international system. This survival leads to a security dilemma.⁴¹ States will do what they can to secure their own security, which induces fear in others who, in return, increase theirs. Water, a fundamental resource, is considered precious and worth fighting. For their survival, states will engage in conflict to secure water. Typically, water disputes arise when two or more countries share key water sources, and the states involved have rarely agreed on procedures for dividing up the available supply and access to the contested resource.⁴² Some of the contested water sources include the Nile basin, Jordan, Tigris-Euphrates, and Indus River. Due to the rapid population growth, increased demand for water for both daily human use and for food production force states to use all means possible to secure this precious limited resource. In addition, due to rapid urbanization, expanding use of water in industrial processes, especially in Africa, and climate change all contribute to the contest for water.⁴³

For decades, "the waters of the Nile River have sustained human habitation in what is now Egypt and Sudan."⁴⁴ The Nile is the longest river globally and travels northward, dispersing water in nine countries—Burundi, Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.⁴⁵ The Blue Nile flows from Ethiopian highlands through Sudan then joins the White Nile, which flows into Egypt. The White Nile supplies Egypt with fifteen percent of its water, while the Blue Nile provides eighty-five percent.⁴⁶ According to Klare, the "great civilizations of Egypt owed their durability and opulence to the life-giving properties of the Nile River," and therefore, Egypt takes "every precaution to ensure its continued flow—through the rigorous performance of religious ritual and, when deemed necessary, the use of military force."⁴⁷ Egypt has deployed its military power repeatedly in northeast Africa to protect and control the

upper reaches of the Nile River and its principal tributaries.⁴⁸ Notably, Egypt's primary source of water is the Nile, and therefore it seeks to protect this resource by whatever means possible.

To Egypt, the survival and well-being of the country take precedence. It is also the strongest military power in the region.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, during colonialism, the distribution of water and its access was left unresolved.⁵⁰ Britain, which was the colonialist then, granted Egypt the larger access to the Nile water in a Treaty signed in 1929.⁵¹ The Treaty limited the powers of Sudan and Ethiopia on the usage of the Nile water. In 1959, Sudan and Egypt signed a Treaty that provided ninety percent of the Nile water to both countries. However, this Treaty lacked provisions on the allocation and access of the Nile water to the other countries that shared the Nile basin.⁵² With rapid socio-economic development and population growth, these countries required water to sustain their population and agricultural needs. These countries concerned with the exclusion from the Treaty developed a 1999 Nile Basin Initiative whose aim is to "achieve sustainable socio-economic development through the equitable utilization of and benefit from the common Nile Basin resources."⁵³ In 2010, the six countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Burundi) signed the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) to replace the discriminatory colonial agreement that gave a monopoly to Egypt.

In the 1950s, to sustain its growing population and quest for hydroelectric power, the Ethiopian government began to explore the possible construction of a mega-dam, a project that was pursued by the former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Its design was publicized on March 30, 2011. A few days later, Zenawi laid the first foundation stone of the dam—the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).⁵⁴ Once completed, the dam will be the largest hydroelectric power plant in Africa. Egypt is concerned about the reduction of the freshwater supply needed to sustain its population. In the 1980s, then Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs asserted that "the next war in our region will be over the waters of the Nile, not politics."⁵⁵ In 2018, the Egyptian President asserted that the Nile was "a matter of life and death" for his country and that "no one can touch Egypt's share of the water."⁵⁶ Following this assertion, he called for the cessation of the dam's construction as a prerequisite for negotiations.⁵⁷

⁴⁸Ibid., 149.

⁴⁹Ibid., 151.

⁵⁰Ibid., 2.

⁵¹Asiedu, *The Construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and Geopolitical Tension between Egypt and Ethiopia with Sudan in the Mix*, 2018.

⁵²Klare, 153.

⁵³Asiedu, 2.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Klare, 153.

⁵⁶Asiedu, 3.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁴¹Jennifer Sterling-Folker, 14.

⁴²Klare, 140.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., 148.

⁴⁵Ibid., 149.

⁴⁶Michael Asiedu, *The Construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and Geopolitical Tension between Egypt and Ethiopia with Sudan in the Mix* (Global Political Trends Center (GPoT), 2018), 1, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep14136>.

⁴⁷Klare, 148.

Several factors interplay into this growing conflict over the water recourse—the speed at which Ethiopia’s dam reservoir will be filled, Egypt’s fear of water shortage which could lead to drought, historical mistrust, military capabilities of both parties, and the interest of the great powers in the region-US and China.⁵⁸ Negotiations over the water resource have stalled. To Ethiopia, the “dam is a symbol of Ethiopia’s sovereign right to development and a source of national pride.”⁵⁹ Ethiopia is adamant and has rejected foreign intervention in mediation and instead prefers mediation from African Union, which Egypt and Sudan reject.⁶⁰ According to one of the scholars, when dialogue or mediation fails with dissidents or other states, armed violence and involvement of civilians are inevitable.⁶¹ This can be said for states as well.

III. CONCLUSION

The realists were right to state that states are after their self-interests. They must do what they can to survive and protect their sovereignty. When states pursue survival, mistrust builds up. Ethiopia’s conflicts for example, with TPLF is after respect for sovereignty, the conflict with Eritrea is over a territory and prestige, and the conflict with Egypt is over water resource. Ethiopia’s quest for control of resources and territory reasserts the realists theoretical approach.

In all the conflicts above, historical mistrust, control for resources or territory, and differing perceptions of each other are apparent. There is adamancy of the leaders to negotiate unless demand is first met and of foreign intervention. Unless the parties involved agree to solve these issues, the Horn of Africa will continue being a hotbed of conflicts. Ethiopia, whose population is rapidly growing, its quest for economic expansion, internal instability, poverty, political representation imbalance, and Nile conflict will continue to destabilize the country and, by extension, the whole region unless solid measures are put in place. Youth unemployment and marginalization should be immediately addressed as they lead to the rise of dissidents and armed violence thereafter. The refusal by Ahmed to call for dialogue is a dangerous path. According to one of the scholars, no nation that went to war won. War is expensive. Additionally, resource disputes should be solved through cooperation rather than military strategy. Unfortunately, Ethiopia’s ruling regime has refused the possibility of a negotiation with the TPLF, a

front he refers to as criminals and ought to be dealt with.⁶² This hard stance, the flow of refugees to Sudan and other neighboring countries will accelerate the conflict. Going to war with Egypt will further destabilize the country and the region. There is not an agreed framework yet of the Nile water between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan, which ought to tackle the speed of filling Ethiopia’s dam. The disagreement of the parties on whom to mediate the process is a bad sign. The conflict will continue to accelerate unless immediate steps are taken.

The establishment of a body that could address such disputes stated above would be far better than military force. “If we rely on warfare to settle disputes over raw materials, the human toll will be great.”⁶³ Ethiopia has some hope, especially after the 2018 Peace Agreement with Eritrea, which has eased tension between them though its effectiveness is yet to be seen.⁶⁴ Also, the Horn of Africa states are members of several active multilateral organizations: the African Union (AU), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, the East African Community, the Gulf Cooperation Council, IGAD, the Indian Ocean Rim Association, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the League of Arab States, the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Ethiopia can use these institutions to address most of the conflicts highlighted above, though in the past, conflicts have entrapped the Horn of Africa, and these institutions remained silent.

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