The Post-2018 Ethiopian Foreign Policy towards the Horn and Ethio-Sudan Relationships Dynamics

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Foreign policy is dynamic and constantly changes in response to major domestic, regional, or global developments. The political reform that brought Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to office in 2018 exhibited an 'inside out foreign policy approach.' Domestic issues and Ethiopian citizens were prioritized under the policy, followed by neighboring states, the continent, and the world. This article analyzes Ethiopian foreign policy towards the region and the factors shaping the post-2018 Ethio-Sudan relations. The study utilized a qualitative approach involving key informant interviews, archival materials, and an in-depth investigation of published documents and sources. Even though Ethiopia pursued an appealing foreign policy towards Sudan under the 'Horn First' ethos, factors such as border issues, domestic instabilities, the reinstatement of the mutual destabilization policy, Egypt's interest, and mutual misunderstandings concerning UAE- made their relationships dynamic, alternating between mutual suspicion and peaceful cooperation. Resolving domestic security and political crises while exploiting natural and organic bridges such as borders, shared peoples, and transboundary resources as opportunities for their integration and mutual development rather than security threats can cure the diplomatic ailment.

Keywords: *Ethiopia, Ethio-Sudan Relationships, Ethiopian Foreign Policy, Inside-out Approach, Sudan*

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Introduction

Ethiopia Ethiopia and Sudan are situated in the Horn of Africa[i], the continent's easternmost triangle, facing the Red Sea to the east, the Indian Ocean to the southeast, and the Nile Basin to the west (Roba & Berouk, 2011). Because of its strategic location, the region is extremely significant geopolitically. To begin with, the region is located at a critical geostrategic crossroads connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa and is bounded by the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean, with the Suez Canal at the northern end and the strait of Bab el Mandeb (approximately 30 km wide from Djibouti to Yemen), a choke point linking the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea at the southern end. Besides, the region is rich in commodities (crude oil, potash, lithium, and diamonds) and natural resources (transboundary rivers). It has enormous market potential due to its high population, vast geographical area, and promising economic performance that can attract significant investment (Yirga, 2021). Furthermore, the region is the most important worldwide commercial line, transporting approximately $700 billion in commodities and more than 40% of the world's oil each year, and is adjacent to the oil-rich Arab states (Mabera, 2020). This caused the region to become the hub of intense geopolitical competition among regional and global powers vying to establish their military bases to preserve their political, economic, and security interests.

Despite its global significance and some positive developments in the areas of security, economy, and regional integration, the Horn has been perceived as one of the most volatile geographical spaces for internal dissidence and interstate conflict (Roba & Berouk, 2011). Some of the region's primary traits include the absence of democracy and long-serving rulers, starvation and drought, interstate and intrastate warfare, and secessionists achieving de jure or de facto independence [Eritrea and Somaliland, respectively] (Clapham, 2017).

The countries in the Horn of Africa have an interconnected regional security complex[ii], wherein any development in one of them has an impact on all the others either directly or indirectly (Tafesse, 2009). Historical connections, political ties, traditional economic ties, and cultural and religious practices are all shared across the region. According to Markakis (1998,p.5), the Horn is not simply a geographical name but also a cultural and socioeconomic entity that might set it apart from nearby locations. This physically, culturally, and economically integrated group of nations is referred to as "a cultural and economic zone" by Tafesse (2009).

Ethiopia, the region's lynchpin and heartland, maintained long-standing foreign relations with several countries, including its neighbors. Its relationship with Sudan has continued to be exemplary and dynamic. Since Ethiopia established its Laison Office in Sudan in 1941 (Belete, 2012,p.460), and formal Ethio-Sudan bilateral relationships began following Sudan's independence from Anglo-Egyptian condominium colonial rule in 1956, Sudan-Ethiopian political relations have fluctuated between cordial friendship and mutual mistrust or suspicion. Changes in governments, as well as changes in foreign policy, domestic politics, national interests, regional dynamics, and global influences, have all contributed to the dynamics of bilateral relationships. In 2018 and 2019, Ethiopia and Sudan saw the termination of governments that had been in place for almost three decades and were exposed to a new environment. Since then, the bilateral relationship dynamics have been maintained. Thus, this article analyzes the post-2018 Ethiopian foreign policy towards Sudan and the factors behind the dynamics between Ethiopia and Sudan's bilateral relationships.

Statement of the Problem

The Republic of Sudan is Ethiopia's biggest neighbor. The country, which gained independence from Anglo-Egyptian condominium colonial power in 1956, is crucial in the region due to its wealth of natural resources (oil, gold, arable land, and Nile water) and its geographical placement on the Red Sea, a vital global economic corridor (Belmadi & Hichem, 2024). Sudan and Ethiopia share long-standing political, social, economic, and geographical relations. Throughout history, this connection has seen ups and downs, making it dynamic.

Following the 2018 and 2019 changes of government in Ethiopia and Sudan, the bilateral ties between Ethiopia and Sudan became much more dynamic. Because of the region's security complex, events in Ethiopia have an impact on Sudan and vice versa. After the change of governments, both countries experienced deadly civil wars, and domestic insecurity persisted. The ongoing security crisis in both countries has been impacting their relationships as well as the security of the Horn of Africa. Despite this, scholars and academicians have not given adequate focus to the post-2018 Ethiopian foreign policy towards the region and Sudan, the post-2018 Ethio-Sudan relationship dynamics, and the variables generating these dynamics. Thus, this study attempted to fill the lacuna appraising the post-2018 Ethiopian foreign policy, the

dynamics of the bilateral relationships, and internal and external factors influencing the dynamics of Ethiopia-Sudan relations.

Methodology

Methodologically, the study is designed to employ a qualitative research method, which relies on the description of data in words and observations. With regard to the source of data, the study draws on both primary and secondary sources. From *primary sources of data*, the semi-structured interview has been used. Under this, the data are collected from purposively and carefully selected respondents of key informants from the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Ambassadors, diplomats, researchers, and experts. The informants include five active ambassadors or diplomats, two Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials, two Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs scholars, and one academician and foreign affairs analyst. These five active ambassadors or diplomats represent their countries in Sudan, South Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates. The two researchers and two officials are important figures in their respective institutions. High-ranking Ethiopian academics and foreign affairs experts have written a variety of documents/papers on security, foreign policy, and international relations.

Key informants with direct knowledge and experience of the issues were chosen using the purposive sample technique, and they were questioned using semi-structured interview questions that the researcher had prepared. Despite submitting a cooperation letter from Addis Ababa University to the Sudanese embassy in Addis Ababa, the researcher was unable to obtain permission for an interview. Thus, the gap in that line was attempted to be filled by a thorough analysis of secondary and archival sources.

With regard to the *secondary sources,* materials such as books, journal articles, published and unpublished data collected from the archives of different institutions [mainly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs], media reports, electronic sources, official documents, research papers, newspapers, magazines, reports, web sources, and others; and an in-depth analysis of respected scholarly works or documents have been used.

The study employed the qualitative data analysis technique. Accordingly, a *general inductive approach to data analysis* and *thematic analysis* methods were adopted for this article. In these approaches, the process of analysis began with gathering (raw) data and subsequently organizing and preparing data for analysis. Then, reading through all data, segmenting, and categorizing

(coding) data in order to interrelate themes/issues were followed. Finally, the analysis was concluded by interpreting the meaning of the interrelated themes/issues or deriving meanings from the information (Creswell, 2009).

An Overview of the Pre-2018 Ethio-Sudan Relationships

Ethiopia shares a 744-kilometer border with Sudan in the Northeast (World Fact Book, 2024, p. 2). Both nations have long-standing political, social, economic, and geographic ties. Conflict and cooperation have been defining their relationships for a long time. For instance, Sudanese Mahadist groups engaged in war with Emperor Yohannis IV (r.1872-1889) of Ethiopia at the battle of Mattama in 1889. Conversely, Sudan played a significant role in Ethiopia's liberation from Italian occupation (1936 - 1941). In addition to providing a safe haven for Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie I (r.1930-1974) to regroup and plan the liberation struggle, Sudan's army also participated in the liberation struggle under the leadership of their colonial masters, the British (Carlos, 2016).

Ethiopia and Sudan established formal diplomatic relations in 1956, shortly after Sudan gained independence (Kinfe, 2006). During the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I (r.1930-73), the political relationships between Sudan and Ethiopia have been fluctuating between cordial friendship and mutual suspicion. While border disputes, religious differences, and ideological conflicts were at the heart of mutual hostility during that time, the emperor's attempts to mediate disagreements between the rebel group in South Sudan and the Sudanese government served as the foundation for cooperation.

According to an interviewee, Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan, Yibeltal Aemero (2024), *during the Ethiopian Socialist militarist Derg regime (1974-1991), Ethiopia-Sudan relations were primarily marked by mutual antagonism. During this time, he added, both engaged in mutual subversive and mutual destabilization activities, with the Khartoum government providing material and psychological assistance to anti-Ethiopian government rebel groups and the Addis Ababa government doing the same for anti-Khartoum regime rebel groups.* Another interviewee of the study, the researcher of the Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs, Befkadu Bogale(2024), added that *such 'subversion or mutual destabilization' practices, such as training, hosting, or arming anti-government political and armed forces against one other, are a common foreign approach in the region in general, and in Ethio-Sudanese ties in particular.* During this period,

domestic politics, religious issues, border issues, the Cold War, ideologies, and other regional and global variables influenced their ties.

The political transition in Ethiopia in 1991 and the subsequent change in foreign policy dramatically altered Ethiopia's approach to interacting with neighboring countries. An interviewee of the study, an official at the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sebsibe Bade (2023), said that *the 1991 foreign policy change is a complete break from the past or a major shift in the country's foreign policy dimension because it ended the siege mentality, and regarded neighboring countries as friends or partners, not as threats. The pre-1991 Ethiopian Foreign policy, according to him, had been mainly characterized by a siege mentality and the resulting suspicious bilateral and multilateral relations of the country with neighboring states and others. Instead of opting for cooperation and working towards achieving mutual benefit with neighboring states, Ethiopia's foreign policy resorted to building the military capacity in order to effectively address perceived adversities from near and far.* Hence, the previous mutually suspicious environment between Ethiopia and its neighbors was shifted to mutual cooperation in 1991. Consequently, the Horn of African States began to enjoy top priority concern in Ethiopia's foreign policy after the rise of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (hereinafter EPRDF) (1991-2018) to power.

From 1991 to 2018, Ethiopia's international relations with its neighbors were generally guided by the principles of good neighborliness, non-interference, mutual respect, win-win negotiations, collective security, and accountability. Economic integration, avoiding unnecessary conflict, prioritizing people's interests, and lowering tension-ridden situations were also cited as strategies.

Regarding Sudan specifically, the government's foreign policy document, the Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy (hereinafter FANSPS) document, states that "*from the perspective of our own economic development agenda, for regional stability and peace-in short, in light of our fundamental national interest framed by development and security-utmost priority should be given to the relations between Ethiopia and [t]he Sudan"* (2002, p. 46). The importance of Sudan to Ethiopia's market due to its sizeable population, abundance of natural resources, potential for growth, investment, Nile issue, and implications for its peace and security justifies the allocation of top priority.

Practically, when the militarist-socialist Derg (r.1974-991) was overthrown, and the new EPRDF force took control and entered Addis Ababa on May 28, 1991, Ethio-Sudan friendship and cooperation ties were established. Relations between the two had already developed before the coalition of rebel factions led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (hereinafter TPLF), the EPPRD, came to power in 1991. Before 1991, the regime in Khartoum had been providing material and psychological support to the TPLF rebel forces, even enabling them to use Sudanese soil as a base to destabilize and topple the Ethiopian Derg government.

An interviewee who is a senior Ethiopian Diplomat to Sudan (2024) said that *from 1991-1995 the Ethiopian government attempted to forge strong ties with Sudan by removing visa requirements, forbidding all opposition groups from using Ethiopia as a base, visiting Sudan and welcoming Sudan's leaders on reciprocal visits to Ethiopia, signing a number of agreements for cooperation, showing excessive patience with Sudan's Islamic fundamentalist regime [National Islamic Front's] wrongdoings, and playing a significant role in resolving Sudan's conflict with Eritrea*

On June 26, 1995, the event that strained the relations and altered the trajectory of the political relations between Ethiopia and Sudan happened in Addis Ababa when Islamic terrorists attempted to assassinate Egyptian President Husni Mubarak, who stayed unharmed, owing to the bulletproof quality of the car and the efforts of Ethiopian security agents (MoFA, 2024:KI3[iii], 2024). Five Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya members were murdered in this incident; three were captured, and one escaped and fled to Sudan, where he joined the strategists and directors (CDRC, 2017). Despite its apparent understanding that Khartoum's NIF was solely responsible, Egypt wrongly accused Ethiopian security services of complicity in the incident, which strained Ethiopian-Egyptian relations. During this mutual suspicion and hostility period, Sudan became isolated both regionally and internationally.

An interviewee of the study, Deputy Head of the Ethiopian Mission to South Sudan, Markos Tekle (Ph.D), said *the animosity of 1995 between Ethiopia and Sudan ended, and a new era of cooperation and collaboration started after three years with the deterioration of Ethio-Eritrean friendly relations.* This is mainly due to the move of Ethiopia and Eritrea towards the Ethio-Eritrean war (1998-2000) war, and Ethiopia's plan to minimize the number of its opponents in the region, as well as to use Sudan ports instead of Eritrean ports. Sudan also welcomed the

rapprochement because it wanted Ethiopia to stop financing the rebel force of the anti-Khartoum regime (the Sudan People's Liberation Movement) and required Ethiopia's assistance to break free from its isolation. Finally, the drying up of Islamic fundamentalists from the Khartoum administration and the purpose of restricting Eritrea's [their mutual enemy's] ambition brought Ethiopia and Sudan together.

From 1998 to 2018, their bilateral political relationship confirmed the long-standing, genuine cooperation for several reasons. To begin with, the post-Ethio-Eritrean War (1998-2000) continued the 'no peace, no war' situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea on the one hand, and the resumption of deteriorated relationships between Eritrea and Sudan since 1994, when Eritrea culminated diplomatic relationships with Sudan for supporting anti-Asmara governments rebel groups, on the other hand, strengthened their ties. In addition, the two countries leaders' friendship and their compatible economic interests made Ethiopia extensively use Sudan Port as a way to import oil (KI4[iv], 2023). Moreover, the Sudanese government's progressive shift towards the Ethiopian side rather than Egypt in the Ethio-Egyptian controversy on the Ethiopian construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam enhanced the ties. Furthermore, Ethiopia's pivotal role in mediating the Sudan and South Sudan issue and its middle-of-the-road approach between the two parties sustained the relationships between Ethiopia and Sudan (KI3[v], 2024).

The Post-2018 Ethiopian Foreign Policy Towards the Region and Ethio-Sudan Ties

The Post-2018 Foreign Policy Towards the Horn of Africa

Foreign policy and foreign relations of a given state typically change when the regime in that state changes, whether peacefully (via a democratic election) or violently (via a coup d'état), though there can also be continuity, particularly in terms of foreign policy goals (Keller, 1987). After four years of street protests, Ethiopia's ruling party, the EPRDF, underwent internal leadership and political reform, with Dr. Abiy Ahmed being elevated to Premiership on April 2, 2018, succeeding Hailemariam Dessalegn. The new Prime Minister has put in place a number of political, economic, and social reform initiatives.

With regards to Ethiopian foreign relations, there were two big vivid developments in the post-2018 Ethiopian foreign policy: the book written and publicized by the new premier as a guideline to his government, the *'Medemer[vi]Book's (2019)',* and *'The 2019 Foreign Policy Document'*.

In the *Medemer* book, [an author] Prime Minister Abiy stated that too much cooperation leads to laziness, and too much competition leads to tension and conflict. Thus, *Medemer* tries to accept a balanced approach between the ideals of Liberalist 'cooperation 'and Realist 'competition'. With regard to the Horn of Africa, the book advocates for harmonious coexistence, equal partnership, and fair sharing of rewards and obligations with the neighboring countries. The new policy has recognized the political science saying that 'every nation has the freedom to choose its allies. Nobody, on the other hand, gets to choose their neighbors. Given this rationale, the new approach contends that expanding diplomatic connections with neighboring nations in the Horn of Africa will be prioritized in foreign relationships. According to the book, this may be realized by revitalizing and strengthening the IGAD and injecting new life into bilateral diplomatic relations with neighboring governments (Abiy, 2019, p. 259).

The second most important development in the post-2018 foreign policy is *'The 2019 Ethiopian Foreign Policy Draft'*, which has been quietly implemented since its inception. The revision was needed because the 2002 FANSPS had been unrevised for a long time, and changes were witnessed in domestic, regional, and global settings.

The 2019 document reaffirmed an 'inside out prioritization' strategy, whereby domestic matters are given priority and are followed by neighboring countries, Africa, and ultimately the world. According to the document, peace diplomacy, economic diplomacy, citizen-oriented diplomacy, and public diplomacy are Ethiopia's four foreign policy pillars (The 2019 Ethiopian Foreign Policy Document Draft, 2019, p. 13-23). In general, it focuses on national prosperity, regional integration, citizens' safety and dignity, strategic partnerships and shuttle diplomacy, professionalism, building sustainable institutions, and peace, cyber, and citizen-oriented diplomacy. Balancing cooperation and competition, multilateralism, striving for African fraternity and integration, amicably resolving differences, and neutralism are additional distinguishing features of the approach.

In terms of the Horn of Africa, the document states that it is a relatively close region that shares commonalities with Ethiopia in terms of history, culture, language, geography, and population. These countries' fates are intertwined with Ethiopia's. As a result, foreign policy devotes special attention to neighboring countries (The 2019 Ethiopian Foreign Policy Document Draft, 2019, p. 29). Unlike the 2002 document, which details policies and strategies towards all separately,

treated neighboring countries separately, and divided them into allies and foes, the new document treats them generally and as possible partners. The new policy also avoided labeling neighbors as enemies or allies, as well as us-versus-them and allies-versus-foes orientations. The policy revised the previous premise, which reduced the importance of neighboring states to security issues, saw neighbors from a security perspective, and emphasized their importance in economy and security.

The new strategy treats adjacent countries as brothers and sisters with whom there are unbreakable blood links rather than friends/allies who can be changed and replaced and accords special attention to them under its 'horn first' premise. Redwan Hussein (2022), the Premier's National Security Affairs Advisor, expressed this by saying, "We give top priority to our neighboring countries next to our domestic issues because they are naturally next to us and we share not only borders, peoples, cultures, and languages but also threats, challenges, and opportunities." Therefore, he added, "we make efforts to ensure that our development and progress benefit our neighbors". In fact, creating a peaceful climate with neighboring governments and making them believe Ethiopia's growth and security are equally theirs will eliminate not only regional security threats but also faraway adversaries because enemies might use the neighbors as a bridge to strike Ethiopia.

Generally, it appears that there has been a modest shift in foreign policy about the Horn. An interviewee of the study, Ethiopian Ambassador to Djibouti, Birhanu Tsegaye (2024), said that *in terms of the port issue, rather than renting, striving to realize the state's vision of having access to the sea, naval base, and port that Ethiopia governs or administers has emerged as a key foreign policy goal*. Being on international waters is also linked to the intention of having a naval presence and projecting power. With regards to how to approach neighboring countries, the book '*Medemer'* brought up the idea that *it would be better and preferable if our diplomatic contacts with neighboring countries were handled by leaders since it allows us to communicate directly with the state's top decision-makers* (MoFA, 2024, p. 300). This was evident when the premier personally visited all neighbors and took a direct role in every crucial regional issue. A new direction on the side of the government to encourage Ethiopian nationals to invest in neighboring countries in order to increase capital and develop bilateral economic and people-to-people contacts was also adopted (MoFA, 2024, p. 300).

According to an interviewee, a researcher at the Institute of Foreign Affairs Befkadu (2024), the most significant change of 2018 was a shift in perspective. The previously gradually dissolving Ethiopian exceptionalism [as a Christian island], which had led to a siege mindset, was buried in 2018. The view that Ethiopia is not exceptional but one state with multiple difficulties coexisting with neighbors with multiple problems in a troublesome region was adopted. The new leadership accepted Ethiopia's fate as connected and determined by its neighbors. Therefore, Ethiopia needs to utilize its resources and potential in the region. By sharing what it has and taking what its neighbors have, development could be achieved for the benefit of all. Hence, an inward-looking approach, horn-first ethos, diversification of partners, regional integration, mutual benefit, access to the sea, and non-intervention were embraced as pillars of post-2018 foreign policy.

The Post-2018 Ethio-Sudan Relationships

The new leadership maintained the prior friendly ties with the Khartoum government. On April 21 and 22, 2018, President Omer al-Bashir of Sudan and Premier Abiy Ahmed Ali met for the first time at the Tana Forum in the Ethiopian city of Bahir Dar. On the sidelines of the forum, both parties agreed to make every effort to develop their bilateral ties and raise them to the greatest levels possible in Africa. At the time, the two leaders emphasized the importance of strengthening Ethiopia-Sudan cooperation and partnership in regional and international forums (Sudan Tribune, 2018).

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's visit to Sudan on May 2, 2018, was the first formal move in promoting the long-standing political bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Sudan following the ascent of Ethiopia's new leadership to office. During his two-day official visit, he met with his counterpart, President al Bashir, to discuss economic, security, political, border, and GERD issues, as well as regional matters. President Al-Bashir stated during the discussion, *"We will work with Ethiopia in efforts to bring peace to the Horn of Africa and in Africa, as well as anti-terror and anti-human trafficking activities"* (MoFA, 2018, p. 1). Sudan, he noted, wants to work more closely with Ethiopia on commerce, investment, and infrastructure development. On his part, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia stated that *"Ethiopians and Sudanese are one people; they are the children of the Nile. The border between the two countries is on the ground and not in their hearts" (ibid).* Ethiopia agreed to collaborate with Sudan on Port Sudan's renovation, even going so far as to consider seeking a share of ownership (The Maritime Executive, 2018).

Ethiopia has restated its intention to export energy generated by the GERD to Sudan. The tour came to an end when Ethiopia and Sudan agreed to form a joint army to protect the GERD (Middle East Monitor, 2018).

Despite the suspicion that forging brotherhood between Prime Minister Dr. Abiy and the Khartoum government would be difficult, the two leaders forged cordial bilateral relationships until a months-long civilian protest demanding President Omar al-Bashir's departure resulted in the military's ouster of him in April 2019. The suspicion was due to President al Beshir's already developed close relations with the TPLF, a group that dominated Ethiopia's security, economic, and political power until 2018.

Sudan's thirty-year autocratic rule came to an end with the April 2019 movement. This Sudan People's movement was inspired by the positive spillover effects of Ethiopia's political transition in 2018 and the country's subsequent political and economic developments. However, the two major actors in overthrowing the al-Beshir's government - the military under the Transitional Military Council (TMC) and the civilian opposition group under the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC)- disagreed on who would have ultimate decision-making authority during the transitional period, posing a challenge to the coup (Peace Research Facility, 2022).

On June 8, 2019, Premier Abiy Ahmed headed to Sudan to negotiate and bridge the gap between Sudanese military and opposition civilian leaders. He had separate discussions with the leaders of the two bodies. Finally, *on the sticking point related to the chairmanship and the composition of the Sovereign Council, he proposed a rotating presidency composed of eight civilians and seven militaries* (Sudan Tribune, 2019a, p.1). The two bodies agree to share power for three years, with complete civilian governance to follow, thanks to his mediation and the AU's involvement and suspension of Sudan's membership. Finally, the joint council applauded Ethiopia's Prime Minister for his generous initiative and willingness to bring different points of view closer together (KI4, 2023[vii]). After completing his mission in Sudan, Abiy returned home with 78 Ethiopians who had been held there, though some believe this was a charm offensive strategy.

The Sudanese were grateful for Premier Abiy's mediating efforts, which resulted in the inauguration of a civilian-led transitional administration in Sudan in August 2019 and the continuation of cordial relations. To improve bilateral ties between the two nations, Prime

Minister Abiy and his delegation traveled to Sudan in August 2019. Abdalla Hamdok, the Prime Minister of the transitional administration, and Premier Abiy committed to maintaining strong ties between their respective nations while promoting regional stability and economic integration. They agreed that Ethiopia and Sudan, which share a single people and family, are intertwined and have strong historical and strategic ties (Ethiopian Press Agency/ The Ethiopian Herald, 2020). In the post-2018 Ethio-Sudan bilateral relations, the following factors have been major influencing factors.

Internal Factors

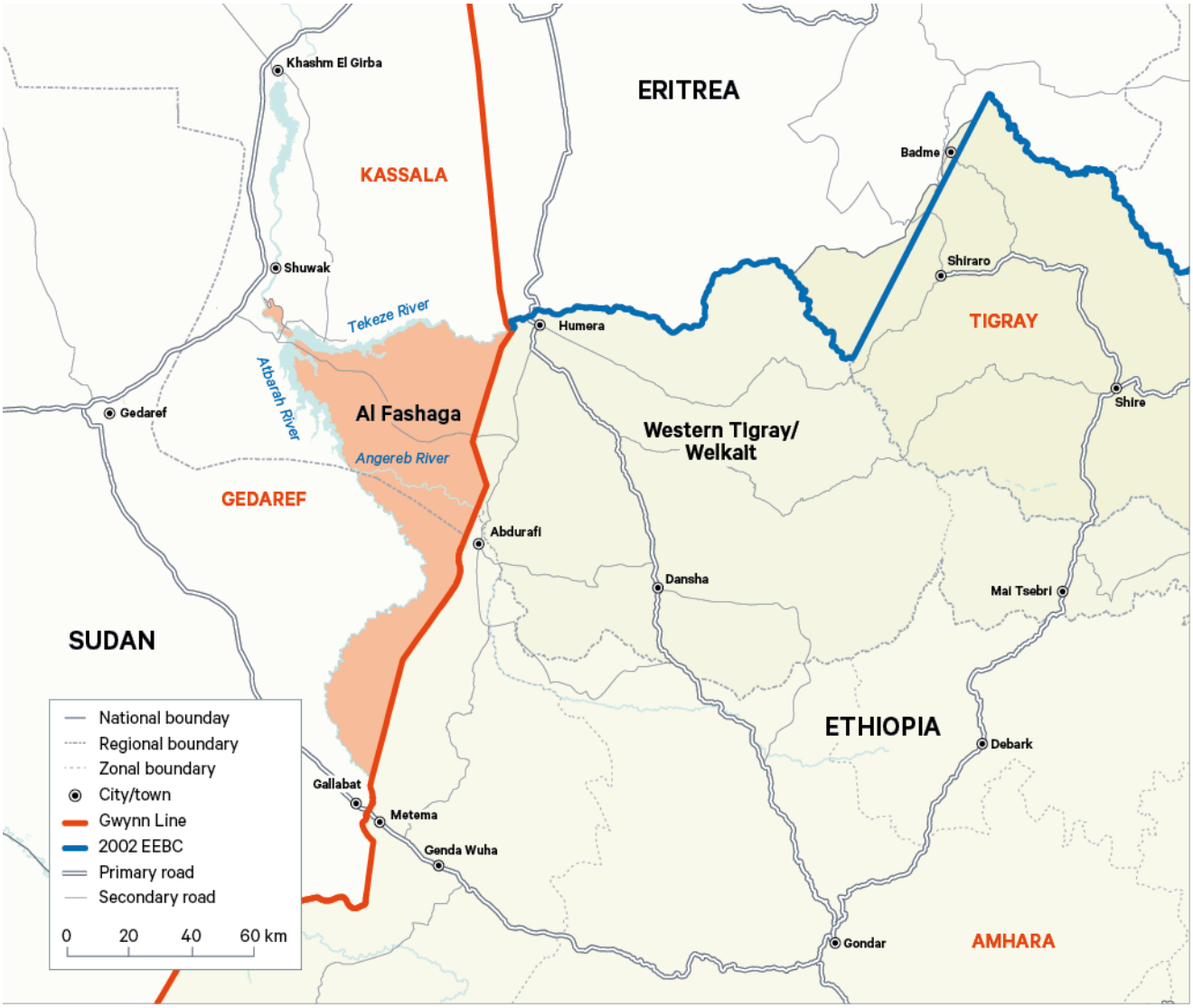
The Border Issue

The Sudan government used its displeasure with Prime Minister Abiy's rejection of Sudan's Premier Hamdok's proposal to mediate peace talks between the government and the TPLF over the Tigrai conflict (2020-2022) as a reason to make the anti-Ethiopian move quite bold by invading the borderland of Al-Fashaga (Peace Research Facility, 2022). Ethiopian government later stated that it rejected the plan solely because the conflict was an inter-issue that it could handle on its own, and the war appeared to be ending in favor of the federal government.

Mid-December 2020 saw Sudan seize control of the Al Fashaga borderland, forcing thousands of Ethiopian farmers to flee while burning and looting their properties. This took place a month and a half after the Tigrai conflict broke out, and the Ethiopian National Defence Force was dispatched to Northern Ethiopia to fight the TPLF.

Border territory claims and counter-claims have long been a source of friction between the two, stemming from arguments over colonial delimitation in 1902–03. However, the current aggression, which disregarded the previous relatively peaceful land-use arrangement in the area, was committed, anticipating that the emerging civil turmoil would make the Ethiopian army "weak and distracted" (KI3, 2024[viii]). Asserting this in his address to the legislature, Ethiopian Foreign Affairs Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen stated, "*When we changed our face to the northern part [of Ethiopia] in relation to the war, Sudan, violating the* status quo, *we respected and agreed to abide by until a sustainable solution is set, invaded Ethiopia*" (Addis Standard, 2022.p.1). Furthermore, the invasion was the result of a 'self-magnifying contest' in which the military wing invaded Ethiopia to gain domestic political

legitimacy, primarily by claiming that it reclaimed the land handed over to Ethiopia by the previous regime. *Moreover, according to an interviewee of the study, a Horn Affairs analyst (2023), the deployment of Sudan troops in the Al-fashaga area was based on an incorrect calculation that the core Ethiopian military had been destroyed in the Tigrai war and that the [military wing] Khartoum regime wanted to assist the TPLF, with whom it had good relations because several Tigreans during different famine periods migrated to Sudan and settled there, intermarried with them, and some of their children have now reached the position of military general.*



Map of Ethio-Sudan border. Sources: Ahmed and Abel (2024:17)

In history, Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia, who was expanding his territory, and Britain, who planned to reoccupy and colonize Sudan, agreed in the first 1902 agreement that a Joint Boundary Commission made up of representatives from both countries would determine their shared border. Nevertheless, Gwynn [a British surveyor] took on this responsibility in 1903 and unilaterally drew the boundary, notwithstanding their agreement to have a commission established by the two governments complete the job (CRDC, 2021). Sudan's forceful invasion was precipitated by the claim made on the area after the arbitrarily determined boundary between the countries by Major Charles Gwynn, a British surveyor, in 1903, who placed Al Fashaga [nearly 600 KM^2 of fertile borderland] in Sudan and has considered it a part of Gedaref state, its major breadbasket (International Crisis Group, 2021). Since then, the Sudanese assert that Ethiopian farmers have been cultivating our land since the 1940s illegally because they lack legal ownership and are not paying taxes to the Sudanese government.

On the other hand, Ethiopian governments believed that not only does the Gwayn delineation require both sides' participation as of 1902, or that it is an arbitrary delineated line from the colonial era, but that Ethiopia was not consulted or asked for permission to conduct the boundary demarcation exercise at all. Aside from these differences, factors such as the lack of clarity over the exact location of Gwynn's boundary line because it ran at the base rather than the crest points, significant discrepancies between the text and the map, and, most notably, Gwynn's modifications and readjustments of the boundary in favor of Sudan made it difficult for the two countries to reach an agreement (CRDC, 2021).

After a long period of calmness, Sudan invaded Al Fashaga borderland, forcing thousands of Ethiopian farmers to flee while burning and looting their properties in Mid-December 2020. The invasion was motivated not only by the nature of Ethiopia at the time but also by Sudan's domestic political problems and external influence. Regardless of the preceding developments and efforts, the recent military incursion not only violates the international standards notion of pacific conflict resolution enshrined in the UN Charter, but it also undermines the progress made thus far by various bodies and joint military procedures to re-demarcate the boundary. Above all, sisterly countries and close neighbours like Ethiopia and Sudan need to help each other at the time of internal crisis.

Ethiopia has been trying its best to resolve border-related differences peacefully. Sudan has been in a particularly devastating civil war since April 15, 2023, and the Sudan Army has left Al Fashaga for the epicenter of the fight. Despite several internal and external pressures on the Ethiopian government to use force to reclaim seized land, the government remains committed to a peaceful resolution of the border and demarcation issues. According to the Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan (2024), Ethiopia's position has been clear since the invasion: Sudan's army must leave the border territory that it has forcefully captured and resolve it amicably, as stated by the 1972 exchange of notes. Ethiopia also prefers that the border dispute be resolved through negotiations between Ethiopia and Sudan rather than taking it to international courts to be adjudicated under international law.

An interviewee of the study, a Horn affair analyst (2023), said that *Sudan is being heavily influenced by outside forces, including pressure from Gulf and Middle Eastern nations that want to sway Sudanese political elites in their favor; Russia's desire to establish a naval base there; the USA's desire to influence developments in the region and the Middle East; China's desire to defend and sustain her economic interests in the area; and Egypt's support for Sudan's military and desire to get Sudan on her side on the GERD issue.* The problem should be solved non-violently without any pressure from the third party. Since third parties have their own national interests, involving them could not solve the issue amicably. The best indication was UAE's proposal about the contesting Al Fashaga region land in which the country called for the land to be divided among Sudan (25% of the Al-Fashaga, and full ownership according to the Gweynn line), Ethiopia (a small percent share, limited to the opportunity to work there), and the UAE (a large percent for 99 years lease to its agricultural company) (CRDC, 2021). Thus, avoiding any third party, when the two negotiate, the claims from Ethiopia based on an 1891 circular letter from Emperor Minilik II that reach all the way up to Khartoum, where the white and blue Niles meet, and from Sudan based on the 1902/3 Gweynn's line must both be reexamined.

The Revival of Subversive or Mutual Destabilization Policy

The military wing's upper hand following the overthrow of President Al-Beshir, as well as the subsequent ascension of Al-Burhan (a close friend of General Al Sisi*)*, rekindled the proxy war. An interviewee of the study, an Ethiopian senior diplomat to Sudan (2024), said that *despite certain rumors and allegations from Sudan, Ethiopia has not sponsored any anti-Sudan government forces, although Sudan has helped several groups such as the TPLF, the*

Benishangul-Gumuz opposition force, the Oromo Liberation Army, and the Kimant People [in their struggle for recognition].

Even before the Tigrai conflict, Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, was accusing the Sudanese government of failing to monitor the flow of weapons into Ethiopia, primarily for various groups in the Oromia and Amhara regions attempting to destabilize the nation (Sudan Tribune, 2019b). However, no publications associated with the government address this issue, meaning that either security personnel or the Sudanese government were responsible for the transit of these weapons. Once again, the new government refrained from openly expressing its displeasure with the covert interaction between the TPLF and Khartoum in order to preserve the good relations. Specifically, when Salah Gosh, the head of Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Service, met with Getachew Assefa, the former security chief of Ethiopia, and a senior TPLF official, as well as when Osman el-Sayid, a former Sudanese ambassador, secretly met with dismissed and expelled TPLF officials in Khartoum (Young, 2020,p.13). Later, however, Sudan took the initiative of accusing Ethiopia of backing anti-Sudan government rebel groups in the Blue Nile region, mainly the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North, which operates in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan (CRDC, 2021,p.20; Peace Research Facility, 2022,p.7).

Sudan's assistance to Tigrean forces (who were fighting against the Federal government in the North) and the Benishangul-Gumuz opposition force (who are fighting against the government and attacking deliveries of GERD construction materials to slow its completion along the Ethio-Sudanese border) further strained relations between Ethiopia and Sudan. Sudan assisted Tigrean and Benishanul-Gumuz forces in a variety of ways, including permitting both forces to operate from Eastern Sudan and facilitating the flow of supplies to both factions. Specifically, while it helped Tigrayan forces with training, material help, and facilitating the way hundreds of Tigreans who fled to Sudan to leave the refugee camp and join Tigrai Defence Force units operating along Sudan's borderland, it supported Benishanul-Gumuz militants by housing them in its Blue Nile state, allowing them to use the area as a staging point for attacks on convoys delivering building supplies to the Dam in Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumu (Horner & Ahmed, 2023).

Mutual Mis-understanding with Regard to the UAE

In October 2021, Sudan saw another military coup that foiled a civilian-led transition to democracy and stalled progress towards an inclusive and responsible governance system. This coup saw the military faction of Sudan, commanded by General Abdul Fettah al Burhan, seize control, imprison Premier Abdalla Hamdok, and sever the power-sharing agreement between the civilian and military factions (Horner & Ahmed, 2023).

Despite the internal political issues in Sudan, Ethiopia continued to pursue a strategy meant to ease tensions between the two nations. However, in June 2022, an event happened that caused Sudan to recall its Ambassador to Ethiopia for consultations. This was in response to the Sudanese army's charge that the Ethiopian army had kidnapped seven Sudanese troops and a citizen near the Al Fashaga border area and executed them while transferring them to Ethiopia, in a violation of all international law and war conventions. Addressing the issue at the UN, Ethiopia's representative, Ambassador Taye Enkusellasie, informed the Organisation that since June 2022, Sudan soldiers have opened fire on civilians in Ethiopia's Armachio district and entered Ethiopia's Gelal Wuha town, where they were met with resistance from the town's militia and pushed back. He made it known that the dead bodies of the Sudan army in that fight, as Sudan said, were not murdered by the Ethiopian National Army (MoFA, 2024, p.295).

Burhan and Abiy met on the sidelines of an IGAD conference in July 2022 to discuss bilateral issues. They resolved to form a joint committee to peacefully address a boundary dispute. Ethiopia announced on August 24, 2022, that its Air Force shot down a plane that flew from Sudan, violating Ethiopian airspace, to Tigray via the northern section of Humera to transfer weapons to the TPLF (Sudan Tribune, 2022). According to reports, the plane belongs to Ethiopia's historical foes, who seek Ethiopia's weakness and have always supported the TPLF.

Al Burhan visited Addis Ababa in October 2022, attempting to reassure the Ethiopian federal government that his administration was not aiding the TPLF forces (Horner & Ahmed, 2023). Premier Dr. Abiy reciprocated by visiting Sudan in January 2023 and discussing ways to deepen the mutual partnership. This visit occurred following the resolution of the Tigrai conflict with the AU-mediated Pretoria Agreement, which was signed on November 2, 2022, in Pretoria, South Africa, by the Ethiopian federal government and the TPLF (Horner & Ahmed, 2023). *In the midst of this, news that Ethiopia had earned 32.61 million dollars by exporting 580 kilowatts of power to Sudan and Djibouti in a single year echoed, signaling the continuing relationships in other sectors* (MoFA, 2024, p. 294)

On April 15, 2023, a more dangerous phenomenon for Sudan's and the region's stability occurred when a civil war erupted in Khartoum between the Sudanese army, under the command of Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the Transitional Sovereignty Council of Sudan, and the Rapid Support Forces, under the command of Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as Hemetti). The battle persisted despite numerous attempts to end it because, in this region, two parties could start a war but could not end it when they needed to because of opposing external actors' interests. As mentioned earlier, Sudan's government has pushed its forces from the Ethio-Sudanese border at Al Fashaga to the heart of the fighting. Though the contested land is currently free due to the withdrawal of the Sudanese army, Ethiopia has not yet sent armed forces to control it. This contradicted Al-Burhan's allegation that after Ethiopia completes its homework (end internal security problem), it will turn its face to Sudan and send its military to Al Fashaga. In accordance with its traditional foreign policy principle of peaceful conflict resolution, Ethiopia has urged the two warring parties to settle their disagreements amicably so that the new administration may talk with Ethiopia and re-demarcate the border in a mutually agreed manner.

Both military generals paid visits to Ethiopia after the civil war began. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan traveled to Nairobi and Addis Ababa in mid-November 2023, where in Addis Ababa, he met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy to discuss bilateral relations as well as the recent situation in Sudan and the region (Sudan Tribune, 2023a). While Dr. Abiy emphasized the necessity of collaborative efforts to stop the bloodshed in Sudan, al-Burhan reiterated his government's support for any activities aimed at restoring peace to Sudan. Al-Burhan also met with AU Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat, discussing the situation in Sudan and efforts to settle the crisis (Sudan Tribune, 2023a).

A month later, Gen. Hemetti traveled to Uganda and Ethiopia aboard an aircraft owned by his important partner, a United Arab Emirates carrier. Despite the fact that his visit was in response to the IGAD invitation for a face-to-face meeting with al-Burhan on December 28, 2023 [which was postponed], he met with Premier Abiy in Addis Ababa to discuss securing peace and security in Sudan. At the end of the discussion, Hemetti made it apparent that they discussed the necessity of bringing an end to the war and easing the hardships of the Sudanese people (Sudan Tribune, 2023b).

As it is evident from the above descriptions, Ethiopia's approach to Sudan's current civil conflict is based on the principle of non-intervention. Because its leader visited Ethiopia, the conclusion that Ethiopia supports the Rapid Support Forces, led by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as Hemetti), stems from a failure to understand that Ethiopia is Africa's capital, where different actors can come, as well as the location of the AU headquarters. Furthermore, given Ethiopia's efforts to mediate the conflict between Sudanese forces, inviting them to Addis Ababa and engaging with both major parties in the Sudan civil war is essential to resolve the situation.

Ethiopia supports Sudan's resolution of its problems not only for the sake of Sudan but also for Ethiopia, which benefits from Sudan's peace. An interviewee of the study, Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan Yibeltal Aemero, said *Ethiopians living in Sudan are suffering greatly. Bilateral economic relations have deteriorated, Ethiopian Airlines [which used to fly three times a day] has ceased operations, there is no overflight, and, conversely, illegal trade, illegal arms smuggling, contraband, and kidnapping have increased*.

What is at stake is that General Al-Burhan has convinced himself that Ethiopia [along with the UAE] supports Hemetti, despite Ethiopia remaining neutral and claiming that the two actors should resolve the problem and opposing third-party intervention to dissolve the country. This Al-Burhan's assertion stemmed not only from Hemetti's numerous visits to Addis Ababa but also from Hemetti's belief that the forceful invasion of Al-Fashaga was wrong and that the issue should be settled peacefully (KI3[ix], 2024). Ethiopia is collaborating with numerous entities [like IGAD and AU] to help Sudan's civil war end, in addition to housing civil-war refugees and easing the way those with passports fly to other countries (MoFA, 2024).

The UAE issue should be viewed in a broader context, from the fact that Gulf and Middle Eastern countries are influencing regional political developments after identifying regional government weaknesses and political fault lines despite their earlier intention of exploiting the region's natural resources, particularly land and water. Interviewee of the study, a senior researcher of the Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs on Africa Affairs, Henok Getachew (Ph.D.) (2024), stated *that Gulf and Middle Eastern countries have an important role in the Horn's domestic politics, control the ports on the Horn side of the Red Sea, and have a spillover impact of problems from their region to the Horn and vice versa*.

On the UAE's growing role in the region, the subsequent growing ties between Ethiopia and the UAE, and the rumor of alliances among Ethiopia-the UAE-Hemetti [of Sudan]-and-Somaliland, interviewee of the study, the Ethiopian Ambassador to the UAE, Omer Hussein (Ph.D.) (2024) said that *the relationships have no hidden agenda, but rather are formed as a result of the compatibility of the UAE's national interests with those of these Horn of Africa actors*. Recently, oil-dependent economies have faced challenges as a result of shifts to renewable energy sources [the development of electric vehicles, solar power, and wind power], growing concern about environmental sustainability, and technological advancements [that simplify oil extraction and increase domestic oil production while also improving oil use efficiency]. The decline in the global importance of oil exports pushed the UAE to diversify its oil-based economy, focusing on agriculture and investment in the Horn (KI7[x], 2024).

Ethiopia has adopted an economic program aimed at transforming the mostly agrarian low-income country into an industrialized middle-income country. The country has resources and workforce, and it is seeking foreign investors (KI6[xi], 2024). The UAE has capital (money and industries) and is interested in investing in Ethiopia. This compatibility has prompted the two to collaborate on regional peace and economic development. The UAE learned a lesson from the impact of Covid 19, which caused food shortages in the country and forced it to reconsider the situation and adopt a plan to ensure food security, connecting the state to the Horn. The alignment of interests between Ethiopia and the UAE has also transformed the partnerships into 'Strategic alliances', with a stronger probability of continuing in this manner in the future (KI7[xii], 2024).

External factors

The 'Egypt factor'

The rivalry over resources, long-standing grudges, and shifting geopolitical allegiances are the main causes of Egypt's hostility towards Ethiopia. Ethiopia's construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (hereinafter GERD) on the Blue Nile is the most pressing modern issue. Egypt sees this Dam as a potential threat to its water supplies. Furthermore, Ethiopia's expanding influence and energy superiority in the region call into question Egypt's long-held authority over the Nile. Thus, Egypt began to take steps to restrict Ethiopia. One of these steps has been to utilize Sudan, its former colony, to exert influence over Ethiopia.

Egypt's influence on Sudan has been a major determining element in Ethio-Sudan bilateral relationships. Belete (2024) stated that a threat from Sudan is considerably indirect, coming through a third party, primarily Egypt. The Anglo-Egyptian condominium rule over Sudan; Egypt's unforgettable struggle for Sudan's independence; their cultural, border, and religious relations; and, above all, Egypt's policy that considers Sudan (including South Sudan) to be a security, political, and strategic area part (Strategic depth) [or as an extension of territory/extra territory that can be used to carry out national interests] grew its influence on Sudan. According to an interviewee of the study, an Ethiopian senior diplomat to Sudan (2024*), Sudan has never undertaken an anti-Ethiopian foreign policy unless pushed by Egypt, which wants Sudan to remain unstable, weak, and undemocratic (militarist).* He added that *Egypt requires a weak, unstable, and destitute Sudan to influence the Khartoum government and prevent Sudan from using the Nile River for irrigation and other uses, despite Sudan's lush irrigable land's potential for huge water consumption from the Nile.* This is part of Egypt's overarching policy towards the higher riparian states [especially Sudan and Ethiopia]: to control [the source of] the river [or establish hegemony over the river], and/or keep these countries unstable and weak so that they do not use the river. Egypt also requires an undemocratic Sudan due to Khartoum's military regimes' predisposition towards Cairo and the concern that Egyptians may question the undemocratic government in Cairo for democracy being inspired by Sudan.

The strong pressure from President Al Sisi of Egypt (who learned and grew with Khartoum's military government's leader, General Al-Burhan*)* made Sudan take several measures that transformed Ethio-Sudanese amicable interactions into mutual mistrust. To begin with, it invaded the Ethio-Sudanese borderland of the Al-Fashaga region. As can be seen in the next section of the paper, Sudan's measure was taken looking at the fact that Ethiopia is unstable due to the Tigrai conflict (2020-2022), which was fought between the Ethiopian federal government and the government of Ethiopia's northern province of Tigrai. Besides, the relationships were also further impacted by Ethiopia's displeasure with Sudan's shifting position on the GERD issue and siding with Egypt, as well as Sudan's signing of a defense treaty with Egypt, promising to support one another in an emergency (CRDC, 2021). Furthermore, Sudan asked the UN to evacuate Ethiopian peacekeeping personnel from Abyei, which it considered a security danger on its border with South Sudan in 2021 (Peace Research Facility, 2022, p.7).

An interviewee of the study, an Ethiopian senior diplomat to Sudan (2024), said *that until the military government is completely free of Egyptian influence, the military wing (mostly the higher - and middle-ranked military groupings trained in Egypt, married in Egypt, and earned huge amounts of money in Egypt) could continue to be influenced by Egypt and adopt policies that favor Egypt to the detriment of Ethiopia. This was evident recently when the military wing supported anti-Ethiopian stances on GERD and border issues.*

Conclusion

Ethiopia plays a crucial role in the relations between countries in the Horn of Africa, owing to its large population and land area, central location, strong military, growing economy, and natural resources. Its long history of statehood, diplomatic endeavors, regional leadership expertise, and widespread acceptance worldwide have also increased its importance in the region. Ethiopia's foreign policy and patterns of interactions with its neighbors have been shifting in the Horn of Africa, the region where enemies and allies, opportunities, and problems change very quickly.

The 1991 regime change in Ethiopia, as well as the adoption of new, more idealist and optimist foreign policy pillars such as the inside-out approach, Horn first, diversifying partners, ending the siege mentality, and good neighborliness, marked the start of a new chapter of friendly relations between Ethiopia and Sudan. This era ended in 1995 as a result of the Khartoum regime's Islamist ideology and an attempted assassination in Addis Ababa. This event not only shifted Ethio-Sudanese ties towards mutual animosity but also prompted the Ethiopian government to reconsider its 'open door policy' towards the region. Eritrea's invasion of Ethiopia in 1998 reinforced earlier suspicions, reignited the siege mentality and shifted policy towards a more realist perspective, in which hard power began to support soft power. The outbreak of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict, the end of fundamentalist rule in Sudan, a shift in Ethiopia's foreign policy posture, and the subsequent alignment of both nations' interests rekindled another chapter of cooperation in 1998.

In 2018, Ethiopia's political reform brought pillars such as Horn first, regional integration, emphasizing both the economic and security importance of neighboring states, ensuring Ethiopian access to the sea, non-interventionism, and other idealist principles to the forefront. Ethio-Sudan relations have also resumed smoothly, and in 2019, the Ethiopian Prime Minister played an important role in mediating negotiations between Sudan's civilian and military wings.

However, the patterns of bilateral relations shifted when Sudan invaded Al Fashaga in 2020, while Ethiopia was involved in the Tigria Conflict. This demonstrated how significantly neighboring nations' policies and actions towards Ethiopia shape bilateral relations and impact the Ethiopian government's broader vision of the region, which is more optimistic.

Since 2018, internal and external factors like the Egyptian pressure on the military wing, the resurgence of a proxy war, domestic security issues in both nations, the border issue, and [Sudan] leaders' perceptions have all played a significant role in affecting Ethio-Sudan relationships. Ethiopia and Sudan are the region's two largest countries, and there is a security complex in the region. Thus, their irregular relationship could have an impact on regional stability in the Horn of Africa, especially if border conflicts or other crises escalate. On the other hand, the success or failure of actions aimed at strengthening economic integration between the two countries would have an impact on regional economic development and integration.

Addressing their domestic security and political issues is a top priority for both, and then resolving the border issue bilaterally, bringing in a paradigm shift in which their border no longer serves as a barrier or source of conflict but instead as a bridge that unites the populace, encourages collaboration, and strengthens interstate integration. Thus, opening diplomatic channels for discussion, establishing a bilateral commission with local population representatives, and encouraging community dialogue and reconciliation are critical in addressing the problem and the tensions in a win-win manner and instilling a sense of shared ownership over the region's future.

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List of Key Informants (KI)

No	Name	Position	Month/Year
KI1	Yibeltal Aemero	Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan	January, 2024
KI2.	Markos Tekle (Ph.D)	Ethiopian deputy head of mission to South Sudan	January, 2024
KI3.	Anonymous	Senior Ethiopian diplomat to Sudan	January, 2024
KI4.	Anonymous (Ph.D)	Horn Affairs Analyst, and Academician	July, 2023
KI5.	Befkadu Bogale	Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs researcher	August, 2024
KI6.	Oumer Hussein (Ph.D)	Ethiopian Ambassador to the UAE	January, 2024

KI7	Anonymous	Ethiopian Diplomat to the UAE	February, 2024
KI8	Subscribe Bade	Ministry of Foreign Affairs official at the position of Director of IGAD Affairs	February, 2023
KI9	Anonymous	Official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the African department	February 2024
KI10	Henok Getachew (PhD)	Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs researcher	August 2024

[i]Horn of Africa: While there are disagreements among academics on which nations belong in the Horn of Africa, most of them concur that Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia (including the unofficial state of Somaliland), Sudan, and South Sudan are (Lenco, 2004; Kinfe, 2009*)*.

[ii] Security Complex is a group of countries whose primary security concerns are so closely interlinked together sufficiently that their securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another or their national securities extracted or addressed independently of each other (Buzan, 1991, p.190). He added that security interdependence, in which what happens in one country affects the rest of the region, is a critical factor in the creation of regionally based grouping or cluster.

[iii]KI3 Senior Ethiopian diplomat to Sudan

[iv] KI4 Horn Affairs Analyst and Academician

[v] KI3 Senior Ethiopian diplomat to Sudan

[vi]Medemer [Amharic word for 'synergy' (collaboration for a common goal) or 'coming together' (Mokaddem, 2019) is a new 'homegrown philosophy' of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy that was announced by a book titled 'Medemer' to be the state's new domestic and foreign policy path. Medemer is supported by the following codependent pillars: building a robust democracy by advancing the state's young democracy, eradicating economic backwardness by achieving economic energy, and fostering regional integration and openness to the outside world (ibid).

[vii] Horn Affairs Analyst and Academician

[viii] Senior Ethiopian diplomat to Sudan

[ix]KI3 Senior Ethiopian diplomat to Sudan

[x] KI7 Ethiopian Diplomat to the UAE

[xi] KI6 Ethiopian Ambassador to the UAE

[xii] KI7 Ethiopian Diplomat to the UAE