



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS
MA PROGRAM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND
DIPLOMACY

THE ROLE OF SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY IN THE CESSATION OF
HOSTILITIES BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF FEDERAL
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA AND TIGRAY PEOPLES
LIBERATION FRONT IN THE NORTH ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT:
FROM 2020-2022

BY
KIRUBEL TSIGE YIMER

JUNE, 2024
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

**THE ROLE OF SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY IN THE CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES
BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
ETHIOPIA AND TIGRAY PEOPLES LIBRATION FRONT IN THE NORTH
ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT: FROM 2020-2022**

**BY
KIRUBEL TSIGE YIMER**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES OF THE
ADDISABABA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMT
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
AND DEPLOMACY**

**ADVISOR
DEMEKE ACHISO (PhD)**

**JUNE, 2024
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE ROLE OF SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY IN THE CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES
BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
ETHIOPIA AND TIGRAY PEOPLES LIBRATION FRONT IN THE NORTH
ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT: FROM 2020-2022

BY
KIRUBEL TSIGE YIMER

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
DEMEKE ACHISO (PhD)	_____	_____
ADVISOR		
_____	_____	_____
INTERNAL EXAMINER		
_____	_____	_____
EXTERNAL EXAMINER		

Declaration!

The undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree at any other University, and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Kirubel Tsige Yimer

Signature _____ Date _____

This thesis is submitted for examination with my approval as an advisor of the candidate

Demeke Achiso (PhD)

Signature _____ Date _____

Table of Contents

Contents	Pages
Acknowledgments.....	i
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	ii
Abstract	iii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background of the Study.....	1
1.2. Statement of the problem	3
1.3. Core Argument of the Study	5
1.4. Objectives of the Study	6
1.4.1. Overall Objective.....	6
1.4.2. Specific Objectives	6
1.5. Research Questions	6
1.5.1. General Research Question	6
1.5.2. Specific Research Questions	6
1.6. Research Methodology and Methods of Data Collection	7
1.6.1. Research Methodology	7
1.6.2. Sources and Instruments of Data Collection	7
1.6.3. Data Analysis and Interpretation.....	8
1.6.4. Ethical Considerations.....	9
1.7. Scope of the Study.....	9
1.8. Significance of the Study	9
1.9. Limitations of the Study.....	10
1.10. Organization of the Study	10
CHAPTER TWO	11
LITERATURE REVIEW	11
Introduction.....	11
2.1. Definition of Concepts	11
2.1.1. Conflict Resolution Mechanisms.....	11
2.1.2. Peace Agreement	13
2.1.3. Ceasefires.....	14
2.1.4. Cessation of Hostilities.....	17
2.1.5. Diplomacy	18
2.2. Theoretical Framework	23

2.2.1. Realism	24
2.2.2. Liberalism	25
2.2.3. Constructivism	27
2.2.4. Carrot and Stick Approaches of IR	28
2.2.5. Game Theory	29
2.2.6. Third Party Intervention	30
CHAPTER THREE	32
THE NORTH ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT: CAUSES, COURSES AND CONSEQUENCES	32
3.1. Causes of the Conflict	32
3.1.1. Root Causes of the Conflict	32
3.1.2. Immediate Causes of the Conflict	42
3.2. The Course of the Conflict (2020-2022)	43
3.2.1. The First Phase of Conflict (November, 2020 - January, 2020)	43
3.2.2. The Second Phase the Conflict (January 2021- August 2022)	45
3.2.3. The Third Phase of the Conflict (August-November, 2022)	53
3.3. The Consequences the Conflict	54
3.3.1. Humanitarian Consequences	54
3.3.2. Socio-Economic Consequences	55
3.3.3. Political Consequences	57
CHAPTER FOUR	58
SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY IN THE NORTH ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT	58
Introduction	58
4.1. The Role of Diplomacy in the North Ethiopian Conflict	58
4.2. The Role of Shuttle Diplomacy in the North Ethiopian Conflict	62
4.2.1. African Union and United States Shuttle Diplomacy in the First Phase of Conflict	63
4.2.2. African Union and United States Shuttle Diplomacy in the Second Phase of Conflict	67
4.2.3. African Union and United States Coordinated Shuttle Diplomacy in the Third Phase of Conflict	102
CHAPTER FIVE	108
THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS ON SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY IN THE NORTH ETHIOPIA CONFLICT	108
5.1. The Strengths of Shuttle Diplomacy	108
5.1.1. Established Robust Platform for Direct Talks	108
5.1.2. Mobilized Diplomatic Efforts	109

5.1.3. Non-Intervention.....	110
5.2. The Drawbacks of Shuttle Diplomacy	111
5.2.1. The Perception of Impartiality and Credibility	111
5.2.2. Too Late to start Too Late to Stop	113
5.2.3. Multi-task Shuttle Diplomacy: Region-Focused, not Case-Focused.....	115
5.2.4. Swift Changes of Envoys.....	116
6. CONCLUSION	117
References:.....	120
APPENDICES:	134
Appendix I: List of Key Informants	134
Appendix II: Interview Guide/Check List Questions for Key Informants.....	135

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my sincere acknowledgement and gratitude to all my family and friends for their unbounded support, especially their inspiration to keep on going and finish my MA study in general and this thesis in particular. Secondly, as my advisor, Demeke Achiso (PhD), I would like to express my appreciation for your distinguished patience. Above all, I would like to thank God for giving me the opportunity to start and finish my master's program study.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Amb- Ambassador

CoH- Cessation of Hostility

D.P. Deputy Prime Minister

EDF- Eritrean Defence Force

ENDF- Ethiopian National Defence Force

EU- European Union

GEFDRE- Government of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

HoA- Horn of Africa

IGAD- Intergovernmental Authority on Development

MoFA- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

PM- Prime Minister

PP- Prosperity Party

PSC- Peace and Security Council

SEHOA- Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa

TDF- Tigray Defence Force

TPLF- Tigray People's Liberation Front

UN- United Nations

UNSC- United Nations Security Council

US- United States

Abstract

This study explains how shuttle diplomacy employed by the African Union and the United States has contributed to bringing the federal government and TPLF to the negotiation table, where the permanent cessation of hostility was reached in Pretoria, South Africa. The study employed a qualitative research approach and used key informant interviews and digital ethnography as instruments of data collection. According to the findings of the study, Ethiopia experienced a devastating conflict from 2020 to 2022 that was deeply rooted in post-2018 post-reform period developments like power rivalry, isolation of the TPLF in the new administration, the Ethiopian-Eritrea rapprochement, dismantling of the EPRDF, creation of the Prosperity Party, and the extension of the sixth general election. The aggregate of frustration and mistrust led to the November 3, 2020, preemptive attack of TPLF forces against ENDF, which marked the beginning of the conflict. Since this time, the African Union and the United States have been involved in resolving the conflict through a shuttle diplomacy approach. This approach was able to mobilize diplomatic efforts, abide by the non-intervention principle, and establish a robust platform for direct talks. However, intensive engagements in shuttle between Addis Ababa and Mekelle, the perception of impartiality, the rapid development of the battlefield and opportunistic behavior of parties, the multi-task mandates of envoys, and the swift change of US envoys to the region prevent success. Therefore, the study concludes that shuttle diplomacy, designed to address the North Ethiopian conflict, has not significantly contributed to the permanent cessation of hostility agreements.

Key Words: Shuttle diplomacy, Cessation of Hostility, Ceasefires, African Union, United States

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

State and non-state actors have been intensively engaged in finding the best methods of conflict resolution since World War II. Diplomacy, which is narrowly defined as a means or instrument for achieving the foreign policy objectives and goals of nation-states in a peaceful manner, is now transformed to deal with dispute settlement (Joseph and John, 2022). And now, not only in the international sphere but also in the state's internal sphere, diplomacy is crucial in resolving conflicts—efforts to prevent, limit, contain, or resolve conflict and promote peace and development. Diplomacy, as one of the various mechanisms to resolve conflict, involves communicating, negotiating, and other nonviolent means in the form of formal negotiations, backdoor talks, and multilateral discussions in regional and international organizations. Nowadays, several types of diplomacy have been identified to address intrastate and interstate conflicts. For instance, preventive diplomacy, public diplomacy, multilateral diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and shuttle diplomacy are just a few to mention (Mapendere, 2005).

Shuttle diplomacy is one of the instruments of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms among nation-states, especially after World War II in 1945 (Aloysius et al., 2019, p. 430). Shuttle diplomacy was more formally instituted after the 1973 Arab-Israel conflict (Zubarenko, 2020). The term “shuttle diplomacy” was coined by the crew of the media who followed one of the famous US diplomats, Henry Kissinger, in his efforts to broker peace in the Middle East following the fallout of the October 1973 Yom Kippur War (US State Department, 2023). Kissinger was “shuttling” back and forth between nations and leaders that were participating in the war to produce cease-fires and peace agreements (Hoffman, 2011).

Even though the war was ended by Israel's decisive victory, the parties to the conflict were not interested in coming to a negotiation table. This was because Arab states were reluctant to recognize the legitimacy of Israel as state, and Israel was confident in its hard power (Sarah, 2019; Hoffman, 2011). Therefore, to address such deadlock, Kissinger shuttles back and forth between Israel, Egypt, and Syria to have separate private meetings with leaders to try to encourage and persuade them to respect the perspective and motivations of the other side. These allowed him to bring Israel and Egypt to the round table for dialogue that was the

Sinai I negotiations in 1974. This was followed by negotiations for a Syrian-Israeli disengagement plan, which reached an agreement in May 1974, and a Sinai II agreement between Israel and Egypt again, which has brought relative peace since then (Sarah, 2019; Hoffman, 2011).

Since then, shuttle diplomacy has been practiced as a form of diplomatic engagement and is increasingly being used nowadays in various conflict resolutions, particularly in bringing the conflicting parties together (Veton 2014). Another good example of Shuttle diplomacy in regard to conflict resolution is the post-Cold War Balkan conflict, especially the Bosnia and Herzegovina issue. After the end of the Cold War, which followed the breakup of the multiethnic Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in 1991, there were inter-ethnic conflicts caused by poorly managed and unresolved independence questions. Particularly, the civil war broke out in April 1992 between the Serbs who voted and the demand for independence being pursued by the Croats and Bosnian Muslims (Bjarnason, 2001, P. 27; Burg & Shoup, 1999).

The international community engaged to halt the conflict through diplomatic efforts and by sending peacekeeping forces, but was unable to stop fighting. However, meeting conflicting parties separately and perusing to bring around a negotiation table was found to be a better approach. Therefore, US President Bill Clinton appointed the well-known diplomat Richard Holbrooke as special envoy of the Balkan region. He began shuttle diplomacy by flying from one capital to another, and a peaceful plan was prepared in coordination with strong placement. These results led conflicting parties to fly to the US military base in Dayton, Ohio (Veton 2014). The Dayton Peace Agreement, signed on December 14, 1995, was guaranteed by the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and Russia. It ended the bloodiest conflict in Europe and claimed about 200,000 lives, among whom over 11,000 were children; over 20,000 Bosnian women were raped; and over three million refugees were displaced (Veton, 2014; Bjarnason, 2001).

Also In the 21st century, the ongoing conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine has brought new challenges for the region and for the whole world as well. A number of states and multilateral organizations have attempted to contribute their part in resolving the conflict. Shuttle diplomacy is also one of the ways to deal with the conflict. The Chinese special representative on Eurasian Affairs, Ambassador Li Hui, visited Ukraine, Russia,

France, Poland, Germany, and the EU in May 2023 to bring Ukraine and Russia to the negotiation table with China as a mediator or facilitator of talks (Sanjee, 2023).

Ethiopia also experienced a two-year bloodiest conflict from the beginning of November 2020 between the Government of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), governing party of the regional state of Tigray. The TPLF preemptive attack conducted on November 3rd, 2020, on the Northern Command (*semin eze*) of ENDF in Tigray was the immediate cause of the conflict (Blanchard, 2021; Eritrean Embassy media, 2021). The federal government took on the “law enforcement operations” immediately, and later the House of People’s Representatives (HPR) designated the TPLF as a terrorist group (Blanchard, 2021). The conflict continued until November 2022 and claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, displaced millions, and generated several reports of atrocities on all sides of the conflict (Crisis Group, 2022, November 23).

On November 2, 2022, exactly two years later, representatives of the federal government and the TPLF agreed to peacefully resolve the conflict and reached an immediate and permanent cessation of hostilities (CoH) agreement after intensive peace talks led by the African Union (AU) in Pretoria, South Africa. The United States, the United Nations, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) also facilitated and observed the peace talk process (ibid.). Hence, the study aims to assess the contribution of shuttle diplomacy to bringing parties in conflict to the negotiation table, which signed the CoH agreement to permanently end the North Ethiopian conflict.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Most scholars argue that Africa in general is a conflict-prone continent with a history of civil wars and instability. This is also true in Ethiopia, where the regime change in the country is not always smooth and builds without upheaval (Alemayehu, 2004, cited in Siyum, 2021). Rather, Ethiopia's history is a history of wars and conflicts, in the recent North Ethiopian conflict, labeled as the most deadly one in the world, with more than 104,000 fatalities only in 2022, which accounts for nearly half of all battle-related deaths during 2022 in the world (Obermeier and Siri (2023).

This deadly conflict attracts various researchers, academicians, columnists, and geopolitical analysts. Blanchard (2021), attempts to assess the conflict causes traced back to the transition

period and explains the humanitarian, human rights, and economic trouble concerns in particular in the Tigray region and beyond Tigray at large. In addition, Jima (2023) further elaborated on the details of why the conflict erupted. He mentioned that separatism against the TPLF, the disbandment of the ethno-regional parties' coalition, the Ethiopian People's Revolution Democratic Front (EPRDF), and the merging into a new Prosperity Party; TPLF members' exclusion from the federal government position; the 6th general national election delay; and the constitutional crisis were among others. Meanwhile, Moses et al. (2022) study patterns of local and global media reporting and the role of disinformation, misinformation, and media bias in the North Ethiopian conflict, which found significant levels of disinformation, misinformation, and biased reporting that domestic media biased and echoed the narrative of the federal government, while the international media were largely inclined towards the narrative of the TPLF.

Demissie (2023), in his paper, argued the conflict creates intense challenges for Ethiopia's economy, social fabric, inter-communal relationships, state-building process, and the safety and security of its citizens. He dealt with the mediation efforts and role of regional organizations, mainly the African Union, and stresses that such organizations and the international community have a responsibility to consolidate the peace agreement.

Moreover, there is also literature concerned with pushing factors for the signing of the cessation of hostility agreement. For instance, Crisis Group (2022, November 23) and Demissie (2023) opined that the TPLF's growing military weakness was positioned under heavy military pressure and encircled by its adversaries, Eritrean and Ethiopian forces. In addition, the TPLF realized that ending the conflict was the best option to ease the Tigray people's suffering. Moreover, for the federal government, there was high diplomatic pressure from the international community, like UN investigators finding the use of starvation as a tool of war against Tigray's civilians; international funding agencies hesitated to provide financial assistance to the federal government at the time when the country's economy was relinquished by the conflict (Crisis Group, 2022, November 23). Natan (2022) tries to examine the implications of the US response to peacebuilding efforts regarding the conflict. He argued that coercive diplomatic measures employed by the US to compel the warring parties to halt hostility failed.

The existing literatures written on the North Ethiopian conflict emphasizes the causes and consequences of the conflict, pushing factors of negotiation, and, to some extent, the efforts

of mediation in the conflict. However, the intensive diplomatic effort to curb the conflict made by state and non-state actors who conducted high-level visits to Addis Ababa and Mekelle has been overlooked. Particularly, shuttle diplomacy was practiced by the AU High Representative and US special envoy to the Horn of Africa to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table. For instance, the US has facilitated three informal direct exchanges between the conflict parties, two times in Djibouti and once in the Seychelles (Weber, 2022).

Even though shuttle diplomacy was a traditional conflict resolution mechanism, it was less frequently employed by mediators. The above literature in the introduction implies that it is still important to deal with crises through diplomacy. Hence, regardless of its success and failure and its compatibility with 21st century diplomacy development, it has been employed by the AU and US in both the conflict and post-conflict periods of the North Ethiopian conflict. Therefore, the applicability of shuttle diplomacy was a driving factor in studying the shuttle diplomacy contribution to the permanent CoH in the North Ethiopian conflict.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the existing several works of literature assess and focus on the causes, course, consequences, and, to some extent, the mediation efforts of the conflict up to negotiation rather than dealing with what shuttle diplomacy contributed to bringing warring parties to the negotiation table. Therefore, the researcher identified a fragmentation of literature on the overall mediation efforts at large and the shuttle diplomacy approach contribution to curbing the conflict in particular. Hence, this study examine what shuttle diplomacy has contributed to bringing warring parties to the negotiation table, which reached the sign-of-agreement on the CoH in Pretoria, South Africa.

1.3. Core Argument of the Study

This study argued that shuttle diplomacy has made a significant contribution to bringing the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front to the negotiation table to sign a cessation of hostility agreement in Pretoria, South Africa. Since the conflict broke out, both the African Union and the United States have been engaged in intensive shuttle diplomacy.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. Overall Objective

The overall objective of this study was to exploring how shuttle diplomacy has contributed to bringing the federal government and TPLF to the negotiation table where the cessation of hostility was reached.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

In light of the above-mentioned overall objective, this study was to deal with the following specific objectives, which are:

- ❖ To illustrate the main causes of the conflict between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front.
- ❖ To examine the role of shuttle diplomacy to halt the North Ethiopian Conflict.
- ❖ To identify the strengths and drawbacks of shuttle diplomacy efforts in the North Ethiopia conflict.

1.5. Research Questions

Based on the problem statement and the above-mentioned general and specific objectives, the core research question and specific questions of the study were the following.

1.5.1. General Research Question

The general research question of this study is: what has shuttle diplomacy contributed to bringing the governments of FDRE and TPLF to the negotiation table where they reached the cessation of hostility?

1.5.2. Specific Research Questions

Based on the above core question, the research addressed the following specific questions: These are:

- ❖ What were the reasons for the conflict between the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front?
- ❖ What was the contribution of shuttle diplomacy to halt the North Ethiopian Conflict?
- ❖ What are the strengths and drawbacks of shuttle diplomacy efforts conducted by state and non-state actors?

1.6. Research Methodology and Methods of Data Collection

Research methodology can be defined as a way to systematically address the research problem by identifying which methods or techniques are relevant to the particular study and which are not, and what they mean and indicate the logic behind the methods we use (Kothari, 2004). Meanwhile, all those methods and techniques that are used by the researcher during the course of studying are termed research methods (ibid.). Based on this, to draw a sound conclusion about the research problem, the appropriate research methodology and different data collection methods were employed to obtain relevant qualitative information from various stakeholders.

1.6.1. Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach. Kothari (2004) stated that the qualitative approach is concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behavior. Kumar (2011) also argued that qualitative research approaches mainly focus on understanding, exploring, explaining, and clarifying the situations, feelings, perceptions, values, attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of a group of people. The reason for this approach is that this type of research methodology is a set of non-numerical data inquiry techniques that are helpful in gathering and processing data about social phenomena. In addition, a qualitative approach is essential to describing, interpreting, contextualizing, and giving in-depth insight from enormous amounts of information collected about how shuttle diplomacy contributed to bringing the GFDRE and the TPLF into the negotiation table on which the cessation of hostility agreement was reached.

1.6.2. Sources and Instruments of Data Collection

As a source of information, data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources for the study. It used primary data collected from various key informants from different backgrounds and institutions, particularly from the African Union (AU), officials in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Addis Ababa University and University of London scholars who are close to the issue. The researcher interviewed five informants from the sources mentioned above for this study.

Regarding the instruments of data collection, the researcher employed key informant interviews as an instrument of data collection. Usually, qualitative data is obtained through semi-structured and unstructured interviews and observation (Kothari, 2004). In this study, a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was employed to acquire detailed

information from key informants. To gather appropriate information from the informants, a non-probable purposive sampling technique was employed in the study. The very purpose of sampling in qualitative research is to build up in-depth knowledge about a specific episode or to become familiar with various aspects of an individual on the assumption that the purposely selected information-rich respondents will provide the information needed to attain the objectives of the study (Kumar, 2011). This type of sampling is important to construct a historical reality, describe a phenomenon, or generate an idea about which only a little is known (ibid.).

Secondary data was also gathered to substantiate the primary data from relevant literature, such as books, journal articles, periodicals, published and unpublished materials, newspapers, videos, etc., dealing with the study area. In addition, the researcher employed digital ethnography as a method of collecting both primary and secondary data from official sources. According to Richmond (2014, 15), digital ethnography is a form of online and digitally mediated qualitative research that includes the use of digitally mediated field notes, digital archives, content analysis, online participant observation, and online discussions. This was mainly to reach certain inaccessible informants because of their lack of willingness to get crude information.

Accordingly, the digital data was collected through media review techniques from X accounts (former Twitter), Facebook accounts, official websites, and YouTube channels (both verified and unverified). In particular, the official websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the African Union, and the US Department of State; verified YouTube channels of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Service (EBC) and Tigray Television; the X account of the FDRE Communication Service; the Tigray External Affairs Office; and TPLF spokesperson Getachew Reda were considered primary sources of data and comprehensively exploited. Various domestic and international news outlets were also used as secondary sources of data for the study.

1.6.3. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data was collected through key informant interviews, and relevant document reviews were translated, summarized, and analyzed qualitatively to reach a sound conclusion. As Walliman (2011) argued, the analysis of qualitative data requires data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In qualitative research, there are various approaches to data analysis.

Ethnographic analysis, content analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, and ground theory analysis are among the major ones.

The study employed descriptive and analytical data analysis. All collected relevant information was analytically investigated. The huge collected of data were analyzed by cross-checking mechanisms of validation through associating information acquired from in-depth interviews and reviewed secondary sources with each other.

1.6.4. Ethical Considerations

In the process of conducting the research, it is very important to establish the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Therefore, the researcher embraced and respect necessary research ethics such as informing the respondent's, confirm their willingness to participate, confidentiality, impartiality, and personal judgement, which guarantee the reliability and credibility of any study. In this respect, the researcher refrains from citing the name and organization of one of the informant. Thus, the researcher cites the informant as anonymous.

1.7. Scope of the Study

This study mainly examined the role of shuttle diplomacy in the cessation of hostility between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front. Even though there are other factors mentioned above that contribute to the cessation of hostility, the main focus of the study was to examine the shuttle diplomacy approach. In addition, the study was limited by the roles of the African Union and the United States of America and focused only on the time period from November 3, 2020, when the conflict erupted up to November 2, 2022, when the conflict ended.

1.8. Significance of the Study

The findings of the research were expected to have value and benefit for the following groups: This study was used by relevant stakeholders and has the potential to be used as a ground for further studies and research related to the issue. This study could also contribute to the existing literature by exploring how shuttle diplomacy was instrumental in the recent cessation of hostility between the governments of the FDRE and TPLF. This study had paramount significance for knowledge building about how shuttle diplomacy has contributed to bringing the conflicting parties to the negotiation table.

1.9. Limitations of the Study

In conducting the study, the researcher faced some problems that contributed to the limitations of the study. The first constraint for the study was a lack of well-organized academic literature regarding the issue because of the newness of the phenomenon. Secondly, diplomacy itself is a less theorized concept and does not have an independent theoretical framework for diplomacy to ease systematic analysis. Thirdly, there was a lack of willingness from the federal government, the TPLF, and the US Embassy to conduct interviews. There was also a lack of time and finances for the researcher to conduct interviews.

1.10. Organization of the Study

This study organised into five chapters. The first chapter gives highlights of the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the core argument of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, research methodology and method of data collection, scope of the study, , significance of the study, limitations of the study and organisation of the study. The second chapter deals with the literature review and conceptual frameworks for the study. Chapter Three focused on the causes, courses, and consequences of the conflict. Chapter four examined the AU and US roles in shuttle diplomacy to curb the conflict. Chapter five discusses the strengths and drawbacks of shuttle diplomacy efforts. Finally, Findings and conclusions were drawn to summarise the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter offers a definition of concepts and theoretical framework for the study by discussing defining conflict resolution mechanisms, Peace Agreements, Ceasefire, Cessations of Hostility, and related concepts that give a clear understanding of the study. Moreover, it also deals with diplomacy and its different types and empirical examples, and it discusses how shuttle diplomacy played an essential role in addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict in the 1970s. Accordingly, this chapter is organized into three sections: the first section deals with definitions of terms and concepts; the second section is literature reviews; and the final section is theoretical frameworks.

2.1. Definition of Concepts

2.1.1. Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Conflict resolution can be defined as a condition where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that resolves their essential incompatibilities, accepts each other's continued existence as parties, and ceases all violent action against each other (Wallenstein, 2018, p. 8). It mainly pays attention to altering the relationship between the conflicted parties strategically rather than offering an immediate solution for the conflict to promote stable peace and cooperation (Kelman, 2010). To resolve conflicts, either interstate or intrastate, there are methods called Conflict Resolution Mechanisms (CRM). There are methods and processes for curbing a conflict and restoring peace that encompasses all conflict resolution mechanisms or techniques (Nte, 2018, cited Buchanan 2000).

Prominently, there are six CRM techniques: negotiation, mediation, conciliation or reconciliation, facilitation, arbitration, and adjudication. Each of the above-mentioned techniques is dependent on different factors. For instance, the nature of the conflict, the relationship between the conflicting parties, the sensitivity of the issues involved in the conflict, the cost, and the nature of the technique, among others (Nte, 2018). Accordingly, for this study, negotiation, mediation, and reconciliation were selected to be discussed.

2.1.1.1. Negotiation

Negotiation is the oldest mechanism for conflict resolution (Nte, 2018). It is an appropriate method of conflict resolution between parties when they recognize the main points of

contention and agree to engage directly in a bargaining process to reduce hostilities and come to a compromise that should restore peace. The negotiation process contains major activities like the proposal stage, discussions, proposals, bargaining, compromise, and collective agreement (ibid.).

Several factors promote successful negotiation. One is a shared interest in mutual survival and peaceful coexistence. The other is the escape from the dreadful consequences of war in an asymmetric power relationship setting. In such a situation, a weaker opponent could be interested in negotiating under coercion instead of being completely destroyed by the stronger one. However, negotiations aimed at reconciling parties engaged in violent armed conflicts are mostly challenging due to the need to involve confidence-building measures. This mostly leads to third-party intervention called mediation (Nte, 2018).

2.1.1.2. Mediation

Mediation is another conflict resolution mechanism when a neutral third party, acceptable to the contending parties, presides over a deliberation that enables parties to reach a negotiated agreement (Nte, 2018). Mediation is a form of assisted negotiation or a catalyst for negotiation; the mediator is permitted to assist the parties in negotiating and reaching an agreement (Nte, 2018, cited Touval and Zartman, 2001). The very important function of mediation is to improve communication between antagonists, which is interrupted by the conflict; hence, mediators tend to interpret information, make suggestions and recommendations, inject opinions, evaluate the preferences and demands of the parties, and propose solutions and modifications (Nte, 2018, cited Jeong, 2010). The communication may be conducted by the carrying of messages, the supply of missing information, the clarification of meanings, the development of a rapport, and brainstorming either face-to-face or in a separate session with each party that would reveal the areas of agreement and disagreement (Nte, 2018, cited McCorkle and Reese, 2005).

Nte (2018) argued that mediation can be conducted using different tactics; among these, the persuasion and compromise tactic is the most common and widely used tactic for mediation. There is also a tactic of mediation by proxy; this is an indirect tactic, as the mediator wouldn't participate in face-to-face meetings with the adversaries but rather through different communication channels. Another tactic is coercive mediation, which is the blatant use of force to secure an agreement. It is adopted when a negotiation remains for a long time without compromise and one of the parties in the conflict is too adamant and aggressive. Broadly speaking, there are two types of mediators: state mediators, which consist of

individual and group states, and non-state mediators, which include highly respected individual, global, regional, and sub-regional organizations and groups like non-governmental organizations, churches, and peace organizations (ibid.).

2.1.1.3. Reconciliation

Reconciliation is another predominant conflict resolution mechanism for sustaining peace in a post-conflict situation (Nte, 2018). Reconciliation is defined as “a societal process that involves mutual acknowledgment of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behaviors into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace” (Brouneus, 2003). It serves the dual purpose of being a means as well as an end to conflict resolution mechanisms. As a means, reconciliation is like recuperation that should be achieved and sustained. It is also an end because the ultimate goal of facilitation, negotiation, mediation, and other conflict resolution mechanisms is to achieve reconciliation or resolve a conflict (Nte, 2018).

2.1.2. Peace Agreement

The post-Cold War period witnessed the proliferation of peace processes culminating in peace agreements, which have been considered the leading option for intra-state conflicts (Bell, 2008, p. 5; Bell, 2015). According to the Peace Agreement Database (2023), between 1990 and 2023, over 2,003 peace agreements have been signed globally. However, the term "peace agreement" has proven difficult to define. International law also does not contain a legal definition of a peace treaty. Therefore, it is defined differently by scholars, peace agreement mediators, and practitioners.

Although there is no officially agreed definition of a peace agreement, the following definitions are broadly accepted by the academic circle. Forster and Romaniuk (2019) define a peace agreement as a formal and publicly available document that is the result of discussion with conflict protagonists and agreed to by some or all of them to address the conflict. It is also explained as the codification of the terms of settlement among some or all conflicting parties to end the conflict. A peace agreement also refers to an agreement between two or more primary warring actors in a conflict that settles the disputed incompatibility, either by resolving all or part of the incompatibility. In addition, a clearly outlined process for how actors plan to address the incompatibility is also called a peace agreement (Högbladh, 2011).

Peace Agreements, according to their scope, can be broadly classified into two categories. The first is the International Armed Conflicts (“IACs”) between states or other non-state actors. The second is Non-International Armed Conflicts ("NIACs"), overwhelmingly

experienced in the world. Generally, peace agreements can be grouped into six main categories depending on what they attempt to achieve (Forster and Romaniuk, 2019; Bell, 2000). Those are pre-negotiation, ceasefire, partial peace agreement, comprehensive peace agreement, implementation, and renewal agreements.

2.1.3. Ceasefires

The term ceasefire has no single commonly agreed-upon, legally defined, or universally accepted definition; rather, commentators have used it interchangeably with terms like cessation of hostility, truce, and armistice (Forster and Robert, 2019). However, anybody who has been following the recent Israel and Hamas bloody conflict in Gaza understands why the international community calls for an unconditional ceasefire on the one hand and the US calls for a humanitarian pause on the other.

The term ceasefire, widely used in the post Second World War period, signifies a call to terminate hostilities, and warring parties announced it as a part of a peace process to signal their level of commitment to ending the armed conflict (Forster and Robert, 2019). Clayton and Sticher (2021) also defined ceasefire as arrangements with a declaration through verbal or written form by all or at least one warring party to halt violence temporarily or permanently from a definite point in time. In addition, a ceasefire can be mediated by a third party or imposed by a regional or international security architecture body like the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (ibid.). Generally, the overwhelming focus of ceasefires remains on a way to stop or contain the use of violence for a specific period of time or as a preliminary phase to build trust among warring parties and, in the process, offer a negotiation to sign a peace agreement (Sosnowski, 2020). Therefore, according to UNDPPA (2022), a ceasefire agreement expected to fulfill the following:

- Be a formal written agreement between two or more conflicting parties;
- Explain its purpose and broad linkages to a political process;
- State and specify the period at which the agreement will be implemented;
- State and specify the geographical areas where the agreement is applicable;
- List down the outline of military and non-military actions prohibited and permitted;
- Design and define modalities for monitoring and verifying the parties' compliance with the agreement;

2.1.3.1. Typologies of Ceasefires

Ceasefires can be categorized into different types based on the number of parties involved, the genesis of the ceasefire, the power relationship between belligerents, their relationship to the broader peace process, their durability, and their focus, to name a few. The United Nations Department of Political and Peace building Affairs (UNDPPA) (2022) categorized ceasefires based on several dimensions. Those are:

I. Ceasefire defined by the number of actors

Ceasefires can be categorized based on the number of actors involved in the negotiation or declaration. Therefore, it can be a unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral ceasefire.

Unilateral ceasefires are declared by a single conflicting party based on the actor's goodwill. These types of ceasefires are open-ended or apply for a definite period, with a provision for extension by a single party. Unilateral ceasefires are mostly declared to be associated with an annual occasion or activity, such as a religious holiday, cultural festival or harvest season.

Bilateral ceasefires: are the results of two warring parties' negotiations; they can be preliminary or definitive and could share features with other ceasefires listed above.

Multilateral ceasefires: These types of ceasefires are agreed between three or more conflict parties. There are more complicated and multi-stakeholder ceasefires that may include the marking of geographical areas, arrangements for intersecting zones of government or influence, and the implementation of arrangements for liaison, communication, and coordination.

II. Ceasefires as a part of broader peace processes

Under such a context, a ceasefire is not an independent process; rather, it is part and parcel of the broader political process, particularly in intra-state civil wars. As a result, ceasefires are categorized according to how they relate to a larger peace process: preliminary or definitive.

A preliminary ceasefire: is not necessary for the opening of a formal peace process; it can happen before, concurrently with, or after. Preliminary ceasefires usually aim to minimize violence, lessen a humanitarian crisis, and create fertile ground for negotiations leading to definitive or permanent ceasefires.

A definitive ceasefire: on the other hand, is usually the outcome of a fruitful political process in which the belligerents have reached an agreement on all aspects of the peace negotiations. Such a ceasefire usually addresses broader security arrangements like Disarmament,

Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) of identified forces and Security Sectors Reform (SSR) at the national level.

III. Ceasefires defined by focus

It may be designed to address humanitarian crises, halt the conflict in a specific geographical area, protect certain targets from specific attacks, prohibit the use of specific arms or tactics, or secure a temporary cessation of hostilities.

Humanitarian pauses are one type of ceasefire that focuses on the ‘cessation of hostilities purely for humanitarian purposes’ for a specific period of time and a defined geographic area where the humanitarian activities are to be carried out. Predominantly, such types of ceasefire negotiations are demanded and led by humanitarian actors who are less interested in political goals, at least in principle.

Geographical ceasefires: Geographical or local ceasefires are directly attached to a specific physical area, for instance, a town, a region, or a province. These types of ceasefires are mainly designed to handle a hotspot and de-escalate conflict in a particular location.

Sectoral ceasefires: This type of ceasefire basically focuses on either a unilateral declaration or multilateral agreement on the prohibition of targeting certain groups of people (usually civilians, minority groups, children, and women); or civilian infrastructure like health service centres, water and electricity supply, roads, and bridges; or the use of military tactics or weapons such as aerial bombardment, rocket attacks, the use of white phosphorus, and any other biological weapons.

IV. Other ceasefires

Some types of ceasefires can be categorized based on their evolution or genesis. Accordingly:

Informal ceasefires: are ‘handshake agreements’ or unwritten arrangements in which belligerents agree to minimum preconditions to avoid violence, mainly for a short period of time. These types of ceasefires do not need monitoring mechanisms.

Imposed ceasefires: As the name suggests, imposed ceasefires are belligerents forced by external actors who have no direct engagement within the conflict to stop the use of violence. Superpower or regional hegemony states and regional or global organizations like UNSC and AU may impose ceasefires. However, it is necessary for the imposing entities to have leverage over them or constitute a credible deterrent to stop the conflict.

De facto ceasefires: the primary focus of this ceasefire is not to resolve conflict; rather, it tends to freeze and manage it. Therefore, de facto ceasefires usually refer to "frozen" conflicts in which belligerents have still sought to obtain their interests through military victories. As a result, they have no interest in or a clear road map for how political negotiations are to take place to terminate the conflict. This type of ceasefire brings a calm "no war, no peace" status quo, which can be exploited by negotiators towards a definitive ceasefire. However, there is also a chance to drive a bloody conflict by a simple incident.

In contrast to the UNDPPA categorization of ceasefires, Sosnowski (2020) identified four types of ceasefires. Those are substantive ceasefires, interim ceasefires, symbolic ceasefires, and coercive ceasefires.

Substantive ceasefires: are mainly conducted between parties that have symmetrical power relations and can maintain a military front line. The ceasefire will have a high level of textual detail regarding a specific geographical area for troop withdrawal, a precise distance from the buffer line, and the exact numbers and types of detainees to be released.

Interim ceasefires: mainly conducted between symmetrical powers, reference some sort of monitoring mechanism without providing details of how this mechanism will operate on the ground. Signatories consider the interim ceasefire as a tactic to attain their political and military needs at a definite juncture in the conflict, and then turn back. Therefore, such ceasefires are frequently used ad infinitum to abstain from dealing with key conflict issues.

Symbolic: ceasefires occurred where there were asymmetrical power relations in which one party was in a position to command, enforce, or ignore the terms of the agreement. Such ceasefires will allow the upper-hand party to agree and continue its campaigns to consolidate power under the cover of the ceasefire.

Coercive ceasefire: This occurs at a time when there are extremely asymmetric power relations between the warring parties. The actor at the position of power forces the weaker one into accepting the ceasefire agreement, which may end the conflict at a military level. In short, a coercive ceasefire is not a negotiated solution but just a codified surrender.

2.1.4. Cessation of Hostilities

The origin of the term cease hostility can be traced back to the organization of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as an emergency apple by the Council to organize an arrangement to deal with the conflict (Bailey, 1977). OCHA (2011) defined the term as the interruption of active hostilities to let parties to take a break from fighting for different

reasons. This includes as a step forwards to political dialogue and a sustained ceasefire. Cessation of hostility is also one of the core elements of a ceasefire (PILPG, 2013; Amnesty International 2023, November 2). It prevents the warring parties from participating in hostile acts, which includes military acts (firing on another party) and non-military acts (propaganda and hate speech) (PILPG, 2013).

The cessation of a hostile agreement could be temporary or permanent. A temporary CHOA is a temporary CHOA is a halting of fighting that has been approved by all parties for a set amount of time. It could be done for several reasons, such as for humanitarian purposes. In such situations, the agreement specifies the operational region and the time frame for which particular humanitarian tasks will be carried out (OCHA, 2011).

2.1.5. Diplomacy

Diplomacy has no general or single definition that can be agreed upon by all. As a result, there are many definitions of diplomacy, as there are scholars on the concept. Berridge (2022, p. 1) stated that diplomacy is a political activity that aims to enable states to implement their foreign policy without resorting to force and propaganda. It achieves this mainly through communication among professional diplomatic agents and other officials designed to protect agreements. Leguey-Feilleux (2009) argued that the central concept of diplomacy is the idea of communicating, maintaining contact, and negotiating with states and other non-state actors. Diplomacy also entails a mode of behavior, a system of doing business, and a certain professional style (Leguey-Feilleux, 2009, cited Harold, 1964).

Diplomacy's remote origins date back to the late fourth millennium BCE in relation to the 'Great Kings' of the Near East. However, its modern form has origins in the Italian peninsula in the late 15th century AD. Despite such a long period, it was not institutionalized until 1589, when France established the first foreign ministry. Yet, in the second half of the 18th century, most European countries had established modern foreign ministries (Berridge, pp. 5-6).

By the early 20th century, in most European countries, the monarchy system had changed. This results in diplomats attempting to represent a nation rather than impose a ruler, which is called democratic diplomacy. Therefore, the Congress of Vienna in 1963 resulted in the adoption of the Vienna Convention, which made an important contribution to placing diplomacy on a more formalized and systematic basis. Also, the Congress laid down certain rules of procedure that are still commonly experienced by states and non-state actors (Mount Kenya University, n.d.).

Diplomacy has several functions performed by a diplomat; these includes diplomatic representation of the sending country; protection of its citizens; exchange of ideas on matters of mutual interest; political negotiations; and preservation and projection of the national interests of his country generally (Mount Kenya University, n.d.). The functions of diplomatic missions are clearly spelled out in the Vienna Convention of 1961, Article 3. Such professional diplomats' intercession with regard to issues of peacemaking, trade, war, economics, culture, and environment refers to international diplomacy (Alier and Bill, 2022, cited Berridge, 2005). Regarding conflict resolution and peacemaking, diplomatic relations could bring about diplomatic initiatives to address a conflict by enhancing communication between warring parties (Alier and Bill, 2022, cited Little, 2007). Indeed, negotiation is widely regarded as one of the major functions of diplomacy (Leguey-Feilleux, 2009).

2.1.5.1. Types of Diplomacy

The concept of diplomacy has been growing with the development and dynamics of international relations. Despite the fact that the transformation of diplomacy has not been completed yet, traditional diplomacy, which was started in the middle of the 15th century and monopolized by states, is completely different from contemporary diplomacy, in which multiple non-state actors are able to access and shape international agendas (Klavins, 2011, 3). Indeed, we can argue that multilateral processes connected to security, economic, social, and technological changes influence the essence of modern diplomacy (ibid.). Nowadays, for instance, the use of advanced information technologies in modern communication has changed the character of diplomacy. Therefore, all the above mentions are accountable for the proliferation of diplomatic forms. The following are a few, among others:

Economic or Commercial Diplomacy: As the economy is one of the most important elements of national power, diplomacy has to deal with every state's attempts to augment its economic resources through pacific means. States try to extend their influence through various economic measures like trade and economic aid. Such a type of diplomacy could be employed both in times of peace by providing financial assistance and during war through coercive economic measures, i.e., sanctions and blockades (Van et al., 2018). In intra-state conflicts, particularly when there is the interest of big powers, economic diplomacy has been materialized to bring about a favourable solution to the disputes.

Multilateral Diplomacy: Different from bilateral diplomacy, it refers to communication in international relations participated by three or more states. Such diplomacy has now been

conducted through global institutions, permanent conferences, and a variety of regional and sub-regional institutions. States engage in multilateral diplomacy to demonstrate their sovereign equality, irrespective of their economic and political power disparities. In addition, states are able to project their views and positions and receive diplomatic recognition (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, 2010). Multilateral institutions, which are the results of multilateral diplomacy, have played a vital role in the containment of conflicts and conflict resolution, in addition to bringing all parties to abide by agreements that are necessary to attain common interests (ibid.).

Quiet Diplomacy: It is a diplomatic communication between officials without informing the media about both the agenda and the dissection itself. Therefore, the name of quiet diplomacy derives from its lack of an overt or unpublicized nature (Graham, 2008). Multilateral-permanent international organizations like the UN usually serve as a venue for quiet diplomacy to mobilize votes and influence the diction before entering into public discussion of issues. This type of diplomacy also practiced in the north Ethiopian conflict frequently.

Coercive Diplomacy: This type of diplomacy aims to oblige changes in behaviour using withdrawal or denial of rewards, threats, and sanctions. But not an immediate measures of violence, instead the intention to convey the possibility of pain or damage (Perez, 2015, p. 1). Coercive diplomacy moves diplomacy to the gray area, where diplomacy is no longer distinguished by the notion of ‘give and take’, argument, and persuasion in which the parties achieve a degree of mutual benefit but rather compliance through force. Economic sanctions, denial of aid, and suspension of regional and international organization membership are some of the instruments (Graham, 2008). In connection with this, gunboat diplomacy can also be mentioned as one aspect of coercive diplomacy. This signifies the pursuit of foreign policy objectives with the demonstration of military power as deterrence. This strategy complies with the idea that “actions speak louder than words” (ibid.).

Preventive Diplomacy: it defined as an action to prevent conflicts from arising between parties, to prevent existing disparities from escalating into conflicts, and to limit the spread of the latter in the wider region when they occur. The strategies to prevent the conflict can be military or non-military, including crisis prevention, pre-conflict peace-building, and intervention (Graham, 2008).

2.1.5.3. Shuttle Diplomacy

Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defined “Shuttle diplomacy” as “discussions between two or more countries, in which someone travels between the different countries, talking to the governments involved, carrying messages, and suggesting ways of dealing with problems.” It is a main characteristic of crisis-time diplomacy, which is conducted by traveling between the capitals of the parties in conflict. Such moves are made possible by state-of-the art, transportation and communication, involving flying airplanes and telephone calls. Such diplomacy is more effective at creating channels of communication when it is much more difficult to do so (Graham, 2008).

As many scholars have suggested, the art of negotiation is the most important activity of diplomacy as a whole and shuttle diplomacy in particular (Leguey-Feilleux, 2009). As per the objective of the study, the researcher focuses on shuttle diplomacy and its empirical experience in addressing conflicts.

The first and most common practice of shuttle diplomacy was conducted after the fourth Arab-Israel conflict called Yam Kippur in the 1970s. The causal factors were traced back to the aftermath of the Six-Day War of 1967 and its territorial outcome, through which Israel can secure large tracts of territory of strategic importance, including the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip of Egypt, the Golan Heights of Syria and the West Bank of Jordan (Smith et al., 2016, p. 416). The US National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, who coined the term shuttle diplomacy, was used to mitigate the conflict. In addition, shuttle diplomacy has played a crucial role in reaching the Camp David Accord between Israel and Egypt in particular and the Arab-Israel Treaty in general (Zubarenko, 2020).

The Shuttle diplomacy approach to mitigating the Arab-Israel conflict and later reaching a deal was a gradual process of conflict settlement, which takes not less than five years. The first “shuttle diplomacy” victory of Kissinger over the conflict was recorded on January 18, 1974, in agreement on the troops’ separation, which obligated Israel and Egypt to refrain from military actions against one another (Zubarenko, 2020). However, Kissinger also made a failed series of shuttle diplomacy tours to the capitals of Israel, Egypt and Syria in February and March 1975. To deal with the proposals to withdraw Israeli troops from the Gidi and Mitla mountains, as well as from the Abu Rudeis oil fields on the Sinai Peninsula (ibid.).

The second Egyptian-Israeli agreement on the troop’s separation on the Sinai Peninsula was signed in Geneva on September 4, 1975. The agreement resulted in Israel’s announcement of

the return of Egypt's part of the occupied territories, including the Abu Rudeis oil fields, which had been under Israeli control since the war. In response, Egypt agreed to allow Israeli non-military ships to pass through the Suez Canal (Zubarenko, 2020).

In parallel to Kissinger's restless shuttle diplomacy trip, there were favourable factors that facilitated the success of the negotiation. One can mention the political leadership shift in Egypt, which brought President Anwar Sadat to office in October 1970. The president was easily convinced by Kissinger that Washington played a "first fiddle" in the Middle East peace settlement. Later, Sadat pulled out of the Soviet camp and became a pro-US ally in the region. Kissinger was able to win the heart of President Sadat, who welcomed his involvement in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. He was also praised as a very friendly and smart man (Zubarenko, 2020, citing Sadat, 1998).

However, there were also critics of Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy. The first and foremost scholars argued that Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy was a means to promote US foreign policy in the Middle East, in particular the elimination of the USSR from the Middle East settlement, and fixed its presence in further peace settlements in the region according to its interests. Secondly, the peace settlement was not comprehensive but a partial settlement of the conflict on a bilateral basis between Arab countries and Israel. Therefore, this approach to resolving contradictions among the warring parties became a scourge to achieving inclusive peace in the region. Particularly, territorial disputes between Syria and Israel, as well as between Palestinians and Israel, remain unresolved and pose a chronic conflict with a high risk of spill over effects in the region (Zubarenko, 2020).

In general, the practical application of shuttle diplomacy in the Arab-Israeli conflict was focused on holding separate bilateral negotiations between US officials and representatives of the warring parties, Israel and Arab countries, particularly Egypt, to agree on the most effective course of action. The primary mission of "shuttle diplomacy" in the Middle East was aimed both theoretically and practically at bilateral but not comprehensive solutions to the peace settlement.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

In all academic research, theoretical understanding is essential to provide the basis for the issue under study. Theories are very important to simplify and understand a given phenomenon, which is a problematic one. According to Jemes (2001), theory is nothing more than a systematic reflection on phenomena that aims to explain them and insight into the relationship between them in an understandable and intelligent pattern. Every discipline needs theory in order to direct research, provide biases for explanation, and, if feasible, develop probabilistic prediction capability.

Diplomacy has made considerable advances in literature compared to other disciplines of political science in general and international relations in particular. Unfortunately, it has received little attention amongst theoretically oriented IR scholars. Indeed, there is no independent theoretical framework for diplomacy to ease systematic analysis (Christer, 2011; Leguey-Feilleux, 2009). This makes diplomatic statecraft suffer a wider gap between experience and theory in contrast with other areas of international politics (Steiner, 2004). Christer (2011) has mentioned two major factors for the relative dearth of diplomatic theory.

The first one is the deficiency of an agreed-upon conceptualization of diplomacy that can serve as a foundation for theorizing. In this sense, more or less diplomacy is connoted as a foreign policy, as an instrument of foreign policy, as a negotiation, as a diplomatic service, as a behaviour of relations being conducted, and as a skill or art. These connotations of diplomacy are also subjected to definitional broadening because new international actors involved in international politics are able to create and accept new modes of interaction as diplomacy (Leguey-Feilleux, 2009).

The second major factor is the character of the authors who are writing about diplomacy. The vast literature on the diplomacy discipline has been written by diplomatic practitioners and/or historians who are less interested in theory-building. Both practitioners and diplomatic historians are inclined to be anecdotal rather than systematic and interested in a particular past, respectively (Christer, 2011).

On the other hand, other scholars don't agree with the above-mentioned academicians, who argued that diplomacy lacks a theoretical framework. Rather, they argued that diplomacy had been theorized long before the development of the sub-discipline of diplomatic theory that is associated with international relations (Constantinou and Sharp, 2016). Therefore, they argued that complete explanatory narratives of diplomacy can be constructed from

fragmentary and unsystematic thought (ibid.). However, even though IR marginalized diplomacy, it is very common to use theories of international relations in order to study diplomacy. Accordingly, this study employed relevant theories of international relations and other discipline theories to analyse the role of shuttle diplomacy in the cessation of hostility between the federal government of Ethiopia and the TPLF.

2.2.1. Realism

‘Realism’ is a term that is used in different ways in several disciplines. In philosophy, it is a theory ontologically opposed to idealism and nominalism. In International Relations, political realism is a tradition of analysis that stresses the imperatives states face to pursue power politics in the national interest (Scott and Andrew, 2003). Realist theory has an intellectual foundation in the ancient world, with Manifestation extending into and perhaps beyond the contemporary world. Emblematic 20th century figures include George Kennan, Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and John Mearsheimer in the United States and E. H. Carr in Britain. In the history of Western political thought, Niccolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Thucydides are usually considered realists (James, 2001).

Realism is one of the dominant theories of International Relations (IR); its roots are often backed by Thucydides’ historical writings of the Peloponnesian War and crystallized by Niccolò Machiavelli’s book called ‘The Prince’. The theory held a dominant position in the study of IR for a period extending from World War II to the 1980s. It gives emphasis on the constraints on politics derived from the egoistic, selfish, skeptical, and power-seeking nature of human beings, who are essentially held by such repetitive patterns of behavior. Therefore, such patterns of human behavior have been manifested in a state, which is an entity of organized individuals. As a result, Realism argues that there is no international government—which is anarchic—in the competitive and conflictual nature of international relations where states are the principal actors (McGlinchey et al. 2007, pp. 15–16).

The famous realist Hans Morgenthau put six basic principles of realist theory; first, he suggested that political relationships are governed by objective rules deeply rooted in human nature; second, he argued that political leaders think and act in terms of interest defined as power; third, he acknowledge that the meaning of interest defined as power is not easily determined; fourth, universal moral principles cannot applied on the action of states in there abstract universal formulation but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstance of time and place; fifth, he also asserted that political realism does not identify

the moral aspiration of particular relation with the moral laws that governs the universe; and finally, he stressed the autonomy of political sphere, meaning political actions must be judged by political criteria (Andrew, 2011; p. 57).

However, realism is often criticized as extremely pessimistic since it views the inherently confrontational nature of the international system; it fails to predict or explain a significant transformation of the international system: the end of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union in 1991. Additionally, they are accused of concentrating heavily on the state as a monolithic entity, thereby disregarding other actors and forces within the state and also ignoring Realism international issues that are not directly related to the survival of the state (Scott and Andrew, 2003).

In general, realism has the following central assumptions: First, states are key actors in international politics. Other bodies, such as individuals and organizations, have limited power; secondly, international politics is essentially full of conflict and a struggle for power; thirdly, regardless of legal sovereign equality capability, difference is there; fourthly, states are unitary actors and their foreign policy is separated from domestic politics; fifth, states are rational actors considered by a decision-making process advancing national interests; and finally, power is an important concept in explaining and forecasting state behavior (James, 2001). In this respect, even though the theory contributed to analyzing the federal government and TPLF's power-centered behavior in the conflict and how their position posed a challenge to the diplomats who were shuttling in between Addis Ababa and Mekelle and how both parties tried to manipulate the international organization for their respective advantages, this theory undermines the role of international and regional institutions and also pays little attention to global norms and values, which more or less states are bound to.

2.2.2. Liberalism

Liberalism is the founding conceptual theory to understanding international relations at the end of the World War I (1914–1918) (McGlinchey and Walteers, 2017). It is a hallmark of contemporary democracy, seen by the widespread use of the term "liberal democracy" to characterize nations with free and fair elections, the rule of law, and safeguarding civil liberties. But when it comes to discussion within the context of IR theory, liberalism has become a separate and distinct field. Liberalism contains numerous concepts about how behaviors, institutions, and economic connections prevent and mitigate aggressive states. In comparison to realism, liberalism adds more factors to our perspective, in particular by taking

into account individuals and international organizations roles in International Relations (McGlinchey and Walteers, 2017).

Liberalism is an 'inside-out' approach to IR because liberals favor a world in which the endogenous determines the exogenous. Their challenge is to extend the legitimacy of domestic political arrangements found within democratic states to the relationships among all nation-states. There is pacification of foreign relations among liberal states; we can argue that it is a direct product of their shared legitimate political orders grounded on democratic principles and institutions (Scott and Andrew, 2003). It argues that conflict between democratic states is highly unlikely. This phenomenon has two parts to its explanation. First, as previously said, internal power constraints are a defining feature of democratic regimes. Secondly, democratic countries generally see each other as legitimate. Therefore, they have a higher degree of cooperation with each other than they do with non-democracies (McGlinchey and Walteers, 2017).

Most scholars argued that, we are in an international system structured by the liberal world, and there are factors that account for the liberal world. Deudney and Ikenberry (1999) describe three interlocking factors, First, international law and international agreements are accompanied by international and regional organizations to make an international system that goes beyond one of just states. A good example of this is the UN, which pools resources for common goals, offers for almost constant diplomacy between enemies and friends alike, and provides all member states a voice in the international community.

Second, the spread of free trade and capitalism through the efforts of influential liberal countries (Western countries) and international organizations like the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank creates an open, market-based, international economic system. This condition is mutually beneficial, as a high level of trade between states reduces the chance of conflict and makes war less likely as long as conflict disrupts or cancels the benefits (profits) of trade. The third element is international norms. Such norms favor democracy, human rights, international cooperation and the rule of law. When states take actions opposing to these norms, they are subject to numerous types of costs. Though, these norms are often contested since the wide difference in values around the globe (McGlinchey and Walteers, 2017).

In general, liberalism theory has the following assumptions in international politics: first, liberalism asserts that individuals are rational and moral creatures; second, history is a

progressive process categorized by a growing prospect of international cooperation and peace; third, mixed-actor replicas of international politics are more realistic than state-centric ones; fourth, economic interdependence and trade make war less likely; fifth, international law helps to encourage order and fosters rule-governed behavior among states; and sixth, democracy is inherently peaceful (Andrew, 2011). Therefore, liberalism theory is used to analyze how diplomats who were shuttling to deal with the North Ethiopian conflict evoking international norms and values shaped the conflicting parties' behavior in the conflict. Even though, in comparison to realism, liberalism attempts to emphasize the role of institutions, norms, and values, it narrows down the room for power in international politics and diplomacy as well.

2.2.3. Constructivism

Constructivism's theory of arrival in international relations is often related with the end of the Cold War, an event that realism and liberalism failed to account for. However, constructivism accounts for this issue by arguing that the social world is our making. Actors (commonly powerful ones, like leaders and influential citizens) continually shape and reshape the nature of international relations by their actions and interactions (McGlinchey and Walteers, 2017).

Constructivism perceives the world and what we know about it as socially constructed. This refers to the nature of reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology). Here is a good example given by the famous theorist Alexander Wendt. He states that "five North Korean nuclear weapons pose a greater threat to the United States than 500 British nuclear weapons." The meaning attached to the material structure (the ideational structure) is what leads to these identifications, not the nuclear weapons (the material structure). It is critical to comprehend that the United States and North Korea, as well as the United States and Britain, view their social relationships similarly since their interactions are predicated on a shared understanding or inter-subjectivity. The example also demonstrates how, without understanding the social context, nuclear weapons has no significance in and of themselves (Scott and Andrew, 2003).

Constructivists go beyond material reality, it contain the effect of ideas and beliefs on world politics. Unlike realists, constructivists claim that 'anarchy is what states make of it'. Meaning anarchy can be understood in various ways depending on the meaning that actors assign to it. This implies that reality is always being constructed, which creates the possibility of change. Put another way, meanings are fluid and subject to change over time based on the

attitudes and convictions that actors maintain. According to constructivist theory, agency and structure are mutually constitutive, meaning that agency shapes structures and structures shapes agency. The capacity to act is known as agency, whereas the worldwide system made up of both material and ideational components is referred to as structure (McGlinchey and Walteers, 2017).

Constructivism places a strong emphasis on social norms. These are typically described as expectations of proper conduct for performers portraying a certain identity. It is expected of states that conform to a particular identity that they follow the norms connected with that identity. This concept carries with it the notion that certain actions and behaviors are more appropriate than others (McGlinchey and Walteers, 2017). Therefore, this theory has contributed to the study by analyzing how parties in the North Ethiopian conflict constructed facts to mobilize both domestic and diplomatic support, including the parties who participated in the mediation process. In addition, it is also important to analyze the mediator's engagement to persuade the parties in the conflict's actions and behaviors to conform to a particular identity that is accepted in the wider international community. However, this theory undermines the material reality on the ground and gives more emphasis to the ideational factor.

2.2.4. Carrot and Stick Approaches of IR

The carrot-and-stick approach is one of the traditional motivational theories of English philosopher Gerny Bentham, who argued that as long as individuals are self-centered and motivated by the desire to escape pain and find pleasure, they will act only if they make sure their action will bring a reward, not a punishment. Therefore, we can argue that reward and punishment are what motivate a rational creature to discover desirable behaviors (Akcaý and Kanat, 2018). This allegory relates to the use of rewards and penalties to persuade the desired behavior in diplomatic negotiation.

The carrot-and-stick approach emerged in the International Relations discipline after the World War II period. This time witnessed the increasing influence of economic power in international politics when international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) were created. This approach's central argument is that states military and economic powers are being used in the form of reward or punishment to shape the attitude of a given state or party (Akcaý and Kanat, 2018). In this context, on the one hand, use foreign aid, loans, the removal of trade barriers, and the promise of military

protection as a carrot, and on the other hand, use coercive diplomacy—military force, economic sanctions, loan or aid suspension—as a stick. This will teach states how to behave in their internal or international arenas. Therefore, this approach will help to analyze the hard and soft powers of state instrumentalize to fulfill other states needs in general and intervention to halt conflicts in particular. This approach is mainly used to analyze the US and other Western powers' engagements to halt the conflict in northern Ethiopia. Such actors used aid as a carrot to convince the parties in the conflict, and when it failed, they transformed into coercive peacebuilding measures. However, it failed to analyze the crucial role of the African Union in the process of the conflict to reach the CoH agreement.

2.2.5. Game Theory

Game theory originated in mathematics; however, it has been applied to the social sciences since the time of John Von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern's 1944 classic *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* (Thomas et al., 2011, p. 66). Therefore, game theory employs a combination of mathematics and logic to analyze strategic interactions among decision-makers. Such actors act according to their strategic rationality to maximize gains or minimize losses in environments of uncertainty and inadequate information, which requires each actor to rank order preferences, put scenarios together, and try to estimate what the other actor is going to do (Paul and Mark 2012, p. 55).

Game theory is considered a helpful tool in political science and international relations to explain why negotiation or international cooperation sometimes fails while players in conflict or cooperation would be in the interest of negotiating or cooperating (Thomas et al., 2011, p. 68). Game theory assumes that winning is the ultimate goal of players; therefore, actors will act rationally. Accordingly, the game will end with the following results: If the game is a zero-sum game between parties called X and Y, if X wins, Y totally loses. Checkers, chess, mill, strategy, two-person poker, and two-man blackjack games are two-actor zero-sum games. All games end with one player (X or Y) having a score of plus 10, which means a win, and the other minus 10, which means a loss (James and Robert, 1977, p. 349).

On the other hand, if the game is a two-person non-zero-sum game or a variable-sum game, it can be played either cooperatively or non-cooperatively. If a game is cooperative, the players are allowed to communicate with one other directly and to exchange information in advance regarding their intended choices. But players in the game are "non-cooperative" by nature; the rules of the game ban direct communication. In such circumstances, it is possible for the players to cooperate implicitly through inferred communication, in which one player

interprets the other's intentions from the kinds of choices he makes in a long series of plays. Therefore, there is communication, if possible, directly, if not indirectly. However, a game is non-cooperative; overt communication is not allowed (James and Robert 1977; pp. 353-54). The "Prisoner's Dilemma" game is the best example of a two-person non-zero-sum game. In such a game, gains and losses are not necessarily equal; it is possible that both sides may gain and sometimes both parties can lose to a different degree (Paul and Mark, 2012, p. 55; Dunne et al., 2021, p. 119). Therefore, this theory is important to explain why parties in the conflict failed to negotiate before the November 2022 CoH Agreement and how the parties were undermining negotiation opportunities. However, this theory's main focus revolves only around the main part of the negotiation, when the parties in conflict are interested in engaging at a negotiable table. This means that it is less important to analyze the efforts made by the AU and the US to convince the parties to resolve the conflict through peaceful means.

2.2.6. Third Party Intervention

The post-Cold War period is characterized by the proliferation of civil and intra-state conflicts, predominantly in those regions that have passed through a complex process of decolonization. This created fertile ground for IR scholars, who have been widely engaged in the study of third-party actors' roles in conflict management. Particularly, there is a focus on the types of actors engaged in conflict management and the approaches that have been developed within and beyond traditional diplomacy (Irrera et al., 2015). Therefore, states are primary in continuing to make national and multinational efforts to minimize conflict impact. Similarly, non-state actors like non-governmental organizations (NGOs) gradually but constantly introduced themselves into the conflict management system (ibid.).

Third-party intervention in a border sense can be understood as 'actions taken by an actor that is not directly party to the crisis that are intended to reduce or remove one or more of the problems of the bargaining relationship and, therefore, to facilitate the termination of the crisis itself'(Irrera et al., 2015, cited Young, 1967). Over the last decades, the most common and visible form of intervention has been the use of military force, either unilaterally or multilaterally, like US intervention in Afghanistan under the Global War on Terror operation against al-Qaeda and the Taliban government (ibid.). In parallel, non-military interventions and official and unofficial conflict management methods have also been utilized in many contemporary conflicts. For instance, in official diplomacy, special envoys engage in negotiation on behalf of states or multilateral organizations or make use of good offices for conciliation and mediation (Irrera et al., 2015, cited Jeong 2010).

Basically, intervention is classified into three key categories: diplomatic, economic, and military. In this regard, diplomatic and military intervention actions are the two extremes in the model. However, economic forms of intervention occupy middle ground between the two above mentioned. Diplomacy is traditionally related to third-party techniques, as played by state and non-state actors like IOs and NGOs, including official public statements of condemnation or support for a warring party, promotion of a ceasefire, and direct diplomatic assistance to bring the negotiation table to an end (Irrera et al., 2015). On the other hand, military intervention, which is the non-neutral joining behavior of actors, provides military assistance to the actual use of warring actors in support of one of the disputants (ibid.). Economic interventions rather range from optimistic conditionality—the promise of economic assistance to a disputant—to hostile economic sanctions and cut aid.

Despite having different theories and approaches to international relations and conflict resolution that could explain the role of shuttle diplomacy in the cessation of hostility agreements in the north Ethiopian conflict, the third-party intervention approach, for different reasons, could examine and explain the shuttle diplomacy contribution to ending the north Ethiopian conflict better than other theories and approaches. Firstly, the third-party intervention claims that the AU and the US, which were not directly parties to the conflict, took action to facilitate the end of the conflict through negotiation. This actor's intervention also manifests in the form of diplomatic, economic, and military intervention. Therefore, this theory is suitable for analyzing the diplomatic intervention of the AU and US in the North Ethiopian conflict, in particular the shuttle diplomacy intervention.

Secondly, this approach incorporates relevant elements of other theories like realism, liberalism, and the carrot-and-stick approach for this study. For instance, the third-party intervention approach to conflict resolution emphasizes both state and non-state actors (multilateral organizations) engaging in negotiation. In addition, the wider options of third-party intervention types enable the researcher to navigate realism, carrot-and-stick approaches, and liberalism through the lens of diplomatic, economic, and military intervention. Third-party intervention approach as well as touch game theory. However, unlike game theory, which focuses on the conflict parties' behavior in the main part of the negotiation, third-party intervention helps to analyze the whole engagement of the third party from A to Z. Therefore, a third-party intervention approach is more suitable for the study as a binding concept of the above-mentioned theories and approaches.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NORTH ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT: CAUSES, COURSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Introduction

The conflict between GFDRE and TPLF has different names, like the Tigray conflict or the North Ethiopian conflict. Commentators call the conflict the Tigray conflict because it was mostly conducted in the Tigray region against ethnic Tigrians. One can argue that such a type of naming was deeply rooted in the ethnicization of the conflict. However, others are calling it the North Ethiopian conflict because of the geographical nature of the conflict. In addition, the conflict expanded beyond the Tigray region to the neighboring regions of Amhara and Afar, affecting the security of several other parts of the country and severely weakening Ethiopia's social fabric. Therefore, the researcher used the former to refer to the conflict.

Even though several works of literature were there regarding the cause analysis of the conflict and the course and consequences, this study attempts to give emphasis and contribute to reframing the cause analysis and periodization of the conflict. Moreover, the study uses the nature of the conflict as a historical background, which implies how shuttle diplomacy engagement was affected by the nature of the conflict. This chapter exclusively focuses on the nature of the conflict. Hence, it discussed the root and immediate causes of the conflict; the course of the conflict: which is divided into three phases; and lastly, the humanitarian, socio-economic, and political consequences of the conflict are analyzed and examined.

3.1. Causes of the Conflict

The causes of the north Ethiopian conflict have been debated and are expected to continue to be debated between scholars, politicians, and even actors who engaged in the conflict. Hence, there is no agreement among such actors; this section deals with different arguments raised about the root and immediate cause of the conflict, in particular focusing on the post-political transition period.

3.1.1. Root Causes of the Conflict

I. Power Rivalry

Power competition between the conflicting parties was the root and essential cause of the conflict. The revolutionary TPLF, which was formed as an insurgent group in 1975, became the head of the biggest and most effective coalition rebel groups by the end of the 1980s

(Yohannes, 2018). Then the TPLF-led Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of ethno-regional parties, toppled the military socialist regime of Derg and seized power in 1991 (ibid.). The TPLF dominated the politics of Ethiopia, which is characterized as an incremental authoritarian and intolerant regime, and had continued for nearly three decades under Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the EPRDF chairman who led Ethiopia for two decades until his death in 2012, and his successor Hailemariam Dessalegn (Blanchard, 2021).

The widespread popular protest was mainly staged by youths in Oromia and Amhara, which are a part of the largest portion of Ethiopia's total population, respectively, against the ruling regime of the EPRDF for about three uninterrupted years (from 2015-2018) against the TPLF's dominance in Ethiopia's political landscape and a power struggle within the coalition that forced the TPLF to open a way to another political party in a coalition. This brought the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), presently renamed the Prosperity Party (functioning as Oromia-PP) (Tefera, 2019).

The OPDO and Amhara National Democratic Party (ANDP), which represent the two largest ethnic groups of Oromia and Amhara, formed an anti-TPLF—Tigray minority ethnic group—dominance alliance called Oro-Mara (ኦሮ-ማራ). This marked the beginning of power competition and manifested in the PM Abiy Ahmed (PhD) election among EPRDF central committee members. After PM Abiy took office, he challenged the robust and illegitimate TPLF supremacy in federal government political offices (Jima, 2023). He fired TPLF members from key federal positions where they dominated for several years, irrespective of their population size. This made TPLF leaders retreat to their origin, Mekelle, and began to undermine Abiy's administration (ibid.). In addition, they orchestrated propaganda to distance the Tigray people and elongate their powers. Particularly following the postponement of the general national election, which the TPLF labeled as unconstitutional, the TPLF parliament members, including the TPLF representative and House of the Federation speaker, Keria Ibrahim, resigned and returned to Mekelle, vowing to maintain the Constitution (Jima, 2023, citing Jima & Meissner, 2021).

However, Lt. Gen. Tsadikan G/Tensay argued that the root cause of the conflict is the incompatibility of two different state building projects. The one was started by Emperor Menelik II, who was a unitary model of government that surfaced among groups of people in particular region [Amhara Shewa] hegemony over Ethiopia in culture, history, and narration.

On the other hand, the state building project, which is the antithesis of the first project, was successfully interrupted when EPRDF came to power. However, the Abiy-led government wants to restore the unitary model of state building by keep the Tigray people by force. So to precede the Minilik project, eliminating the main threat of TPLF is a primary measure (Tigray TV, 2021).

The Amhara elites, who have a strong influence in the federal government, have opposed the EPRDF-led government pillar of the new state building project, which is the right of peoples to self-determination up to secession. When the EPRDF weakened both from internal and external factors, the pro-Mnilik state-building project supporters became empowered. Therefore, PM Abiy Ahmed has been an agent or supporter of this camp (Tigray TV, 2021).

The ideological difference can also be mentioned as the root cause of the conflict. PM Abiy Ahmed proposed an economic reform to replace the state-led development strategy (developmental state model) of the EPRDF with a neoliberal economic system in which foreign intervention has been raised (Ethio Forum, 2020, March 2). This shift became another significant factor dividing the TPLF and the federal government. The TPLF is against the neoliberal economic doctrine and believes that the country should improve the number of local investors who can compete with their international counterparts. However, TPLF dominated many economic sectors like mining, agriculture, and others in the name of local investors to secure its narrow interests (Abdulkadr et al., 2021).

II. Scapegoating TPLF for the Sin of the Whole

The new PM Abiy Ahmed-led administration and the former incumbent TPLF rift widened when he branded the entire EPRDF period as the ‘dark years’ and initiated the reversal measures against the TPLF policies and interests (Meester et al., 2019). Like the peace deal with Eritrea and the demonetization of old currency notes, which were also perceived as means to break the TPLF’s power (ibid.). In particular, after the June 2018 bomb attack on the Mesqel Square rally for PM Abiy, Abiy accused the former TPLF security service leaders of the attack and called them ‘Day Hayne’ (*የቀን ጅብ/yeqen jib*) and alien (*ፀጉረ ልውጥ/Tsegure lewuet*) (Yayesew, 2024).

In addition, documentary films were released on official state-owned media about the corrupt and human rights crimes committed during the TPLF-led EPRDF period. Those documentaries suggested that human rights abuses and violations were committed by the

TPLF, specifically mentioning “Tigrigna language speakers,” despite the fact that all EPRDF members were accountable for the violations (Abdulkadr et al., 2021, cited Fana, 2018; EBC, 2018). According to Crisis Group (2020, November 10) human rights groups estimate that security forces killed over 1,000 Ethiopians during the 2015–2017 protests, and the government accepted detaining over 29,000 people, including opposition leaders, in the crackdown. However, such government action was considered an extraordinary barrage of negative propaganda against the anti-Tigray movement by the TPLF, and many Tigrayans saw these campaigns as having increasing overtones of ethnic discrimination (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 155).

III. Ethio-Eretria Rapprochement

Ethiopians and Eritreans who share similar ethnicity, culture, history, and mythology have a long history of relations that can be traced back to the Axum civilization. Prior to the 1880s, Eritrea had been part and parcel of Ethiopia (Terefe, 2019, p. 35). However, since the late 1880s in general and after the battle of Adwa in particular, Italy has colonized Eritrea and forced it to separate from its parent state, Ethiopia. This had continued until 1952, when Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia by UN resolution and later united in 1962 (Terefe, 2019, pp. 35-38). This change had triggered secessionist movements by different armed groups, and one of the most prominent was the EPLF, formed in the 1970s (ibid.).

Following the early formation of the TPLF in 1975, the two forces, despite their political and ideological differences, had been working in collaboration to overthrow the military Derg regime. In 1991, both groups took control of Addis Ababa and Asmara, and Eritrea got recognition in 1993. However, the two countries economic and political incompatible interests led to the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrea war, which resulted in the deaths estimated to be 70,000 to 100,000 on both sides (Terefe, 2019, pp. 35-38). The Algiers Agreement, which concluded the war and paved the way for the establishment of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) in 2002 to demarcate the disputing borders between the two countries, Though, the attempts were not put into practice because the commission decided to send Badime to Eritrea, which Ethiopia rejected the EEBC in 2003 (Terefe, 2008, p. 47). Therefore, the two countries remained in a `no war, no peace` situation and both conspired to undermine the other by supporting opposition armed groups militarization of the borders until PM Abiy took office (Terefe, 2019, p. 49).

The domestic political dynamics in Ethiopia have resulted Ethio-Eritrea rapprochement, which was a major development in the region (Terefe, 2019, p. 50). PM Abiy stated in his inaugural speech that the conflict between the two states must come to an end, and the Executive Committee of the ruling party, the EPRDF, decided to accept unconditionally the Algiers Peace Agreement and the EEBC's decision on June 5, 2018 (Abdulkadr et al., 2021).

However, the TPLF Central Committee, in an emergency meeting held on May 28, 2018, by the Executive Committee of the TPLF, passed the decisions after reviewing the report submitted by the TPLF Executive Committee in order to peacefully resolve the Ethio-Eritrean conflict. Even though TPLF admired the decision of the EPRDF Executive Committee as appropriate and timely to bring lasting peace and was in line with its peace police, the TPLF central committee concluded that the final decision was made and announced to the public without the participation of partner organizations and without detailed discussion was wrong (ENA, 2018, May 28).

A week later, President Isaias' speech on martyr's day, June 20, 2018, accountable the TPLF regime and its paymasters for adversarial relations between the two countries, undermined the TPLF regime-led government, and the Ethiopian people became angry and rebelled against it, which was aptly described as "Game Over." In addition, he warned The TPLF cliques and other vultures, dissatisfied by the ongoing changes, will not refrain from obstructing the rapprochement and working for the perpetuation of tension with Eritrea. Finally, he appreciates and welcomes the new administration's call to peace and again warns that it will require time and efforts to remove the TPLF's toxic and malignant legacy and bring about a congenial climate (EMI, 2018, June 20). This statement clearly implied that the Eritrean government categorized the TPLF as a foe of both itself and the new administration.

In the next month, Abiy and his delegation visited Eritrea to initiate the peace deal and signed the secret Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship on July 9, 2018. This marks the Ethio-Eritrea rapprochement, which reconfigured the politics of the Horn of Africa, and it ends the 'no war, no peace' situation with Eritrea, which had triumphed for nearly two decades (Plaut & Vaughn, 2023, p. 159). A week later, President Issais also paid a visit to Ethiopia.

Despite the fact that the acceptance of the Algiers Agreement was greeted by many Ethiopians and Eritreans who have been waiting for the reconciliation, not a few people understood the rapprochement as one of the government's provocative alliances with political

groups who were enemies not just of the TPLF but of Ethiopia itself (Plaut & Vaughanh, 2023, p. 155). The TPLF leaders didn't join the delegation to Eritrea and called for reconsideration of the decision, and protests were observed in some parts of the Tigray Regional State at the early stage of the rapprochement. This step was the first fuel for distrust between the TPLF and the federal government (Abdulkadr et al., 2021; Terefe, 2019, p. 51).

Some commentators and political parties in Tigray argued that the rapprochement is a strategy to weaken the TPLF used by PM Abiy and Isayas Afeworki (Terefe, 2019, pp. 70–71). Similarly, Manek & Omer (2020) stated that both Abiy and Isaias have a bloodlust for the TPLF. This shared hostility toward Ethiopia's former TPLF-led regime, rather than any brotherly love, was the principal motivation for their commencement of diplomatic relations. In addition, Plaut & Vaughanh (2023, p. 161) opined that Abiy and Isayas settled their differences before they began planning how to remove a mutual enemy. Accordingly, they have conducted a series of at least 14 bilateral visits from the time they signed the peace deal until war broke out as they planned what to do next. The meetings were mostly one-on-one, without aides or note-takers (Walsh, 2021).

Similarly, General Tsadikan, who was a combatant of the TPLF and later General Chief of Staff of the ENDF until 2001, had an interview with Ethio Forum (2020, March 2), before the North Ethiopian conflict broke out. This general also attempted to mediate between the federal government and the TPLF but failed. Later, as the threat of war mounted and he sensed the danger, he jetted from Addis Ababa to Mekelle and joined the TDF. He brought a wealth of expertise and deep knowledge of the Ethiopian military, which he put to good effect (Plaut & Vaughanh, 2023, p. 192). However, by the time of the interview, Tsadikan was a board member of ENDF and Pro but not a member of TPLF. He stated that:

Isayas has been a historical grievance and contempt against us [TPLF]. This invincible mentality led him to aggression toward us, who we treat as close friends. However, the victory was in favor of us [the TPLF-led government], and we broke his baseless invincibility rhetoric; still, after long years, he wants to retaliate.

In addition, General Tsadikan stated that because of the federal government is a close ally of the Eritrean government, it has lost the confidence of the people of Tigray in the extent to which the EFDRE protects them from Eritrean revenge.

The Ethiopian government has to stop Isayas's domestic political intervention;; otherwise, it has a negative implication....now they're very doubtful people in Tigray: either the federal government defends us or coordinates with Isayas if he has to take revenge measures.

One can understand from the above speech that not only the TPLF but also the people of Tigray perceived the Ethio-Eritrean rapprochement as a real threat. Of course, this is fuelled by the continuously deteriorating relationship between the federal government and the TPLF on the one hand and the flourishing of the federal and Eritrean governments on the other hand. For instance, the last two back-and-forth official trips by the heads of the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments before the war seemed to be preparations for an irreversible war against the TPLF. In July 2020, Abiy visited Eritrea's training facility at Sawa, where young Eritreans are taken as conscripts for their national service. This makes him the first ever foreign leader to visit Sawa (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 167). This was followed by President Isaias going to the Ethiopian air force base at Deberezeyt in October 2020, less than a month before the outbreak of war (ibid.).

The involvement of Eritrean government forces in the war was also muted, and there has been no acknowledgement from both governments since the outbreak of the war in November 2020 until March 2021. Most pro-Ethiopian government commentators mention that the unprovoked attack of the TPLF against the Eritrean capital Asmara more than 22 times by medium-range missiles was the specific time Eritrea acted accordingly. The United States also strongly condemned Tigray's unjustifiable attacks against Eritrea and its efforts to internationalize the conflict (Plaut & Vaughan, p. 1993). However, TDF members argued that the Eritrean government allegation that the TPLF fired missiles towards Asmara a week after the war broke out and that the provocation to engage in the conflict was totally false.

The Eritrean army started attacking the TDF in the early days of the war at Humera, and the Eritrean government mobilized its army towards the Badme and Adiabo border areas of Ethiopia and Eritrea. By the time the Eritrean government had almost full control of Adiabo, the TDF fired Missael at Asmara (Tigray TV, 2021). Finally, on March 20, 2021, PM Abiy reluctantly acknowledged that Eritrean forces had participated in the war while at the same time declaring that they were about to withdraw (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 190).

IV. The Creation of Prosperity Party in Expense of EPRDF

The Ethiopian People's Revolution Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition of four political parties was the dominant party in the Ethiopian multi-party political system for nearly three decades. The TPLF initially fought for an independent Tigray state, gradually revised its political program to a national state, and mobilized other armed groups to induce power, which was the center of gravity in the coalition (Jima, 2023, citing Clapham, 2009).

Accordingly, ethnic Tigrayans in general and former TPLF combatants in particular dominated key offices of government. For instance, between 1991 and 2018, Ethiopia's national security and military institutions had each been led by only two individuals, all four of them former TPLF combatants during the Derg period: Kifle Gebremedhin and Getachew Assefa headed the National Intelligence and Security Service; General Tsadkan Gebretensae and General Samora Yunis were chiefs of staff, and all those were fired (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023; p. 128). In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and other different federal administrations exerted physical exertion, almost exclusive management over economic aid, foreign loans, and the leasing of public land to amass billions of greenbacks (Jima, 2023, citing Jones, 2020).

However, the TPLF's core position among the EPRDF grew weaker with the death of its strategic leader and Ethiopian PM Meles Zenawi in 2012, and elemental parties pushed back against what they perceived as TPLF dominance within the coalition (Ostebo and Tronvoll, 2020). In particular, after the 2018 political reform, the TPLF's influence in the coalition dramatically declined and was neutralized in December 2019, when it pulled out of PM Abiy and allied the EPRDF coalition parties into a single party called the Prosperity Party. The party also merges new ethnic-based political parties: the Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP); the Benishangul-Gumuz Democratic Party (BDP); the Somali Democratic Party; the Gambela Peoples Democratic Movement (GPDM); and the Harari National League (HNL). This allows all the regional political parties to engage in decision-making at the federal level (Abdulkadr et al., 2021). Furthermore, the formation of a unified political party was not a new concept for the EPRDF. It was on the agenda for several years, even when the TPLF's most influential leader, the late PM Meles Zenawi, was leading the party (ibid.).

Both the TPLF and PP tried to justify their positions on the demise of the EPRDF and the creation of the PP. PM Abiy came up with the vision of synergy, "Medemer," so that all

political parties leading different regions could be integrated into the federal government (Abdulkadr et al., 2021). In addition, what he characterized as divisive ethnic politics, which increased ethnic conflict in Ethiopia until it reached “an alarming level,” was taken as a push factor to merge the EPRDF’s ethno-regional parties and allied ones into a new PP in late 2019 (Yonas and Kassahun, 2021).

On the other hand, Tigray Central Command member General Tsadiakan G/Tensay argued that a series of controversies were observed between the GFDRE and TPLF, which contributed to the conflict. One controversy was the illegal dismantlement of the EPRDF umbrella party and the creation of a new PP that lacks legal criteria (Tigray TV, 2021). TPLF perceived the PM move as an extra constitutional, reactionary power grab that vulnerable its authority and regional autonomy (Jima, 2023, cited Jones, 2020). In addition, TPLF leaders supposed that the procedure of forming a unified prosperity party was wrong since the decision was made at the center by the council of ministers, while they preferred to first discuss the issue of joining PP with their members (Abdulkadr et al., 2021).

Scholars and political party leaders also criticized the PP creation and argued its creation was one of a series of systematic reforms launched by PM Abiy to reduce TPLF influence and reverse the federalist system for which they fought for nearly two decades (Yonas and Kassahun, 2021). They were claiming that it aimed to reduce their status of self-administration and self-rule. One of Abiy’s most prominent critics, Oromo opposition politician Jawar Mohammed, characterized the PP’s formation as a shift away from multinational federalism to a centralized state, blaming the PM was steering the country back toward authoritarian rule (Jima, 2023; Blanchard, 2021). This unified party formation was not also acceptable for Lemma, who was president of the Oromia region and the engineer of political reform. He said that forming the PP was not completed in a timely manner because the country was under reform and the people who participated in the elections in 2015 did not vote for prosperity (Abdulkadr et al., 2021).

V. COVID-19 and General National Election Postponement

The world-wide pandemic known as Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19), which was reported in Ethiopia on March 31st, 2020, has further challenged and complicated the transitional process in general and the 2020 election in particular. One of the political impacts of the pandemic was the declaration of a state of emergency to handle the adverse effects, which was at the time the term of office of the government ended (Yonas and Kassahun, 2021).

The Ethiopian government decided to delay the scheduled 6th national elections for an indefinite period, asserting COVID-19 caused a constitutional crisis. The decision comes from four possible scenarios that are presented by the ruling party to manage the constitutional crisis (Abdulkadr et al., 2021; Jima, 2023; Yonas and Kassahun, 2021). Those are declaring a state of emergency, dissolving the parliaments, seeking a constitutional interpretation and amending the Constitution. Then the House of peoples Representatives, which is entitled to issue constitutional interpretation, made a decision conforming to the postponement of the election (Jima, 2023; Abdulkadr et al., 2021).

However, the opposition political parties have divided on the decision made by the ruling party. Some political parties agree with the postponed election. On the other hand, the decision was not welcomed by the TPLF, which is the incumbent in charge of Tigry regional state, and other opposition parties, who argued that the COVID-19 pandemic was not an acceptable reason to postpone the election. It decided to reject the legitimacy of the federal government as well as its laws and proclamations after the last day of the government administration on September 30th, 2020 (Abdulkadr et al., 2021). This marked the beginning of divergence between the PP-led federal government and the TPLF on the election matter.

General Tsadikan argued that the postponed election was another issue subjected to the polarization of TPLF and GFDRE. The TPLF positioned itself so that the prevention of COVID-19 could be practiced hand in hand with the election process, but the federal government is in opposition (Tigray TV, 2021). PM Abiy explained that the main responsibility of the federal government is to protect and defend the constitution. Therefore, he cautioned that the government will be forced to take decisive action if they hold a `fake election` (የጨረባ ምርጫ/ *yechereba mircha*) (BBC News Amharic, 2020, May 7).

Hence, the TPLF unconstitutionally decided to hold regional elections and established its own regional election board without the approval of the Ethiopian election board, which is the only organization responsible for managing elections. Even though the Ethiopian federal parliament declared the election unconstitutional four days before it took place, the TPLF conducted the regional election with more than 2.7 million (97%) official turnout and five opposition parties participating on September 9, 2020. TPLF was declared to be winning with 98.2% of the seats, and the party formed its government (Jima cited Blanchard, 2020; Mills, 2021; Meester et al., 2019; Abdulkadr et al., 2021).

The federal government again declared Tigray's regional government election as fake and unconstitutional, rejected the TPLF cabinet and legislature, lost interest in allocating a budget, and warned leaders it would take law and order action if necessary. The ruling party and other opposition political parties like ECFCJ and NAMA denounce the election. The Crisis Group (2020, November 10) and Deleersnyder (2021) stated a constitutional dispute over delayed national elections that brought the spat between the federal and TPLF and gradually led the federal and regional authorities to challenge one another's legitimacy, and finally get into brutal conflict with each other.

3.1.2. Immediate Causes of the Conflict

The sum of all the above-mentioned causes brought the bloodiest North Ethiopian conflict on November 3, 2020, when an alleged raid by TPLF armed unities against the North Command of Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and the TPLF officials admit the first bullet was fired by them (Tigray TV, 2012). In order to control the heavy weapons of the military, fight the central government, demise it (Jima, 2023; Abdulkadr et al., 2021).

On the other hand, General Tsadikan argued that by the time of early November, the TPLF had only two choices: either surrender to the federal government or take measures to self-defense. Therefore, the November 3 attack was the 11 o'clock TPLF's measure against the ENDF in general and the North Ethiopian Command in particular. It was conducted by some ENDF divisions and Tigray Special Forces. And the narrative against the TPLF for blaming and criminalizing the attack by the North Ethiopian Command was just a pretext for war and mobilizing the people to side with the Federal Government (Tigray TV, 2012).

In addition, General Tsadikan tried to opine that the pre-November 3 attack federal government moves were provocative. For instance, the North Command, which was set up to defend Eritrean aggression, was divided into two and the North Western Command was established. In fact, the establishment of the new command was to control the contestation areas of Amhara and Tigray [bordering with Sudan and Eritrea] to avoid some threats from the TPLF. The central government was also interested in pulling out strategic military hardware from the Tigray; however, the people opposed it again. The central government tried to change 6 to 7 north command military leaders. Military mobilization from central to north, particularly in Gonder, Woldia, and Kobo, clearly indicates that the war was unavoidable (Tigray TV, 2021). In addition, there were significant movements of federal troops in the days preceding November 3. According to a UN diplomat, units had been

withdrawn from several areas of Southern Ethiopia including Hararghe, Somali in the Southeast, and from Welega zone in Oromia region (Foreign Policy, 2020, November 16).

Following the attack, the federal government declared a law enforcement order for the ENDF to enforce. The Amhara Special Forces, militia and Eritrean Defense Forces were involved in the war alongside the Ethiopian Defense Forces. The federal government gave nine days in three rounds (three days in each round) for the TPLF leaders to surrender, though they never accepted this offer (Abdulkadr et al., 2021). This marked the official starting day of the bloodiest civil war of the 21st century. And the following part has discussed some of the rounds of the conflict.

3.2. The Course of the Conflict (2020-2022)

There are different perceptions with regard to the categorization of the conflict rounds. However, most commentators are categorized into three phases. The first phase was from November 4 2020, when the first bullet fired, to the end of November, when ENDF and allied forces managed to control almost the entire region of Tigray except Kola Tembin and some other areas where the TPLF leaders and their combatants hid themselves. The second phase of conflict started in early January 2021, when the TPLF launched some major defensive attacks against the allied forces and recaptured Mekelle at the end of June 2021. Furthermore, the attack extended to push the allied forces out of Tigray and advance to Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, and again, the counter-offensive of the government forced the TPLF back to Tigray. Finally, this phase was completed with a unilateral humanitarian truce. The third phase of the conflict started in August 2022, after months of relative calm down. This extends to the Pretoria CoH agreement on November 2, 2022.

3.2.1. The First Phase of Conflict (November, 2020 - January, 2020)

The very short period of the war was the first round of conflict, which took only three weeks and a few days. On November 3, at mid-night, forces loyal to the TPLF (including Tigray Special Forces (TFS), regional militiamen, some ENDF soldiers, and federal police) started the 'pre-emptive' attack on the North Ethiopian Command barracks around Dansha and several other areas simultaneously. In addition, it launched an attack on the border areas of the Amhara regional government via Soroka and Kiraker. However, the Amhara Special Forces (ASF) and militiamen defend (EBC, 2020, November 4). This, conformed to General Tsadikan's above statement and Sekutire Getachew's statement in the Tigrigna media

interview, said a pre-emptive strike was "imperative." Sekutire added, "Should we be waiting for them to launch attacks first? No," (France 24, 2020, December 27).

This was followed by the federal government launching what PM Abiy has named a "law enforcement operation" against the Tigray regional government "to restore the rule of law and the constitutional order." The ENDF, ASF, and allied militias launched countermeasures. The government has declared a state of emergency in the northern Tigray region. The federal government operation aimed to contain the attack, save the ENDF and Federal Police and their logistics and armaments, and weaken the TPLF capability (EBC, 2020, November 6).

In the middle of November, TPLF fired a rocket for the first time towards two cities in the Amhara region: Bahir Dar and Gondar, and Eretria Asmera. The attack targeted airports, which the TPLF claimed were facilitating military operations against Tigry. TPLF President Debretsion Gebremichael accused Eritrea of providing military support to the Ethiopian government and sending troops across the border, and they have been fighting Eritrean forces on several fronts. However, Eritrea has denied the allegations (Welle, 2021).

The government's military operation against the TPLF has three phases. The first phase was focused on reorganizing, consolidating, and mending the chain of command of the Northern Command, which was dismantled by the attack. The second phase was aimed at liberating occupied areas, recapturing stolen military equipment and military camps, destroying stolen strategic military weapons, rescuing members of the defense force that was forcefully detained and encircling Mekelle town. The third and crucial phase objectives were to capture Mekelle and bring the TPLF leaders to justice (ENA, 2020, November 23).

Accordingly, the government reorganized the scattered army, including those who were able to defend and escaped to Eritrea from the November 3 attacks. In addition, it called for retired former senior ENDF generals to lead the army. The federal government airstrike started on November 5 and continued, and the allied forces, including the Eritrean Defense Force (EDF), coordinated ground attacks against the TPLF in several fronts. The Ethiopian government and their allies made rapid territorial advances. They seized the western and southern parts of Tigray on November 12th and gradually occupied the main towns in Tigray, like Dansha, Humera, Shiraro, Shire, Adwa, Axum, Adigrat, Alamata, Mehoni, Chercher, Korem, and other places. Finally, they took control of Mekelle on November 28; just over three weeks after the war broke out. (ENA, 2020, November 23; Pellet, 2021; Crisis Group, 2021, April 14).

Nevertheless, the fighting continued in rural areas, and the TPLF said they would keep fighting. The federal government declared victory. PM Abiy said that federal forces had taken full control of Mekelle and that police would henceforth pursue the TPLF leadership (Blanchard, 2021). There are two main reasons mentioned for the victory in a short period of time: one is that the army "fights hard" in a victimhood mentality, and the second is the coordinated and complete logistics supplies, which were crucial to the success of the campaign (BBC News Amharic, 2021, February 9). Furthermore, TPLF ill-preparedness and miscalculation have also an essential contribution to the defeat (Yayeseu, 2024; p. 158).

After victory, the federal government installed a provisional administration led by Mulu Nega (PhD) at both regional and lower administrative units in Tigray. However, he was replaced by Abrham Belay (PhD) in May 2021 in accordance with a six-month performance review, as per the PM office statement. The administration was focused on rebuilding the region, resuming essential services, and providing humanitarian aid. In the meantime, the federal government continued searching for the TPLF leaders and forced them to surrender, be killed, and be captured. Among them, founding members of the TPLF were killed, including Ambassador Siyoum Mesfin (former foreign minister), Abay Tsehay (former minister of federal affairs and head of Sugar Factory Corporation), Sekoture Getachew (the TPLF spokesperson), Zeray Asgedom (former head of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority) Asmelash Woldeeselassie and (former Ethiopian parliament chief whip), Daniel Assefa (former head of the Tigray finance bureau) (Abdulkadr et al., 2021). And others, like Kiria Ibrahim (former speaker of the House of Federation) and Sebehat Nega (founding member of the TPLF), surrendered and were captured.

3.2.2. The Second Phase the Conflict (January 2021- August 2022)

Before the federal forces controlled Mekelle, TPLF leaders left the city to continue the guerrilla warfare under TDF banner and went to Kola Tembin, where strong power base was. However, the federal government's strong surveillance and operations kept them under lifesaving mood (Crisis Group, 2021, April 14). The January 2021 TPLF leaders meeting were resulted the military operations and structural blue print to fire the allied and EDF forces, which they called `enemy` (Yayeseu, 2024, p. 207). This was the start of second round of conflict, in which TPLF lunched defensive attack¹.

¹ Interview with Fana G/Senebet (PhD): Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University (March 03/2024).

The TDF used guerrilla tactics to attack vital supply lines. These eroded government force morale and allowed the TDF to seize weapons and ammunition to equip. The exiled government of Tigray also issued a statement calling on the youth of Tigray to come and fight for their people (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 194). The first major defensive attack of the TPLF was on March 18, around Wagihmira Zone, Amhara Region, and Workrdino, which was able to secure a decisive victory. On May 1, 2021, the Ethiopian government classified the TPLF as a terrorist organization, suggesting that the federal government has no plan to seek a political solution to the conflict (Pellet, 2021). This indicated that the government cannot dismantle TPLF forces, and they are still operating in some pockets of the region. This guerrilla fighting converted into conventional warfare on June 11, 2021, when a major counter-offensive `operation Alula Abanega` started on Yechila around the central zone of the Tigray region (Yayesew, 2024, p. 231).

In this operation, TDF advance territorial gain, in particular Adigrat, was recaptured on June 22, and on June 28, they marched into Mekelle from several directions to a rapturous reception (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023; p. 205). On the same day, after eight months of being in Tigray, the federal government and the Tigray provisional administration fled the regional capital and most areas of Tigray except in the south and west, where the Amhara Regional State claimed (Abdulkadr et al., 2021). EDF also withdrew from much of the central parts of Tigray that they had captured (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 204).

3.2.2.2. Re-Capturing Mekelle: The Secrete Behind

Recapturing Mekelle was an extraordinary success for the TPLF and a surprise for the people of Ethiopia and the international community as well. As William Davison opined, what makes it surprising is how quickly the armed resistance has not just consolidated control in rural areas with that popular support but has also been able to launch counter-offensives (Crisis Group, 2022, August 4). Three months after the recapturing of Mekelle, PM Abiy addressed the Ethiopian parliament that TPLF forces were totally defeated as follows:

What I would like to tell the people of Tigray, the friends of Tigray, and the honorable parliament is that the TPLF has now become like grain powder that has been dispersed by the wind. We can't collect it again and make it edible powder
Crisis Group (2021, April 14).

There are dozens of reasons mentioned to answer why TPLF able to retake Mekelle beyond the federal government argument of withdrawal areas was no longer a “center of gravity for conflicts” which rejected by TPLF (Al Jazeera, 2021, November 4). The federal government battlefield losses were the predominant factor. Plaut and Vaughan (2023, p. 201) argued that underestimating TPLF capability had been an Ethiopian government blind spot. However, recruitment had increased TDF numbers considerably and organized at corps and army levels. This transforms them from a disjointed aggregate of semi-militia units into a uniform and structured army, one that would be capable of launching a conventional war. In addition they stated that Ethiopia and its allies had limited and largely inaccurate intelligence was accountable for their defeat. This led the federal government deceived regards TDF military concentration cites and adopted lofty plans. This conformed to anonymous interviewee that argued the ENDF capacity limitation in general was one of the reasons to the defeat².

The significant public support that TPLF enjoyed was another factor contributing to TPLF triumph. The TPLF is deeply rooted in the people of Tigray; the people's support is not only derived from the three decades of political hegemony and belongings sentiment but also from development programs implemented in Tigray and the protection of Tigrayan interests (Pellet, 2021). In addition to the grave human rights violations and atrocities against civilians committed by the federal government and other allied forces.³ Fana stated that the scale-up atrocity, particularly in Western Tigray region, forced the people to join the TPLF.

Plaut and Vaughan (2023, p. 193) shared this opinion and argued that Tigrayan youths understood that they had only two options: fight or flee. To remain in their homes would lead to abuse or death. The second option was no longer feasible. The border with Sudan was closed to Tigrayans after allied forces advanced there, and in early December 2020, Ethiopian and Eritrean troops were deployed to prevent Tigrayans from reaching Sudan. This forced thousands of Tigrayans to join the guerrilla operations.

The Crisis Group (2021, April 14) also argued that the presence of Eritrean and Amhara forces fighting alongside the federal government has galvanized Tigray resistance to the intervention. A large number of Tigray people opposed the presence of such forces and are outraged at the atrocities both are reported to have committed against civilians. Anonymous also argued that the siege mentality perceived by the people of Tigray has contributed to the

² Interview with Anonymous: the person familiar with the North Ethiopia conflict (March 26/2024).

³ Interview with Fana G/Senebet (PhD): Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University (March 03/2024).

people standing alongside the TPLF. This support translated into food and basic medical supplies, and it was notable to remember comments from PM Abiy about how, in the end, the Ethiopian military faced a popular insurgency, meaning the ENDF forces were attacked by Tigray villagers and ENDF retreated to the people who would protect—Amhara (Crisis Group, 2022, August 4).

Wiliyam Davison argued that a very resilient TPLF resistance could be mentioned as one factor. This resilience was built upon the long history that those TPLF leaders have of resistance in Tigray (Crisis Group, 2022, August 4). This also combined with increasing pressure from the International community. The factor was the provisional government unable to control the new structure. The government was focused on replacing TPLF higher officials and the middle and lower administrative branch of the government remained loyal to TPLF.⁴ This made the provisional government enjoy little support.

The Ethiopian government declared an immediate and unilateral ceasefire in Tigray on June 28, 2021, and it extends to the end of the farming season in September 2021. As per a response to a request from the Tigray provisional administration to allow the delivery of aid, to give the TPLF time to re-think and rural farmers a chance to return to their regular agricultural activities to lessen vulnerability to food insecurity in the region (Abdulkadr et al., 2021; Pellet, 2021).

However, the government's declaration of a ceasefire did not end the war; rather, the TPLF continued to reclaim the Tigray territories and break the siege. TPLF leaders condemned it as cover for the battlefield losses rather than a humanitarian gesture, and they denounced the continued presence of forces from Amhara in western Tigray—which the Amhara government claims as its territory—and pledged to fight to liberate the area (Blanchard, 2021; Plaut & Vaughan, p. 204). The then TPLF spokesman, Getachew Reda, stated that “we have to make sure that every inch of our territory is returned to us, the rightful owners.” He also added that there would be no negotiations with Ethiopia until essential services like communications, transport, and others that have been cut or destroyed for much of the war are restored (Al Jazeera, 2021, November 4).

⁴ Interview with Anonymous: the person familiar with the North Ethiopia conflict (March 26/2024).

3.2.2.3. The Spread of the Conflict

After controlling Mekelle, the TPLF rapidly re-established their administrative structures. Key political figures returned to their offices, with Debretsion G/Michael resuming his role as president of Tigray (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 205). On July 6, 2021, armed clashes spread into both the Amhara and Afar regions. TPLF forces clashed with the ENDF, as well as Amhara and Afar Special Forces and militias, as they tried to seize areas controlled by the Amhara and Afar regional governments (Abdulkadr et al., 2021). The TPLF mentioned two reasons to justify the attacks on Amhara and Afar regions: securing humanitarian access and forcing the federal government to accept a list of preconditions for a mutual ceasefire (Ethiopia Peace Observatory, 2022, June 7).

Plaut and Vaughan (2023, p. 207) argued that TPLF remained under total siege and intolerable humanitarian pressure. This led them to attempt to break the siege. Davison suspected TPLF leaders were making further political calculations that if they could compel the Amhara forces to relinquish areas they took in late 2020; they would likely be able to inspire considerable Amhara anger at regional and federal leaders. This ensuing heightened pressure on the federal government might force it to negotiate on terms favorable to the TPLF (Davison, 2021, July 30). When the TPLF decided to continue the attack, it was made based on calculations and the expected scenario in their siege-braking offensive operations.

There were several choices on the table for offensive attacks. The first and foremost choice was to strike westward, towards Sudan. This aimed to open a corridor to be connected with the outside world, something they had enjoyed during the war against Derg and that was that was crucial to their success. In addition, it has the advantage of recuperating the large area of western Tigray that was occupied by the Amhara forces and advancing Debre Tabor and Bahridar⁵. However, this choice was well thought out by the federal and allied forces, and there was a high concentration of forces, including much of the Eritrean army, and a determination to defend the route (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 207).

According to Fana, the second choice was an offensive eastward to the Afar region. These strike objectives were to cut and control Ethiopia's critical road links with Djibouti and might provide access to the sea for the TPLF. Further, their aim was to prevent the ENDF from

⁵ Interview with Fana G/Senebet (PhD): Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University (March 03/2024).

regrouping in the region (Ethiopia Peace Observatory, 2021, August 20). But this was also a disadvantage in two ways: naturally, in the harsh environment—desert and military—the ENDF would take aerial overhand. Another option was to drive northward into Eritrea. This able TPLF neutralized the EDF, which made sandwiches from the Northwest, and their invasion would provide retribution for the atrocities. Though the EDF was heavily dug in along the Tigray border, occupying defensive positions that would be difficult to capture, an attack on Eritrea might trigger serious condemnation from the international community (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 207).

The last and better option opted for by the TPLF was to strike south and south-westward (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 207). Therefore, on July 12, 2021, the TDF offensive, called `Operation Tigray Mothers`, began on the southern and south-western fronts, resulting in the capture of Alamata and Korem and then rapid advances to other Amhara region areas like Kobo. This marked the contested territories of southern Tigray as being back under Tigrayan control and expanding more (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 209). In the end of July 2021, Tigray opened another attack eastward, into the Afar region. Davison described this moment as the grinding nine-month war having entered a dangerous new phase (Davison, 2021, July 30).

Even though the federal and regional forces mobilized resources, the TDF aggressively advanced and gained large parts of the Amhara and Afar regions. The Amhara Regional government president, Agegnehu Teshager, declared `operation for survival` and mobilized resources and manpower to combat the TPLF war against the Amhara people. The federal government and other regional governments are also doing the same in the Amhara region. (BBC News Amharic, 2021, July 13).

TDF has maintained its offensive positions across adjacent regions since its offensive began in early July 2021. Hence, in early August 2021, TDF advanced deep into the Amhara region, turned to the west, controlled major cities like Lalibela, and was able to enter the South Gonder Zone. Nonetheless, they had less to contribute to the conflict when an alliance between the Tigrayans and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) was made public (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 211).⁶ In September and October, they pushed back against the allied forces assault, capturing several areas, including Dessie and Kombolcha cities (Crisis Group, 2021, November).

⁶ Interview with Fana G/Senebet (PhD): Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University (March 03/2024).

In early to mid-November 2021, TDF along with the OLA captured key towns in the Amhara region's Oromia Special Zone and North Shewa Zones. They advanced toward the capital, Addis Ababa, and controlled Shewarobit and Debre Sina, 188 K.M. away from the capital city (Crisis Group, 2021, December). This decision comes after the westward and eastward offensives failed in Debre Zebit in North Wello Zone Amhara and Chefera Zone 1 Afar region, respectively.⁷ In parallel, on November 5, TPLF-led armed and political groups jointly announced the formation of a new coalition called the United Front of Ethiopian Federalist and Confederal Forces (UFEFCF), which planned to take over power through force or negotiations once the federal government had fallen. And then form a transitional authority. The coalition consists of nine⁸ anti-federal government forces representing different ethnic groups in Ethiopia (Al Jazeera, 2021, November 5; Plaut and Vaughan, 2023, p. 219; Yayasew, 2023, p. 307). However, most forces in the coalition were unpopular.

In the meantime, PM Abiy has made remarks to higher official regarding the current situation in the country⁹. He stated that the people of Ethiopia do not want and cannot bear the upgraded TPLF anymore, and this is frequently demonstrated by financing, sending their youngsters to the battlefield, making rallies to condemn the TPLF, and revealing their support for the war against the TPLF. However, this is not enough, and the whole population eligible for war has to be mobilized and armed, he added.

Furthermore, PM Abiy explained that TPLF was enabled by its foreign support. For instance, he mentioned that foreign mercenaries—both blacks and whites—fought alongside the TPLF and died on the Wollo Front, where the TPLF was in advance. Superpowers, which have advanced technological capabilities, share intelligence and support them. Finally, he blamed the international community, which acts as a double standard and keeps quiet when the TPLF attacks. The above statement indicated that the federal government decided to use the human wave war strategy to defend the "enemy," shaping public opinion against the international community in general and anti-Western rhetoric in particular.

⁷ Interview with Fana G/Senebet (PhD): Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University (March 03/2024).

⁸ Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front (ARDUF), Agew Democratic Movement (ADM), Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM), Gambella Peoples Liberation Army (GPLM), Global Kimant People Right and Justice Movement/ Kimant Democratic Party (KDP), Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), Sidama National Liberation Front (SNLF) and Somali State Resistance (SLR).

⁹ PM Abiy Ahmed remarks to higher government officials on 02 November 2021 available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNUVdngJkJ8&t=612s>

In late November (early November for the US), Western countries strongly advised and called on their nationals to get out of Ethiopia as soon as possible (Plaut and Vaughan, 2023, p. 218). At the same time, the TPLF used proxy forces by enabling other affiliated armed groups to attack the government. Therefore, there is armed conflict in Oromia with OLA, in Benshangul with Benshangul armed groups, and in Amhara, Qimant, and Agew armed groups (Crisis Group, 2021, October).

The federal and allied regional forces strongly resisted Tigray fighters' advance in the Afar and Amhara regions, forced Tigray's retreat, and retook some towns (Crisis Group, 2021, December). This was followed by PM Abiy Marched to the battlefield to lead the war. In the counter-offensive operations, UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) supplied by China, Iran, and Turkey played an important—probably critical—role in reversing the remarkable gains made by the TDF ground and mechanized forces (Plaut and Vaughan, 2023, p. 220). Yayeew (2024, p. 296) argued that the government deployed up to 10 UAVs per day, both for surveillance and operation. In particular, those UAVs played a critical role in the battle of Chifra in the Afar region and in pushing back the TDF from advancing to Addis Ababa. The long supply line, rash military strategy exposed for the attack, and nearly zero legitimacy from the people forced them to reconsider their march to Addis. Therefore, the central command passed a decision to go back to Tigray (Yayeew, 2023; p. 309).

The counter-offensive operations started in late November and continued with dramatic success until December 23, when the federal government officially announced it would liberate all areas occupied by the TPLF and temporarily halt its force to cross the Tigray region administrative boundary. However, TPLF leaders announced their forces would be withdrawing from a number of areas in Ethiopia and returning to Tigray to give 'priority for peace'. A few days earlier, the federal government released the above statement (DW, 2021, December 20). This concludes the second round of conflict, which was the first time both sides officially but unilaterally announced a ceasefire (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 224).

Although, after the ceasefire, there were irregular outbreaks of fighting, mostly in the Afar region, neither side made serious attempts to advance (Plaut and Vaughan, 2023, p. 224). Rather, the federal government showed a good will for peace.¹⁰ Therefore, it announced that it would start a national dialogue to address chronic political problems, release some leaders

¹⁰ Interview with Fana G/Senebet (PhD): Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University (March 03/2024).

from the TPLF, and lift the state of emergency (Crisis Group, 2021, February). This followed the federal government's declaration of an “indefinite humanitarian truce” to facilitate a free flow of aid into Tigray on March 24, 2022. The TPLF also pledged to respect the cessation of hostilities if aid was delivered. Finally, for the first time since December 2021, aid convoys entered Tigray by land (Crisis Group, 2022, April). Likewise, the TPLF also releases soldiers.

3.2.3. The Third Phase of the Conflict (August-November, 2022)

After eight months of relative stability and a five-month official ceasefire, on August 24, clashes erupted between federal and Tigray forces around Kobo town in the Amhara-Tigray region administrative border. Each side blames the other for firing those shots, and renewed fighting quickly escalated (Crisis Group, 2021, September; De Waal, 2022, September 1). The federal and allied forces, along with the EDF, attacked Tigray on several (eight) fronts on the ground, and an intensive airstrike has been conducted since the resumption of the conflict. EDF with tens of thousands of ENDF sent to Eritrea on the north front; Amhara forces allied with ENDF on the western front; and others on the southern front (Crisis Group, 2021, September).

In September, federal and Eritrean forces, allied with other regional forces, made significant battlefield gains in Tigray. They captured Shiraro town and other big cities like Shire, Alamata, and Korem controlled by allied forces in the middle of October. The federal government forces pushed toward Aksum and Adwa cities (Crisis Group, 2022, October; Crisis Group, 2022, November). Fana also stated that the northern and western front offensives were game changing.¹¹ Plaut and Vaughan (2023, p. 301) this was ten weeks of unprecedented carnage. Anonymous argued the TPLF was faced logistical difficulties and this led to combatants stole aid and fuel. In addition TPLF leadership divided thus who interested to negotiate and continue to fight.¹² TPLF fenced by the ENDF, Amhara, Afar, and Eritrean forces forced to accept the negotiation effort started by AU in late December. Finally, the South Africa Pretoria permanent CoH Agreement signed and the military confrontation was officially halt.

¹¹ Interview with Fana G/Senebet (PhD): Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University (March 03/2024).

¹² Interview with Anonymous: the person familiar with the North Ethiopia conflict (March 26/2024).

3.3. The Consequences the Conflict

A couple of years's North Ethiopian War, like other civil wars, had devastating consequences not only for the areas where the conflict was conducted but also for other parts of Ethiopia. These consequences include humanitarian, socio-economic, and political damage. Even though assessing the consequences of the conflict was not the main objective of the research, indicating its destructiveness makes it important to analyze which actors and to what extent they were engaged in shuttle diplomacy to halt the conflict. In this respect, regardless of limitation to access or lack of creditable and compressive information, the researcher tries to discuss the major damages of the conflict as follows:

3.3.1. Humanitarian Consequences

The humanitarian issues include human rights violations, sexual violence and internal displacement, sanctions, destruction of property, and deterioration of the economy (Natan, 2022; p. 37). The total death number estimated by a team from the University of Ghent in Belgium, led by Professor Jan Nyssen, excluding combatants, is the mortality among civilians (from massacres, lack of health care, and famine) at between 380,000 and 600,000 before the August-November 2022 offensives (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 303). In his updated December 31, 2022, report, an average estimate of the total number of civilian deaths in Tigray was 518,000. The lowest estimate was 311,000 deaths, and at the upper end, it was 808,000 (Annys et al., 2022). The AU's lead mediator in the peace talks' former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, stated the number of people killed in the main theatre of the war—Tigray region—estimated at no fewer than 600,000 (Financial Times, 2023, January 13; Obasanjo, 2022, November 20). When other parts of Ethiopia, particularly Amhara, Afar, and Oromia, destroyed lives directly and indirectly, the estimated total number of lives claimed in the conflict would be close to one million (Obasanjo, 2022, November 20).

The report of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Joint Investigation Report stated that all parties involved in the conflict committed serious abuses and violations of at least 15 issues of international human rights, humanitarian, and refugee law. Among them, unlawful or extrajudicial killings and executions, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, attacks on civilians and civilian objects, sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary detentions, abductions and enforced disappearances, restrictions on freedom of movement, forced

displacement of the civilian population, and freedom of expression, and access to information can be mentioned (EHRC, 2021). This abuse and violation were also increased when the conflict was extended and spread to adjacent regions of Amhara and Afar.

The JIT overall finding also implied that some of the above violations may, depending on their circumstances, amount to international crimes, in particular, “war crimes” and, to the extent widespread or systematic, “crimes against humanity”. It also calls for independent investigations and the appropriate prosecution of those responsible. Similarly, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE), Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other state and non-state actors released reports to conform to and strengthen the above JIT reports (ICHREE, 2022).

Numerical data clearly shows how the conflict was devastating. According to a UN team of experts report, in the first eight months of the war, 2,200 sexual abuse cases were reported in Tigray and 940 in Amhara. However, the team admitted the figures were probably ‘an underestimation of the true extent’ of the violence (BBC, 2022, March 26). Similarly, the conflict is also accountable for 3 million people and 2.1 million people only in Tigray being displaced (Gebreyesus. et al., 2023; Miller, 2024).

3.3.2. Socio-Economic Consequences

The conflict, which directly affected more than 20 million people, also had a huge socio-economic impact. The displaced persons, including wealthy individuals, become dependent on aid (Obermeier and Siri, 2023). After the conflict broke out, the Tigray region experienced a complete blackout. Basic services were halted, and there was no electricity, telecommunications access, or banking. Lack of access to drinking water and transportation were additional problems resulting from the conflict services (Abdulkadr et al., 2021).

Education, which is interrupted because of COVID-19, continued after the breakout of conflict in Tigray, Amhara, and Afar regional states. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimates that more than 2.8 million children will have missed education in Afar, Amhara, and Tigray in 2021 (Lyndsey, 2022). This created a favourable condition for the belligerents to recruit young children who should be attending school (Mulugeta et al., 2023).

Another sector that faced critical damage was the public health sector, Illness, diseases, disability; discontinuation of medication and health care follow-up; and psychological crises like depression (Gebreyesus. et al., 2023). Mulegeta et al. (2023) argued that the conflict consequences can be categorized as either direct or indirect. The direct consequences

primarily include the immediate morbidity and mortality resulting from firearms and explosions. The indirect consequences that deteriorate the health of the population mainly come from the breakdown of the health system. Displacement of healthcare workers, shortage of medical supplies and disruption of food and clean water supplies, should be mentioned as well as. In addition, conflict-related insecurity and a lack of free movement also reduce the delivery and utilization of health services.

The war has also had a severely damaging economic impact, with the redirection of resources towards the war effort creating a significant drain on government finances. The Ministry of Finance has made damage and needs an assessment. According to the findings of the study, the total damage and economic loss were 28 billion dollars, or more than 1.5 trillion birr at the then-foreign exchange rate. In addition, the minister has explained that one-third of the total population in the war-torn areas was directly affected by the war, and three million of the country's citizens fell into extreme poverty as a result of the war. For post-war reconstruction, the Ethiopia Resilient Recovery and Reconstruction Planning Framework have been delayed for a period of five years (2023–2028), which required US \$20 billion for implementation (Ethiopian Reporter, 2023, May 21). This excluded the federal government's spending of 100 billion birr, which equates to 10 years of the region's budget, to reconstruct the damage after the end of the first phase of the conflict.

Meanwhile, the new joint assessment study conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), and Ethiopian Policy Studies Institute (PSI) reveals that 44 billion US dollars are needed for the country to recover from the devastation of the two-year conflict (The Reporter, 2024, June 1).

Furthermore, the infrastructural damage was high. For instance, in the Afar, Amhara, and Tigray regions, 6,942 schools were completely or partially destroyed during the war in northern Ethiopia (Ethiopian Reporter, 2023, June 11). According to a World Health Organization (WHO) report, close to 90 percent of Tigray's health facilities were damaged or destroyed in the conflict (Al Jazeera, 2023, November 2). The Amhara and Afar regional government's reports indicated that in the first year of the conflict, about 2,000 health facilities were also out of service—they would be looted, destroyed, or both (DW, 2022, January 2). Critical infrastructure like airports, roads, and bridges; religious monuments and churches, including a UNESCO-registered world heritage site, the Al Nejashi Mosque, have been damaged (Mulegeta et al., 2023).

3.3.3. Political Consequences

The North Ethiopian conflict left the worst scar on the country, both domestically and internationally. Internally, the war increased political polarization and deeply divided the people living in the country and abroad.¹³ This was facilitated by the war propaganda that has increasingly resorted to rhetoric that not only doesn't differentiate between the masses and the elite but also accuses the entire people of treason. For instance, the officials of the conflicting parties used derogatory terms like 'Junta' and 'fascist' and called for genocidal revenge against ethnic Tigrayans and vice versa. Among this, PM Abiy's statement compared TPLF with "weeds" and "cancer," which needs to be removed, (The Times, 2021, July 19). And his social affairs advisor, Daniel Kibiret, called for Tigrayan's extinction (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 282). Also, other kinds of rhetoric spread on social media whipped up a deeply ingrained hostility between ethnic Tigrayan and Amhara society (ibid.).

Natan (2022; p. 41-43) also stated that the conflict increased nationalistic feelings among the warring parties. In particular, Tigray and Amhara ethnic nationalism was boosted by victimhood farming. The 'Ethiopian' national sentiment was also stimulated by the war. The federal government exhaustively materialized this nationalism to mobilize the people under the banner of fighting against the anti-Ethiopian forces and pro-TPLF forces, both domestically and abroad. This includes western powers to some extent. All this eroded the social cohesion and solidarity that are the center of the survival of the state and put the very existence of Ethiopia at stake. This is manifested in the Fragile State Index (2022), which shows that Ethiopia's rank in fragility increased from 23rd in 2020 to 13th in 2022 (ibid.).

Externally, the conflict was not only tarnishing the country's image but also making it vulnerable to political intervention, and diplomatic pressure extended to economic sanctions. The GFDRE were under diplomatic pressure from the international community in general and the US, UN, and EU in particular. The US first imposed sanctions on individuals that participated in the war, and then it removed Ethiopia from the AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act) agreement that allowed Western Ethiopia to import from the USA free of tax. The AGOA suspension was still a huge loss of revenue, jobs, and investments. It affected more than a million Ethiopians who were not directly involved in the war (Abdulkadr et al., 2021; Natan, 2023, p. 42). Additionally, this leads to US-Ethiopian relations deteriorating.

¹³ Interview with Fana G/Senebet (PhD): Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University (March 03/2024).

CHAPTER FOUR

SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY IN THE NORTH ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT

Introduction

This chapter of the study deals with the role of shuttle diplomacy in the North Ethiopian conflict. In particular, the African Union and the United States engagement in shuttle diplomacy to curb the conflict and bring the conflicting parties to the negotiation table. Therefore, their engagement is divided into three phases of the conflict, and in the phase of the conflict, there are stages and several rounds to track and analyze the envoy's trips. In addition, the strengths and drawbacks of shuttle diplomacy efforts were analyzed in the study.

4.1. The Role of Diplomacy in the North Ethiopian Conflict

Different types of diplomacy were designed and implemented by state and non-state actors to prevent the conflict at its early stage, managing and curbing the conflict and signing the Cessation of Hostility agreement in Pretoria, South Africa. Consequently, it is better to have a short discussion on such roles before dealing with the main focus of this chapter, which is the role of shuttle diplomacy in the CoH agreement.

Plaut and Vaughan (2023, p. 255) argued that even before the conflict in Tigray broke out, diplomatic efforts were made to try to avert the conflict. And once it happened, there were attempts to contain and halt it. In this engagement, they were regional and international actors and, who tried to prevent, manage, contain, and halt the conflict.

Among these, the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia and the National Elder's joint council can be mentioned. The council was the one that could understand the tendency of the conflict and took action to prevent it earlier. Such experiences were not new to Ethiopia. In 2007, the National Elders Committee organized and made fruitful efforts to free the oppositional party leaders who were in prison in connection with the 2005 national election (Arega, 2020). Similarly, 52 member delegations from religious institutions' supreme leaders and elder's council in joint took the initiative, travelled to Mekelle, and discussed de-escalating tensions between the federal government and TPLF (DW, 2020, June 17). At that period (June 2020) the federal government and TPLF were in verbal sparring in connection with the delay of the election. The Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia General Secretary priest Tagay Tadele stated that the joint council members had a wide discussion in May 2020, and all issues and questions raised in the country should be resolved through dialogue and peaceful means.

Therefore, the conflict between the TPLF and the federal government was given priority as it showed a tendency to lead to violent conflict. In addition, they announced that they had submitted a request to talk to the federal government (DW, 2020, June 17). The chairman of the Ethiopian Elders Council, Professor Mesfin Araya, also opined that the mediation was to bring the political dispute between the TPLF and the federal government closer to resolution through dialogue. Additionally, they were jetted to Mekelle to discuss the process and find a solution before a conflict outbreak (ENA, 2020, June 19).

Even though the initiative failed to bring the conflicting parties to a table, they tried to facilitate the federal and Tigray region officials to sit in a meeting in Addis Ababa. In addition, after the outbreak of the conflict, the council went to Mekelle and advised warring parties to cease fire, which should be implemented by all. However, all these efforts failed for one reasons or another (Ethiopian Reporter, 2021, September 13; VOA, 2021, February 10).

One can understand that such diplomatic efforts were preventive diplomacy actions to avert disputes from arising and stop existing disparities from escalating into conflicts. The joint council well understood the tendency and expected violent conflict unless the parties preferred to resolve their differences through peaceful means. Hence, they visited Mekelle and discussed with TPLF leaders how to de-escalate tensions. It was almost four months before the conflict started. In the meantime, the effort can also be understood as public diplomacy. Because members of delegations were not government-sponsored officials from the local or foreign, rather they were religious leaders, intellectuals, famous personalities, businessmen, and others who derived empathy for their country.

The regional bodies AU and IGAD also engaged in the mediation process. In fact, at the beginning of the conflict, regional conflict resolution mechanisms and mediation efforts by the bodies were initially performed weakly. This was because of institutional factors: Ethiopia is a host country of the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, and it has concurrently been influential in IGAD, which has made it problematic for either institution to adopt an assertive role in ending the conflict immediately (Abel, 2023; Admassu, n.d.). The concentration of power at the leadership level across both organizations also contributed to its inaction (Abel, 2023). However, they were engaged in shuttle, multilateral, and summit diplomacy when the conditions on the battlefield were ripe and strengthened the mediation process, which played an important role in persuading the warring parties to sit around the table (ibid.).

Therefore, the African Union took on a leadership role and coordinated with other regional and international state and non-state actors to facilitate the peace process and sign the CoH agreement. In connection with this, it is better to discuss how the regional organization IGAD, which is close to Ethiopia, failed to initiate and lead the peace process. Admassu (n.d.) argued that not only Ethiopian hegemony over IGAD was accountable for the failure but also competing national interests among member states when engaging in mediation, mentioning that the former Sudan PM Abdalla Hamdok's mediation offer was rejected by the Ethiopian government, claiming the Sudanese government lacks credibility. In addition, the lack of strong international political pressure on IGAD to initiate peace talks and its high dependency on regional and international organizations (AU, UN, and EU) hamper its ability to initiate peace talks.

International state and non-state actors were trying to prevent and then halt the conflict. In particular, the UN and EU were predominantly mentioned by non-state actors. The UN exhaustively exploited summit diplomacy to end the conflict. From December 13, 2020, to October 20, 2022, it has held around 15 meetings in different formats¹⁴. Unilateral and joint Shuttle diplomacy is also practiced by its UN Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa (SEHOA) Ghana's former Foreign Affairs Minister, Hanna Serwaa Tetteh. She was appointed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres on February 22, 2022, to succeed Parfait Onanga-Anyanga of Gabon (Politics, 2022, February 23). However, UN efforts did not bring the conflict to an end because of divisions between the international communities while discussing the Ethiopian conflict in the UN Security Council. While mainly Western great powers tend to influence the federal government and opt for some sort of sanction, China and Russia vetoed and stood in support of the federal government to handle the internal matter by itself (Admassu, n.d.). On the other hand, the UN gave diplomatic support to AU-led peace talks, which boosted the AU's confidence to handle African problems in an African manner.

Similarly, the European Union, among others, worked closely with regional and international actors in an attempt to halt the war. The EU reacted to the crisis with expressions of concern and calls for a ceasefire as well as funding for refugees crossing into Sudan (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 273). The union was engaged in coercive and shuttle diplomacy to halt the conflict. Its primary interests were focused on access to Tigray for the aid agencies. However, it failed, and the EU announced it had suspended budgetary aid to Ethiopia worth €88 million until Ethiopian aid reached the needy in Tigray in December 2020 (ibid.).

¹⁴ Security Council Report is available at: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/ethiopia/page/1>.

The next move by the EU was focused on diplomacy. Accordingly, it appointed Finnish foreign minister Pekka Haavisto as the EU's SEHOA in early February 2021 and replaced Annette Weber in July 2021, and she has been serving until now. Haavisto was able to visit Ethiopia twice, in February and April 2021. In his briefing to EU ministers, Haavisto described the situation as 'out of control' and complained that the Ethiopian government had not provided him with a 'clear picture' during his visit (AP News, 2021, June 18). In addition, in his statement about closed-door talks with Ethiopian leaders, they said, "They are going to wipe out the Tigrayans for 100 years." This statement was dismissed by the Ethiopian government, which stated Haavisto's comments as "ludicrous" and a "hallucination of sorts or a lapse in memory of some kind" (ibid.). This move by the EU and its precondition to observe the Ethiopian election, which was declined by the federal government, deteriorated their relations. Weber also officially visited Ethiopia at least three times during the period of conflict. In her visit, she discussed humanitarian and CoH issues with conflicting parties.

In general, the EU and its member states have contributed little to ending the war, beyond lending support to American and African initiatives. The EU's role in the mediation was focused on strengthening the AU and US mediation efforts. They have suggested that the AU and the US need time and space to see if they can make progress. Particularly, they were relying on the AU mediation effort led by Obasanjo (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 274). This led to pay attention on the AU and US shuttle diplomacy efforts to halt the conflict.

States also engaged unilaterally to mediate the conflict. Among them, the US was the first and foremost state actor. It offered aid, appointed special representatives, cajoled, threatened, and even imposed sanctions (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 255). According to Plaut & Vaughan (2023, p. 267), the US has been using carrot-and-stick approaches to halt the conflict and bring the conflicting parties to the negotiation table. The US is unlikely to join the EU; it has deployed a carrot approach from the beginning. Therefore, the US announced additional humanitarian aid to Ethiopia, but this had little or no impact on the federal government's stance on negotiations.

This led the US to use sticks, and it announced sanctions like reducing aid and denying visas to some government and military officials of the warring parties in May 2021. The sanction included Amhara regional and irregular forces and members of the TPLF who are responsible for undermining the resolution of the crisis in Tigray (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, p. 267). Eritrea, which was an ally of the government, was also subjected to repeated sanctions. As Blinken stated, 'Eritrea's destabilizing presence in Ethiopia is prolonging the conflict, posing

a significant obstacle to a cessation of hostilities’ (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, pp. 268–269). Another effective sanction against Ethiopia’s economic interests was taken by the US to remove Ethiopia from the free trade pact, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Similarly, France also tried to put pressure on the federal government by withdrawing its support for the project of the re-establishment of the Navy in August 2021 (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023, pp. 274-275).

Therefore, the above couple of paragraphs implied that both the US and France used the carrot-and-stick approach to shape the behavior of warring parties and, in particular, the federal government. Hence, US\$26 million in additional humanitarian assistance and the French promise to fund US \$100 million and re-establish the Ethiopian Navy were carrots. On the other hand, reducing aid, denying visas, removing Ethiopia from AGOA, and withdrawing funding for the Ethiopian Navy re-establishment were sticking.

4.2. The Role of Shuttle Diplomacy in the North Ethiopian Conflict

Long before the conflict broke out on November 3, 2020, the federal government led by PM Abiy and the TPLF had been locked in a power struggle since April 2018. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the root causes of the conflict were tensions between the federal government and the TPLF, and this tension was radicalized after the national election was postponed. Crisis Group (2020, November 10) described the situation as like “watching a train crash in slow motion”. This developed a hostile attitude from one to the other, leading to a loss of interest in having discussions, at least on common agendas. To be specific, after the Tigray regional government regional election, one undermined the other's legitimacy.

This caused the conflicting parties to come to the negotiation table, and they were rushed to prepare themselves for the military confrontation, which both believed was inevitable. This was noted by the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia, the National Elder’s Joint Council, and other regional and international state and non-state actors who engaged in the mediation process before and after the bloodbath conflict broke out. Therefore, the big assignment for the mediators was to create channels of communication and triggering to bring the belligerent to a negotiation table, which made warring parties less or not interested at all. Hence, shuttle diplomacy was the best approach to dealing with such a crisis, which requires flying and having telephone calls between the two capitals to contact and discuss their interests, positions, and intentions, carrying messages, and suggesting ways of dealing with problems with conflicting parties separately.

There is no doubt about the fact that shuttle diplomacy was employed by different mediators to resolve the North Ethiopian conflict. However, who, when, and how it was employed and to what extent it has contributed to bringing the conflicting parties to the table must be addressed. Subsequently, this section attempted to answer such questions and examined the strengths and weaknesses of shuttle diplomacy in the North Ethiopian conflict. Additionally, the researcher divided the war into three phases based on the previous chapter, which makes the data presentation and analysis clearer.

4.2.1. African Union and United States Shuttle Diplomacy in the First Phase of Conflict

The first phase of the conflict started on November 3, 2020, and ended in January 2021, when ENDF and allied forces managed to control almost the entire region of Tigray while hunting down TPLF leaders. Under this framework, the AU and US responses to the conflict and their efforts to employ shuttle diplomacy have been examined.

4.2.1.1. African Union Responses and Shuttle Diplomacy

The African Union was not immediately acting officially when the conflict erupted. The first African Union Commission (AUC) statement was issued on November 9, 2020, almost a week after the conflict started. In the statement, AUC Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat announced they are following with concern the military confrontation in Ethiopia and demanding the immediate cessation of hostilities, respecting human rights, ensuring the protection of civilians, and urging the parties to engage in peace talks. The chairperson also reiterates the readiness of the AU to support an inter-Ethiopian effort in the pursuit of peace and stability.¹⁵

However, PM Abiy immediately declined the call and assured them there would be no negotiations until the federal government's task to ensure the rule of law was completed.¹⁶ Correspondingly, the EFDRE House of Federation and former Ethiopian PM H/Mariyam Dessalegn stated that there is no legal or moral basis for negotiation, and sitting down for negotiations is considered to give the TPLF legal and moral equality status¹⁷ (Desalegn, 2020). As such, there are fresh conflicts, and no one is surprised by the above statements.

¹⁵ The AU press release is available at: [Statement of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, on the situation in Ethiopia | African Union \(au.int\)](#)

¹⁶ PM Abiy Ahmed twitted is available at: <https://twitter.com/AbiyAhmedAli/status/1326216995247951874>

¹⁷ HoF press release available at: <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/54436>

This phase of the conflict mainly represented by the AUC declaration of military campaign in Tigray was “legitimate for all states” at the end of IGAD member countries leaders meeting, which labelled the conflict as law enforcement measure (Ethiopian Monitor, 2020, December 21). This followed by PM Abiy extends thanks to IGAD leaders for acknowledging law enforcement measures as legal and legitimate (ibid.). On the other hand this strained the relation between AU and TPLF in the early days of the war (Abel, 2023).

The AU's official initial move to settle the conflict was revealed on November 20, 2020. The AU chairperson and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa informed him that he had established a three-person mediation team to facilitate negotiations and ties to end the conflict. By the time EFDRE President Sahle-Work Zewde paid a visit to South Africa to brief him about the current situation in Ethiopia¹⁸ (VOA, 2020, November 21).

The president further stressed that President Sahle Work's insights were important to the effort that will be undertaken by the AU Special Envoys who are due to travel to Ethiopia in the coming few days.¹⁹ The Special Envoys of the African Union consisted of Kgalema Motlanthe, former President of the Republic of South Africa; Joaquim Chissano, former President of the Republic of Mozambique; and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of the Republic of Liberia (ibid.). This implied that President Ramaphosa was setting up the mediators before President Sahle's visit, and it could be less than a week after she had a phone conversation with him.²⁰

Therefore, one can argue that the AU-led shuttle diplomacy effort to address the North Ethiopian conflict was started at this instant. The Presidency (2020, November 20) clearly stated that the primary task of the Special Envoys was to engage all sides in the conflict—GFDRE and TPLF—to halt hostilities, create fertile ground for an inclusive national dialogue to resolve all issues that led to the conflict, and restore peace and stability in Ethiopia. The appointment of Special Envoys to find a solution has been pronounced “African solutions for African problems.”

In the beginning, the initiative enjoyed a good gesture from the GFDRE, even though PM Abiy declined a call from the AUC chairperson for negotiation. President Sahlework stated in her tweet that she took note of President Ramaphosa's decision to send special envoys to

¹⁸ P. Cyril Ramaphosa tweet available at: <https://twitter.com/CyrilRamaphosa/status/1330220226013782018>

¹⁹ P. Cyril Ramaphosa tweet available at: <https://twitter.com/AUChair2020/status/1329880200432246789>

²⁰ P. Sahlework Zewde tweet available at: <https://twitter.com/SahleWorkZewde/status/1330063957634260995>

Addis Ababa. President Ramaphosa also expressed his gratitude to PM Abiy for accepting the initiative and affirming the cooperation of the GFDRE in facilitating the work of the Special Envoys. The Presidency (2020, November 20). Teferi Melesse, the Ethiopian ambassador to Britain, confirmed that Ethiopia had accepted the appointment of the envoys (Plaut & Vaughanh, 2023, p. 257). The international community, such as the U.N., European countries, and U.S. officials, welcomed and expressed support for the AU initiative (Blanchard, 2021).

However, a good gesture by the federal government was reversed a day later, and a government body that provides information on the war period—State Emergency Fact Checking—issued a statement that dismissed a move by the regional body to mediate a conflict. It stated that there will not be a negotiation; however, PM Abiy Ahmed will meet with the three envoys unilaterally (BBC Amharic, 2020, November 21). Additionally, the PM issued the statement on November 25—just a day before AU special envoys arrived in Addis.

The statement stressed that the international community abides by the principle of non-interference in internal affairs²¹. This can be considered a straightforward reaction to actors who are interested in negotiation in general and to the AU special envoys in particular. Nevertheless, despite the federal government's narrowing of the negotiation window, the envoys arrived in Addis Ababa on November 26, 2020, three weeks after the conflict had erupted and when the final chapter of the first phase of the conflict was declared. By the time the three-day deadline for the TPLF leaders and fighting forces to surrender expired, the federal government forces had advanced to Mekelle (ibid.). On December 27, they discussed with PM Abiy, President Sahle-Work, and the provisional administration of Tigray. But it was no more than a courtesy call and briefing of the so-called “rule of law operation” objective and genesis²² (Plaut & Vaughanh, 2023, p. 258).

According to De Wall (2020, November 29), PM Abiy informed the envoys they couldn't visit any representatives of the TPLF, which the federal government is fighting. This decision was unsuited to their primary task—to engage all sides in the conflict. De Wall opined such a federal government was unwelcome as the rebuffing of African highest-level mediators and not only refused the peace initiative but also challenged the foundational principle of the AU.

²¹ PM Abiy Ahmed statement available at: <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/54633>

²² Prime Minister Office press release available at: <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/54661>

A day after this talk, the ENDF controlled Mekelle and PM Abiy declared the law enforcement operation had been completed.

This implied that the federal government was not interested in peacemakers. Rather interested in concluding by force of arms, not a peace agreement. However, the AU special envoys, all from countries that have long experience with armed conflicts, are not likely to be so confident (De Wall, 2020, November 29). Therefore, one can argue that the decisive victory of the federal government in less than a month and its boost in battlefield morale have contributed to the government being less interested in negotiations. So, that military victory marked the conclusion of the failed shuttle diplomacy effort to address the North Ethiopian conflict in the first phase of the conflict

4.2.1.2. United States Responses and Shuttle Diplomacy

Ethiopia and the US have longstanding and enduring diplomatic relations. However, a month before the North Ethiopian conflict erupted, the US position toward Egypt in the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) negotiations had cracked the relations between the two countries. In addition, the conflict erupted close to the US presidential election. Therefore, the US response to the war in Tigray can be viewed from these perspectives (Plaut & Vaughn, 2023, p. 262).

Ever since the beginning of the Tigray conflict, the US government has given responses. These responses include positions, concerns, condemnations, proposed solutions, and sanctions (Natan, 2022, p. 45). This phase of the conflict was laid out in the final months of the President Donald Trump administration and its response, guided by US foreign policy in and US sub-Saharan African foreign policy. Which was best characterized as unpredictable and reneging on US prior international commitments (Haass, 2020).

Therefore, the US swiftly reacted to the eruption of the conflict by condemning the TPLF's attacks on the ENDF base in Tigray and urging the immediate restoration of peace and the de-escalation of tensions. Further, US State Secretary Mike Pompeo reached out to Deputy PM Demeke Mekonnen and attempted to find a way to end the conflict, while underscoring that there wasn't any equivalence between the two sides (Plaut & Vaughn, 2023, p. 264).

The US condemned the TPLF repeatedly in this phase of the conflict. In particular, the Mai Kadra massacre and the TPLF's frequent rocket attacks against the Eritrean capital, Asmara, were the main subjects of condemnation. For instance, in the middle of November, the state

secretary and assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Tibor Nagy, condemned efforts to internationalize the conflict by the TPLF, and Pompeo commended Eritrea for its forbearance in not reacting against the TPLF (Natan, 2022, p. 49; Plaut & Vaughanh, 2023, p. 264). However, the TPLF claimed that the EDF attacked Tigray on several fronts.

After the ENDF controlled Mekelle, on November 30, PM Abiy and Mike Pompeo had a telephone discussion on the political and humanitarian issues of the conflict. Pompeo reiterated US positions—the cessation of hostility, the initiation of dialogue, and unfettered humanitarian access—while mentioning the importance of keeping Ethiopia on a democratic path (Natan, 2022, p. 50). Following this conversation, the last two months of the President Trump administration—December and January—when the federal government of Ethiopia consolidating its victory and the conflict lack of eventfulness simultaneously held the US presidential election accountable for the very little reaction (Natan, 2022, p. 52).

To conclude, in the first phase of the conflict, the US government did not take concrete diplomatic or corrosive steps to halt the conflict and bring the belligerents to the negotiation table. In addition, at the outbreak of the conflict, generally, developments in the Horn of Africa were of little concern to the Trump administration. Regarding the US position on the conflict, as Plaut and Vaughanh (2023, p. 262) stated, the Trump administration perceived the TPLF as ‘the villains in the fray’.

4.2.2. African Union and United States Shuttle Diplomacy in the Second Phase of Conflict

The second phase of the conflict was the most complex phase of the conflict. Its complications are primarily derived from three things. Firstly, the period when the phase of the conflict was covered started in early January 2021 and extended to August 2022. This means it covers 19 months out of 24; in other words, it took almost 80% of the total period of the conflict. Secondly, the nature of the conflict was full of offensive, defensive, counter-offensive, unilateral ceasefires, and humanitarian truces. Finally, the intensive diplomatic intervention of state and non-state actors to end the conflict and address the humanitarian crisis made this phase complex.

Therefore, to simplify this complication, the researcher divided the phase into three stages based on the turning points and junctures of the conflict. The first stage covers January 2021, when the TPLF offensive against the allied forces started, and ends in July 2021, when

Mekelle falls into the hands of the TPLF. The second stage surfaced from early July 2021, when the TPLF offensive spread to adjacent regions—Amhara and Afar—to the end of December 2021, when the allied force counter-offensive pushed the TPLF back to its origin—Tigray. Finally, the third stage occupied January to August 2022, which witnessed relative calm and declaration of a humanitarian truce. Under this timeframe, the AU and US responses to the conflict and their efforts to employ shuttle diplomacy have been examined.

4.2.1.1. African Union Responses and Shuttle Diplomacy

This phase of the conflict was marked by the intensive engagement of the African Union in shuttle diplomacy to end the conflict. In particular, the second and third stages of this phase witnessed several numbers of shuttling not only between Addis and Mekelle but also other states that had diplomatic leverage to push the conflicting parties to a negotiation table.

First Stage (January – July 2021)

This stage of the second phase of the conflict has not witnessed a bold step by the AU to end the conflict. It may be because of two things. The federal government frames the conflict as a domestic law enforcement operation and then designates it as a terrorist group to prevent foreign diplomatic intervention. This was well illustrated when PM Abiy rebuffed three AU high-level envoys' calls for dialogue. The federal government's initial decisive military success was also a contribution. The second one could be Ethiopia's membership in the AU Peace and Security Council, which was elected in February 2020 for two years—February 2022 (Amani Africa, 2020). This enabled Ethiopia to block efforts to put the conflict on the council's agenda (Crisis Group, 2022, September 6).

However, this stage was accountable for the origin of the complications that the African Union-led mediation process faced in the next two stages. As mentioned above, this stage was best characterized by the TPLF's offensive against allied forces, which have controlled major parts of Tigray since the end of December 2020. In the meantime, this stage is also a period when the sixth general election in Ethiopia has been conducted. This round of elections was postponed frequently and mentioned as one of the root causes of the conflict, among others. Therefore, the election was a bone of contention between the TPLF and the federal government because it determined the legitimacy of one over another.

The AU, as part of its mandate to promote peaceful, democratic elections on the continent, engaged in the 2021 general elections following an invitation from the GFDRE. The so-called

African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) to Ethiopia was mandated to conduct an “impartial, independent, and objective assessment” of the 2021 elections consistent with the AU and international principles for democratic elections and the legal framework governing elections in Ethiopia. This mission was led by former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and consisted of eight Long Term Observers (LTOs) and 57 Short-Term Observers (STOs) (AU, 2021, June 20).

However, international observers like the EU were withdrawing their Electoral Observation Mission because of a refusal to fulfill the standard. Mainly, the federal government declined to allow the EU to import communication systems for the mission’s security. Furthermore, the federal government undermined the EU's role by stating that the EU's decision was "neither essential nor necessary to certify the credibility of an election" (BBC, 2021, July 11). The election was boycotted by several main opposition parties after their leaders and candidates were arrested and killed. Polls were not held in the war-torn Tigray region, some areas of Oromia, and major parts of Benshangul Gumez because of security issues (ibid.).

Regardless of this, the election was conducted on June 21, 2021, and a total of 37,408,600 voters were registered, representing approximately 75% of the projected 50 million eligible voters. And the PM Abiy-led ruling party—the Prosperity Party—won 410 out of 436 seats (Plaut & Vaughanh, 2023, p. 257).

The AUEOM deployed on June 2, 2021, up to the conclusion of the counting process at polling stations recognized that the arrest and detention of high-profile opposition party individuals had resulted in certain political parties boycotting the election, and there were logistical, security, political, and COVID-19-related challenges. The mission released its preliminary statement on June 23, 2021, that concludes the Pre-Election and Election Day processes were conducted “in an orderly, peaceful, and credible manner.” It also assured that there was nothing, in the mission’s estimation, that distracted from the credible conduct of the elections (AU, 2021, June 20). This statement was very important for the federal government in general and for PM Abiy in particular, as it is the first time that he has secured political legitimacy through elections.

To conclude, in this stage of the second phase of conflict, the AU was paid less attention and was not officially engaged in the mediation process. Rather, its mission, led by Obasanjo, observed and recognized the credibility of the sixth general election of Ethiopia, for which

PM Abiy—illegitimate for the TPLF—guaranteed five-year term in power. This was unwelcome by the TPLF by any means. In less than a week, AUEOM acknowledged the “credible” election conducted. TPLF forces controlled Mekelle, pushed back the allied forces from the region of Tigray, and expanded the war to the adjacent regions. Ironically speaking, Obasanjo becomes at least morally obliged to protect the PP when the TPLF marches to Addis Ababa to overthrow the constitutionally elected government. This led to the second stage of the conflict.

Second Stage (July – December 2021)

On June 28, 2021, after the federal government installed the Provisional Government of Tigray, ENDF forces officially left and declared an immediate and unilateral ceasefire. Consequently, the TPLF recaptured Mekelle and restored its administrative structures and functions. Therefore, this stage of the conflict exactly started on July 6, 2021, when the TPLF attacked the neighboring regions of Amhara and Afar to break the siege, and ended on December 23, when the federal government announced that the ENDF would temporarily halt its attempts to penetrate Tigray. The stage also consists of a round of shuttle diplomacy.

The restoration of Mekelle authority can be considered a good opportunity to start peace talks because TPLF officials could be easily accessed by their permanent addresses. By this time, the AU was not in a position to contact the TPLF and the federal government as it did not have a particular envoy to address the conflict after PM Abiy rebuffed the three high-level envoys of the AU. This inaction of the AU and the culmination of condemnation led to the appointment on August 26, 2021, of former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo as AU High Representative for the HoA region by AUC chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat²³.

Even though Obasanjo was appointed all over the region, his specific focus and mandate were to mediate the federal government and the TPLF in particular (Abel, 2023). 85-year-old Obasanjo served as AU Special Envoy of Liberia, Sudan, and Darfur and UN Special Envoy of Grate Lakes (Deleglise, 2024). He was also not new to Ethiopia; Obasanjo led the mediation commission of the OAU to address the Ethiopia-Somalia border conflict in 1977 (Birhanu, 2013 E.C., p. 510). Furthermore, he also unilaterally tried to mediate the North Ethiopian conflict in the early stages of the conflict, even though details were unknown (France 24, 2020, November 16).

²³ AUC press release available at: <https://au.int/en/articles/former-president-obasanjo-appointed-high-representative-horn-africa>

This appointment was welcomed by regional and international state and non-state actors and got support from IGAD, the US, UNSC, and others, hoping to consolidate conflict resolution mechanisms. Likewise, the federal government stated that all peaceful resolution efforts are seen as positive and will be reviewed.²⁴ On the TPLF side, spokesperson Getachew Reda makes it clear that they are not opposed to the ideals the AU stands for or against Chief Obasanjo's role in mediation. But it blamed the AUC chair for impartiality and expressed that they had limited expectations for the peace process²⁵.

After receiving his mandate, Obasanjo's first move was to read and consult with all relevant stakeholders, in particular regional leaders, to collect information that helped him figure out and understand the nature of conflict²⁶. This conformed to his statement:

I set out to seek the point of entry into a conflict that dates back to Solomonian times in the Bible or back to 2018 when Prime Minister Ahmed Abiy assumed office, depending on whom you are talking to (Obasanjo, 2022, November 20).

This statement indicated that the first months of his mandate—September and October 2021—were invested in briefing the objective of the appointment, seeking logistical and all other support, and consolidating the support and consulting of regional and other international actors that have leverage in the implementation of the mandate. So, his shuttling diplomacy started with not the conflicting parties he was mandated to convince but others who supported him. Sheku stated that Obasanjo met with leaders of Ethiopian neighboring countries and made a tour of the African continent to diversify perspectives on the divergent understanding of conflict, and that's the way forward. He revealed this in a statement issued on November 13, 2021, discussed with leaders across the region, including the presidents of Kenya, Djibouti, Sudan, Uganda, Somalia, and South Sudan²⁷.

Similarly, he also met with Samantha Power, the US Agency for International Development administrator. This was Obasanjo's first official meeting conducted on August 20, 2021, and both agreed on the urgency of granting humanitarian aid to all in need²⁸ (ISS, 2021,

²⁴ PMO Press Briefing on September 09, 2021 available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUMaRLXZuhc>

²⁵ Getachew Reda tweet available at: https://twitter.com/reda_getachew/status/14311855761722912769

²⁶ Interview with Lt. Col. Sheku Tejan: Military Plans and Operations Officer in Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department at African Union Commission (April 20/2024).

²⁷ Obasanjo statement on the prospect for peace in Ethiopia available at: <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20211114/statement-prospects-peace-ethiopia-he-olusegun-obasanjo-high-representative>

²⁸ Samantha Power tweet available on : <https://x.com/powerusaid/status/1432843702691635200?lang=bn>

September 28). Another visit outside of the continent was to Europe and the US. He visited Europe from October 5 to 8, 2021, and met Emmanuel Macron, President of France, and leaders of the EU in Brussels. Apart from those meetings, he traveled to the United States of America and discussed with different stakeholders there from October 9 to 14, 2021. His meeting with the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, on October 12 was among others.²⁹

The first Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

After all this Abroad Shuttling, on 4, November 2021 Obasanjo arrived Addis Ababa by the time thing drastically deteriorate and serious escalation of the situation both in militarily and politically. Militarily: TPLF and OLA jointly an offensive was intensified. They captured key towns and strategic areas in Amhara and Afar region, further aggressively advance toward the capital Addis Ababa. The federal government `law enforcement operation/ህግ የማስከበር ዘመቻ` shifted to `operation to survival/ የህልውና ዘመቻ` and mobilizing the people to prepare to defend the capital. Politically: on 5, November TPLF lead anti-federal government coalition was crated; the TPLF advance also bring diplomatic pressure on federal government, Embassies in Addis urged their citizens to leave the country as soon as possible; calls for belligerents have a ceasefire deal, and US decide to suspend Ethiopia from AGOA.

Obasanjo has been following these developments with keen attention and paid a visit to engage all stakeholders in the de-escalation of the situation. As far as the researchers know, this was the first official visit since the appointment. Upon his arrival on November 4–6, he discussed the situation with PM Abiy, President Sahle-Work, and the President of Oromia Regional State Shimels, with reflections on how to de-escalate tension and pave the way for dialogue.³⁰ This discussion also granted Obasanjo the green light to pay a visit to Mekelle to meet TPLF authorities.

In this context, on November 7, Obasanjo appeared in Mekelle, and a photograph with Tigray regional government president Debretsion G/Michael (PhD) and his advisor Getachew Reda went viral on social media. Concurrently, large gathering demonstrations in Addis and several other cities were conducted in support of the federal government. As Plaut and Vaughan (2023, p. 259 cited BBC), the discussion was focused on broad consulting to

²⁹ Statement by Obasanjo at the UNSC 8899th meeting held in New York on 08 November 2021 available at: https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_pv.8899.pdf

³⁰ Statement by Obasanjo at 1045th virtual meeting of PSC held in Addis Ababa on 08 November 2021 available at: <https://martinplaut.com/2021/11/08/president-obasanjo-statement-to-the-un-security-council/>

understand the conflict and agreed with TPLF compliance with AU mediation and all mediation efforts to be channeled through AU, chaired by him.

However, the swift reaction from the Tigray authorities was different. Getachew stated most ‘peace initiatives’ were primarily about saving Abiy, not about addressing critical political challenges in the country. He added that efforts that fail to address our conditions and the tendency to conflate humanitarian—resumption of essential services and access to food assistance—issues with political ones are doomed to fail.³¹

Additionally, the Tigray External Office press release indicated the TPLF's suspicions about federal government commitments. The press cited the patterns of “belligerence and dishonesty” by PM Abiy. The mediation effort is just like a drama to present himself on the stage of the international community as a man who is serious about finding a peaceful resolution to a crisis. The press also blamed the AU and other international community for not making a serious attempt to use their rights of use mixed with punishment and reward to get up left blocked on Tigraya and bring Abiy to the negotiation table.³²

Despite all this, on November 8, Obasanjo briefed the AU Peace and Security Council members as per the convened emergency session on the situation in Northern Ethiopia and the UNSC as well. Obasanjo stated he was engaging warring parties to de-escalate tension and find a peaceful solution to the conflict. All these leaders individually believed the differences antagonizing them were political and agreed to require a political solution through dialogue.³³ He also urged the council that the situation was critical and called for a collective effort to assist the people of Ethiopia in finding a lasting solution. He cautioned against avoiding further escalation of the conflict, which may have direct implications for the entire strategic Horn of Africa region. Finally, he again urged the council to consider the following:

1. Strongly urge and encourage the GFDRE and TPLF to engage in political dialogue without any preconditions;
2. Call for an immediate and unconditional comprehensive ceasefire and CoH by all parties;
3. Call for immediate and unhindered humanitarian access;

³¹ Getachew Reda tweet available at: https://x.com/reda_getachew/status/1458335676341043203

³² Tigray External Office available at: <https://x.com/TigrayEAO/status/1458497884786200578/photo/1>

³³ Statement by Obasanjo at 1045th virtual meeting of PSC held in Addis Ababa and UNSC 8899th meeting held in New York on 08 November 2021 available at: <https://martinplaut.com/2021/11/08/president-obasanjo-statement-to-the-un-security-council/>

4. Call on the parties to ensure respect and compliance with international humanitarian and human rights laws;
5. Call for the immediate commencement of an all-inclusive nationwide dialogue and reconciliation;
6. Call on the international community to rally behind the AU-led process to ensure coherence and unity of purpose for our peace-making efforts.

On the next day of this briefing, November 9, he traveled to the Amhara region to discuss the issues of the conflict. However, the details of their talking points are closed. In addition, he met with PM Abiy Ahmed before leaving the country—probably on November 10—and was expected to carry messages from President Debretsion (Al Jazeera, 2021, November 11). Finally, Obasanjo left Ethiopia on November 11 and started on November 13. He stated that he had hopeful meetings with the leaders of the Oromia and Amhara regions and was scheduled to meet with the leadership of the Afar region when he returned to Ethiopia³⁴.

The immediate effect of his shuttle diplomacy effort was highlighted in the November 11 speech of Mofa spokesperson Dina Mufti. He emphasized that no decision had been made to enter into negotiations, but they put their list of preconditions out there for possible peace talks. Firstly, halt the attack, Secondly, leave occupied areas of Amhara and Afar, and third, recognize the legitimacy of the incumbent federal government. Dina added (Al Jazeera, 2021, November 11). But it is far from conclusive that this all resulted only because of Obasanjo's first-round shuttle diplomacy. By this time, the military advancement of the TPLF and high-level visits from US SEHOA Jeffrey Feltman, UN undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, and emergency relief coordinator Martin Griffiths, as well as here and there calls for a ceasefire, may have their contributions to GFDRE reconsider negotiation. To conclude, this round of shuttle diplomacy can constitute a window of opportunity for negotiation. TPLF accepted the AU mission, and the GFDRE confirmed that there will be a possible “peace talk” when preconditions are accepted.

The Second Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

This stage of the conflict witnessed another round of shuttle diplomacy conducted by the AU. The conflict continued in Advance TPLF towards the capital. On the other side, to defend the assault of the TPLF, millions are mobilized. On November 18, 2021, after one week, he left the country and returned for another round of shuttle diplomacy. The GFDRE

³⁴ Obasanjo statement on the prospect for peace in Ethiopia available at: <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20211114/statement-prospects-peace-ethiopia-he-olusegun-obasanjo-high-representative>

Communication Service stated that Obasanjo arrived in Addis Ababa and expected to meet with PM Abiy and discuss what he had achieved in the process of finding a peace solution.³⁵

Obasanjo was seen in Mekelle on November 19—almost two weeks after his first trip. TPLF spokesperson Getachew stated that the Obasanjo visit was part of his efforts to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict. He mentioned that Obasanjo had “extensive discussions” with the President of Tigray Debretsion on ways forward. TPLF reaffirmed its compliance and readiness to continue to engage and cooperate with Obasanjo in the pursuit of peace and stability in the Horn. Further, Getachew also said that:

*It's our hope and expectation that there is now a clearer understanding of what the people and Army of Tigray are after in their advance on the capital, Addis Ababa. Debretsion has also outlined to Chief Obasanjo what he thinks it takes to get the Abiy Regime to realize that he cannot shoot his way out of the crisis he has landed the country in.*³⁶

After this trip, Obasanjo's move to Addis Ababa is unknown. Just after three days of the Obasanjo trip to Mekelle, PM Abiy vows to head to the battlefield front. The statement reads, “*The time has come to lead the country with sacrifice. Let's meet at the battlefield.*” This was the total reversal of shuttle diplomacy efforts to resolve the conflict, which included not only AU-led Obasanjo but also US-led Amb Feeltman. What's wrong with the Obasanjo trip to Mekelle? How this could happen is a million-dollar question that is going to be addressed.

To answer this question, let us go back to MoFA spokesperson Dina Mufti's statement after the first round of shuttle diplomacy. As mentioned above, the ambassador signaled the possibility of peace talks if the TPLF accepted the federal government's preconditions: stop attacks, leave occupied areas out of Tigray, and give recognition to the government. Obasanjo stated that he noted the above preconditions in his statement issued on November 13:

I note the recent statement by the Federal Government of Ethiopia through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on November 11, 2021, highlighting the conditions and order of preference of the government with respect to a peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). In my recent

³⁵ FDRE Government Communication Service statement available on: <https://x.com/FdreService/status/1461386859947474947>

³⁶ Getachew Reda tweet available at: https://x.com/reda_getachew/status/1461719057984536582

*engagements [in November 2021] in Mekelle with the leadership of the TPLF, their prioritized conditions [stated later on] were similarly presented to me.*³⁷

This implied that the second expected specific task of Obasanjo was to deliver the federal government's preconditions to the TPLF and vice versa. Accordingly, Obasanjo jetted to Mekelle on November 19 and briefed the authorities there on the three federal government conditions to have a ceasefire and continue political dialogue. It is quite clear that the TPLF leaders were not in a position to accept the above conditions because their military advancement secured a huge bargaining power to dominate the negotiation. By the time they advanced to Debre Birhan—about 130 km northeast of the capital—at this moment, as game theory suggests, TPLF's ultimate goal was to make the negotiation a two-actor Zeo-sum game: GFDRE loses and TPLF takes all.

Due to this, the TPLF declined government conditions for a ceasefire and political dialogue presented by Obasanjo. TPLF spokesperson Getachew's statement about withdrawing from the Amhara and Afar regions before peace talks begin is "an absolute non-starter," which strengthened this argument (Al Jazeera, 2021, November 11). In addition, his statement issued on November 19 explains that the TPLF and the people of Tigray will not halt their advance to Addis, toppling down the "Abiy Regime." This was not acceptable, not only for Obasanjo but for anyone else concerned about the integrity of Ethiopia. Obasanjo's unsuccessful persuasion effort to change TPLF leaders' minds could be found in Getachew's statement that Obasanjo had "extensive discussions" with Debretsion.

To conclude, the main agenda of the second round of shuttle diplomacy was to negotiate with conflicting parties to declare a ceasefire and continue political dialogue. To address this, Obasanjo shuttled between authorities in Mekelle and authorities in Addis. The researcher believed the TPLF wanted to advance to the capital and declined that the government conditions were accountable for not only the fall of the shuttle diplomacy effort to resolve the conflict but also the PM campaign to fight the TPLF on the battlefield front with millions.

In addition, the TPLF also faced both military and diplomatic challenges. The immediate effect of this was signaled on the same day: when Obasanjo left Mekelle, the TPLF accused the federal government of carrying out "a drone attack in a residential area" in Mekelle

³⁷ Obasanjo statement on the prospect for peace in Ethiopia available at: <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20211114/statement-prospects-peace-ethiopia-he-olusegun-obasanjo-high-representative>

(France 24, 2021, November 22). One can argue that TPLF lost its golden opportunity, which has never come back again.

This failed second round of shuttle diplomacy was a watershed for the conflict. Since “Operation National Unity” declared the PM Abiy march with public figures, politicians, artists, activists, and other influential figures to the battlefield, the world has witnessed the dramatic change that happened in the HoA, Ethiopia. As Kjetil Tronvoll argued, there was no doubt that the PM's decision helped turn the tide against the TPLF. His presence on the battlefield boosted the morale of the Allied forces and made thousands, if not millions, line up to join the army. This, combined with drones, played a critical role in the radical reversal of battleground victory in favor of the federal government (BBC, 2021, December 15).

Before the conclusion of this stage, on December 19, the Tigray External Affairs Office released a three-page letter signed by President Debretsion to the Secretary General of the UN, Antonio Guterres³⁸. The letter could be summarized as follows: The President enumerated atrocities and violations committed by Ethiopia and Eritrea over the last thirteen months against the ethnic Tigrians. He also announced that he had ordered the “Tigray Army” to withdraw from neighboring regions and return to the Tigray border with immediate effect. But this was not meant to mean they were defecating, but rather to respect international calls and trust that the withdrawal would be a decisive opening for peace talks.

The letter also tries to be clear with the TPLF's political objectives: free themselves from “genocidal assault.” In this regard, he calls on the UN to take Responsible to Protect (R2P) actions, including establishing a no-fly zone over Tigray except for humanitarian and civil purposes and imposing arms embargoes on Ethiopia and Eritrea. Another objective was to free illegally annexed areas of parts of Tigray from Eritrean and Amhara forces. The president proposed an immediate CoH followed by negotiations and then communicated the proposal to member states of the UNSC, Obasanjo, and President Uhuru Kenyatta. By this time, the federal government had announced that the allied forces had recaptured Kobo and Woldiya in the Amhara region. The federal government declined and stated that the group's claim that they would leave the occupied areas for the sake of peace is contrary to reality. The government has no desire to enter Tigray to hunt the TPLF, but it is necessary to ensure that

³⁸ Tigray External Office available at aavailable at: <https://x.com/TigrayEAO/status/1472970630207320078>

the ability of the group to attack again is weakened³⁹. Finally, the conflict ended when the federal government announced a halt to excursions into Tigray.

Third Stage (December 2021 – August 2022)

This stage of the conflict has several characteristics that make it different from the other stages. Firstly, this stage was a calm one, particularly after late March, when the government declared the humanitarian truce and the TPLF announced it would abide by it. Further, both parties were demonstrating goodwill for negotiation. This creates conducive environment to peacefully resolve the conflict through political dialogue. Secondly, the stage was the longest compared to others. It exactly started on December 23, 2021, and ended on August 26, 2022—eight months. These are also capable envoys to have frequent and intensive shuttle diplomacy to convince warring parties to resolve conflict through political dialogue. Therefore, on behalf of AU Obasanjo, there were around six rounds of shuttle diplomacy. However, the researcher could only trace around four of them; the others were probably conducted in quiet diplomacy.

First Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

Obasanjo was traced in Mekelle on January 11, 2022, after the conflict had escalated since late November. In this period, there was a significant development in the conflict. In this respect, the dynamics of the conflict since late November 2021 have seen the military balance of power shift in favor of GFDRE forces. The TPLF announced the withdrawal of forces from the adjacent region, and the federal government also temporarily halted its counteroffensive on the border of Tigray. Except in some areas of Afar, the ground offensive was suspended; however, drone attacks in Tigray were continued. In addition, the government announced the release of high-profile TPLF members and established a national dialogue commission, which was welcomed by the international community.

According to TPLF spokeswoman Getachew Reda Obasanjo's Mekelle visit, it was part of his mission to seek a peaceful solution to the crisis in the Horn, and he believed that he discussed it with the Principal Debretsion.⁴⁰ However, details of the discussion remain closed. Getachew also accused the federal government of conducting a drone attack a few minutes after Obasanjo took off Mekelle. Such attacks were conducted for the second time;

³⁹ Ambassador Redwan briefed the ambassadors and diplomats of different countries based in Addis Ababa on the current situation available at: <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/65875>

⁴⁰ Getachew Reda tweet available at: https://x.com/reda_getachew/status/1481002332087373827

on the earlier trip to Obasanjo on November 19, similar incidents occurred. One can note that such attacks have influenced the peace talk effort and the credibility of Obasanjo. After Obasanjo returned to Addis Ababa, his movements were uncovered.

One can be expected that Obasanjo will ask Mekelle authorities to signal goodwill for negotiation: withdrawal of forces from the remaining areas of adjacent regions, particularly from afar. This is because the above efforts, which were made by governments, have been noticed and considered by the AU and other international communities as goodwill.

At the same time, Obasanjo expected to ask the federal government three things that are mainly constantly raised by the TPLF. Firstly, humanitarian issues in general: lift what they called a “de facto blockade” to have access to humanitarian assistance and the resumption of essential services. When Obasanjo briefed the 1064th meeting of the PSC of the AU, he stated that “we should collectively continue to urge the Federal Government to lift the blockade and restore services as critical confidence-building measures.” He also urged the federal government to “grant unhindered humanitarian access to the Tigray region and other affected areas” (Africa, 2022, February).

Secondly, he expected to ask for the withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces from the occupied parts of Tigray in general and western Tigray in particular. Obasanjo, at the same meeting, called for a “full withdrawal of all parties from occupied territories and return to their original positions” (ibid.). But one can surely argue that these will not be acceptable to the federal government because of its fear of the TPLF's establishment of an international corridor to facilitate logistics and because the government has less interest in confronting its major allies, Amhara, who have a historical claim over there.

This round of shuttle diplomacy was followed by a January 19, 2022, telephone conversation with the Secretary General of the UN, Antonio Guterres. Obasanjo briefed Guterres about the conflict in Ethiopia following his latest visit to Addis Ababa and Mekelle. He also added about the efforts being made by the federal government and the TPLF to move towards a resolution of the conflict and expressed optimism that there is now a real opportunity for political and diplomatic resolution of the crisis.⁴¹

To conclude, the main aim of this round of shuttle diplomacy was to commend both parties for their positive developments and push them to continue signaling good gestures for the

⁴¹ UN Secretary-General Statement by on Ethiopia available at: <https://ethiopia.un.org/en/168870-statement-un-secretary-general-ethiopia%C2%A0>

negotiation, which was able to establish grounds for negotiation. In addition, Obasanjo also highlighted the need for the need for both parties to take action on critical confidence-building measures.

Second Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

The second round of shuttle diplomacy was conducted in February 2022, on the sidelines of the AU Summit held on February 5–6, and after. During this period, Obasanjo held consultations with different stakeholders and regional leaders. Among them, Obasanjo has discussed with Djibouti's President, Ismail Guelleh, and Guelleh approved the assignment of Mohamed Idriss Farah (the former Permanent Representative of Djibouti to the AU) to Obasanjo's mediation team. (Amani Africa, 2022, February 10).

After this, Obasanjo traveled to the Amhara and Afar regions on February 7 and 9, 2022, respectively. He was joined by President Sahle-Work and the Deputy Secretary General of the UN, Amina J. Mohammed. On February 7, 2022, Obasanjo arrived to visit the devastation caused by the TPLF during its advance to Southward (ENA, 2022, February 7). He visited a mass grave massacred by the TPLF forces; observed institutions ravaged by the group, and discussed them with officials of the region (Fana, 2022, February 7). Then he goes to the Afar region and is welcomed by the president of the Afar regional state, Awol Arba (News Business Ethiopia, 2022, February 9).

Finally, this round of shuttle diplomacy concluded with Obasanjo's briefing on February 10, 2022, at the 1064th meeting of the PSC of the AU. The aim was to observe the distractions beyond Tigray and include the Amhara and Afar stakeholders in the mediation. As discussed above, since early July 2021, the conflict has spread to adjacent regions and resulted in a huge humanitarian and material distraction. Therefore, to have a holistic understanding of the consequences of the conflict, it was necessary to visit Amhara Afar.

Third Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

Another official trip by Obasanjo to Mekelle was conducted at the end of May 2022. However, he was traced in Addis Ababa on March 21, 2022, and discussed with the new SEHOA Ambassador Satterfield at the AU office. The May trip comes after major positive developments have been seen on both sides. This development was the 24 March federal

government declaration of an ‘indefinite humanitarian truce effective immediately’ which was reciprocated by the TPLF's adherence and the announcement of readiness to peace talks under preconditions of unfettered humanitarian access to Tigray.⁴²

Though the federal government denied and pronounced it a “big lie,” the TPLF announced the complete withdrawal of its forces from the remaining areas of the Afar region—Erebiti and Abala—in April. Lastly, TPLF decided to release 4,208 prisoners of war with an amnesty on May 20 and called for an international community to pressure the Ethiopian regime to release political and other prisoners of Tigray.⁴³ All these developments were welcomed by the international community.

According to Getachew Obasanjo, he met with Tigray's leader, Debretsion Gebremichael, and held discussions. However, Getachew did not disclose details of the meeting; only a photograph appeared of the two men in conversation.⁴⁴ This visit also came a few days after Mekelle authorities accused Eritrean forces of launching “an offensive” around the northern part of the region, Adi Awalla and Sheraro (Addis Standard, 2022, May 31).

After his visit, Obasanjo had an interview with the BBC (2022, June 1) and described the talks between TPLF fighters and the Ethiopian government as making progress “very slowly but steadily.” Today, the talks are in a better position than six months ago. He also stated that the main focus of the discussion was unhindered humanitarian supplies and other confidence-building measures. Obasanjo made clear the phases of the negotiation: first, consolidate the humanitarian ceasefire; next, move to a negotiated ceasefire, which led to the formal declaration of the CoH; and finally, restore services. This directly conflicting TPLF interest put restoration of services, among others, as a precondition for negotiation.

After Obasanjo returned to Addis Ababa, he arrived on June 2 with a high-level delegation led by PM Abiy and President Shimels of the Oromia region. Obasanjo videoed an agricultural site around Bale Robe, Oromia, while visiting a wheat farm and Sof Omar Cave, one of the tourist destinations in Ethiopia. Obasanjo commends the government's efforts to ensure food security and contributed \$10,000 for the preservation of the cave.⁴⁵ This was

⁴² Tigray External Affairs Office available at: <https://x.com/TigrayEAO/status/1507108987107430407/photo/1>

⁴³ Tigray External Affairs Office available at: <https://x.com/TigrayEAO/status/1527651678631215104/photo/1>

⁴⁴ Getachew Reda tweet available at: https://x.com/reda_getachew/status/1531633477740896256

⁴⁵ Obasanjo on OBN TV available at: https://www.facebook.com/OBNEnglish/videos/14087121662_42053

noted by the TPLF as a sign of Obasanjo's partiality in the mediation process and expressed its preservation to engage in his lead peace talk.

On June 13, the Tigray External Affairs Office published an open letter⁴⁶ signed by Debretsion, the AU, and others⁴⁷. The letter aimed to clarify the position of the ‘‘National Regional State of Tigray’’ on peace talks with GFDRE and other Ethiopian parties. The statement indicated the TPLF's readiness to negotiate with other parties. Possibly, with the Amhara regional government, this is locked in the claim and counter-claim of contested areas found between two regional government borders. Furthermore, it expresses that the TPLF has been open to having a good-faith peace negotiation convened by an impartial third party based on the norms and principles of the AU and UN since November 2020. Additionally, they are not interested in having secret deals; this statement also indicated that they had engaged in secret deals with Djibouti and Seychelles, which the paper deals with in the next.

The statement also clearly and objectively blamed the AU for its silence over the war and atrocities perpetrated by forces and the leadership of the AUC, which has yet to redeem its failures and resort to trust. In addition, TPLF also revealed the partiality of Obasanjo by stating, ‘‘The proximity of the High Representative [Obasanjo] to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia has not gone unnoticed by our people’’ and stated Obasanjo had only been received in Mekelle ‘based on the principle of African hospitality, respect for an elder, and respect for the institution of the African Union’.

Finally, the statement expressed TPLF's confidence in Tanzania and Kenya, their respective presidents, for their readiness and efforts in peace negotiations. They added their readiness to dispatch a high-level delegation fully mandated to talk, which was hosted and facilitated by the President of Kenya in Nairobi. And they welcome the engagement of international partners. This statement was declined because the first planned negotiation could begin at the end of June in Tanzania (Hochet-Bodin, 2022, June 9), because the information was leaked.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Tigray External Affairs Office press release available at: <https://x.com/TigrayEAO/status/1536740440069885954/photo/1>

⁴⁷ The open letter sent to the President Macky Sall Chairperson of AU, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, Sheikh bin Zayed al Nahyan psridante of UAE and President Samia Suluhu Hassan of United Republic of Tanzania and cc to UN, EU, AU special envoys and UNSC members states.

⁴⁸ Interview with Ambassador Menilik Alemu: Political Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister at Ministry of Foreign Affairs (February 20/2024).

Since then, both sides have reaffirmed their commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict. The above TPLF statement was followed by PM Abiy's remarks on June 14 addressing the parliament about the formation of a committee led by D. PM Demeke Mekonnen to study how to handle peace negotiations with the TPLF. And the committee was given up to 15 days to report the finer details of what would be negotiated (African Reporter, 2022, June 15). Later on, the government announced the name of a seven-member negotiating team and their readiness for peace talks 'anytime, anywhere' and 'without preconditions' on June 27 and July 28, respectively (ENA, 2022, July 28).

On the TPLF side, in June 2022, President Debretsion stated to the public that negotiations had not yet begun; rather, the discussions were about a formal CoH. The president also stressed five preconditions—what he calls “red lines”—that were not negotiable. Those are: firstly, freedom to determine the fate of future Tigray; secondly, the borders of Tigray governed by the status quo before the conflict; thirdly, Tigray would maintain its army; fourthly, the withdrawal of Eritrean forces from all of Tigray; and finally, the establishment of an international investigation team to address atrocities committed against the people of Tigray.⁴⁹ On July 18, the TPLF also announced a team of negotiators for the talks with the federal government.

Fourth Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

This was the last official trip of Obasanjo in the second phase of the conflict. Obasanjo arrived in Addis Ababa on August 4, 2022. During the visit, Obasanjo met PM Abiy, D. PM Demeke, and members of the appointed Peace Committee to discuss critical developments and preparations for future peace talks between the federal government and the TPLF. In addition, he had fruitful discussions with Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security, who underlined the AU's sustained support and confidence in the Obasanjo and the on-going peace process.

He also convened a meeting with UN, US, and EU special envoys to the Horn of Africa, who visited Mekelle a day earlier, and the IGAD Special Envoy for the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Somalia. They discussed recent developments and the outcomes of their recent visit to

⁴⁹ President Debretsion press release available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKIUCxCK6-k>

Mekelle, the planned peace talks, as well as modalities for information sharing.⁵⁰ This was also marked by the agreement reached that the AU-led process would be accompanied by other partners, including the IGAD, US, EU, and UN⁵¹. In connection with this, Obasanjo reiterated the centrality of having one peace process under the undisputed leadership role of the AU, and he emphasized the need to scale up cooperation and coordination in support of the AU process.⁵²

However, the AU-led mediation effort seems to be dominated by the US-led. The US special envoy is intensively engaged in shuttle diplomacy both in Ethiopia and abroad. In addition, there was seemingly disagreement between GFDRE and TPLF on who should lead the negotiation. The federal government made it clear that the peace talks were only to be held under the auspice of the AU and would not accept any parallel effort that replaced the AU. The TPLF prefers the mediation led by the Kenyan President with the support of international partners, including the US, EU, UAE, UN, and AU.

Particularly after Obasanjo extended a formal invitation to Eritrea to join the AU-led effort to resolve the conflict at the 1097th session held on August 4, 2022, the TPLF is hopeless in the AU-led mediation process (Africa, 2022, August; Berhe, 2022, October 18). TPLF spokesman Getachew (2022, August 22) condemned the AUC and Obasanjo's invitation to Eritrea and believed the AU has serious limitations as a mediator. If such “dangerous ideas” were implemented, that would make any peace talk “dead on arrival,” he argued.

In late August, tensions again rose, and two parties engaged in a very deadly conflict after eight months of relative calm. All the above diplomatic interventions failed to consolidate the humanitarian truce declared in March into a negotiated ceasefire. This marked the conclusion of AU shuttle diplomacy engagement in the third stage of the conflict and the second phase of the North Ethiopian conflict as well.

⁵⁰ AUPSC press release available at: <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/visit-of-the-african-union-high-representative-for-the-horn-of-africa-to-addis-ababa-on-4-august-2022>

⁵¹ Department of State Digital media briefing available at: <https://et.usembassy.gov/digital-press-briefing-with-u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-mike-hammer/>

⁵² MoFA Blog: A week in the Horn 13.08.22 available at: <https://mfaethiopiablog.wordpress.com/2022/08/13/a-week-in-the-horn-13-08-2022/>

4.2.1.2. United States Responses and Shuttle Diplomacy

This phase of the conflict witnessed the first organized diplomatic intervention by the US in the North Ethiopian conflict. In particular, after April 2021, the US appointed its SEHOA to address the interlinked political, security, and humanitarian crises in a diplomatic effort. Until now, the US-appointed three Ambassadors to the Horn of Africa have paid primary attention to Ethiopia. Those are Amb. Jeffrey Feltman (23 April 2021–7 January 2022); Amb. David Satterfield (7 January 2022–30 June 2022); and Amb. Mike Hammer (1 June 2022–until now). These envoys have employed shuttle diplomacy to end the conflict and consolidate peace in the region.

First Stage (January – July 2021)

In late January 2021, the new President Joe Biden's inauguration took place. The more than two-month-old Northern Ethiopian conflict was treated differently from the short-ending administration period of Trump. Under President Biden's administration, the conflict in Ethiopia became the highest US priority in the region. Therefore, the US started constantly calling through state departments and the UN Security Council to resolve and peacefully end the conflict (Martina and Sarah, 2023, p. 265). This extends to the US accusing the federal government of conducting “a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing” in Tigray (VOA, 2021, March 22).

The first bold diplomatic step taken by the US was the appointment of President Biden's SEHOA. This comes on April 23, 2021, when Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that Jeffrey Feltman serves as U.S. SEHOA,⁵³ who is the top and most experienced crisis-time diplomat.⁵⁴ He was an undersecretary general at the UN for political affairs, and he has spent the last decade working to mitigate conflicts (Shapiro, 2021, August 5). One of the particular concerns of Feltman was to address the volatile situation in Ethiopia: the North Ethiopia conflict, the Ethio-Sudan border dispute, and the dispute around the GERD. Since this period, Feltman has engaged in shuttle diplomacy to end the conflict.

But this doesn't mean Feltman was the first person to engage in shuttle diplomacy. A month before Feltman's appointment, President Biden sent Senator Christopher Coons on his behalf

⁵³ Department of State press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa/>

⁵⁴ Feltman served as ambassador to Lebanon at the 2006 Lebanon War; envoy for the Middle East during the Arab Spring and one of top officials at the U.N. visited North Korea to negotiate with Kim Jong UN at the height tensions over North nuclear weapons program.

as a presidential emissary to visit Addis Ababa on March 20, who conveyed President Biden’s “grave concerns” about the humanitarian crisis and human rights abuses in Tigray and the risk of Ethio-Sudan border instability in HoA⁵⁵. Accordingly, D. PM Demeke briefed Coons and his delegation about “the law enforcement” operation and humanitarian situation in Tigray. Demeke also underlined that Ethiopia doesn’t accept any interference in its internal affairs (Fana BC, 2021, March 21).

Coons also had a discussion with PM Abiy on the issue of conflict in Tigray. Coons stated that he noted positive public statements of PM Abiy—recognizing the need for accountability on human rights violations and first acknowledgment of the presence of the EDF—after their discussion (Tadias Magazine, 2021, March 24). However, his effort to push the federal government to declare a ceasefire was declined by PM Abiy, citing the government just hunting a few TPLF leaders and there being no conventional war (Reuters, 2021, March 26).

The First Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

Feltman started his mandate with a controversial statement about the federal government and regional institutions. Just three days after his appointment On April 26, Feltman told Foreign Policy magazine that the conflict in Ethiopia has the potential to be a full-fledged regional crisis compared with the war in Syria. He also delivered a speech that undermined the leaders of the HoA countries. Ethiopian ambassador to the US, Fitsum Arega, immediately commented on his “undiplomatic” statement (Embassy of Ethiopia, 2021, May 1).

After this, Feltman visited the region shortly after his appointment. He paid his first official visit, held from May 4–13, 2021, by traveling to Egypt, Eritrea, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Feltman traveled to Egypt and Sudan to discuss the GRED negotiators; however, his visit to Eritrea was directly related to the North Ethiopian conflict. Therefore, one can understand that this round of diplomacy is primarily concerned with the North Ethiopian conflict.

On May 6, Feltman arrived in Eritrea, and met with President Isaias Afeworki. The Eritrean Ministry of Information stated that they had a four-hour meeting, and Isaias affirmed its readiness to cooperate with the US in the efforts to resolve the problems in the Horn of

⁵⁵ The White House Press release available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/18/statement-by-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-on-senator-christopher-coons-d-de-travel-to-ethiopia/>

Africa.⁵⁶ However, the issue of EDF withdrawal from Tigray regions could be the main agenda of the talk.

On May 10, after six months of the conflict, Feltman arrived in Addis Ababa with two main agendas. The first one is the issue of GRED, and the other is the conflict in the northern part of the country. Regarding to the conflict, Feltman discussed with PM Abiy and other Ethiopian leaders the issues of increasing political and ethnic polarization, the atrocities perpetrated in Tigray, the small scale of the humanitarian emergency, and the withdrawal of Eritrean forces. Feltman recommends that an inclusive effort to build national consensus address the above challenges facing the country. Finally, the US and other international allies pledged to secure a ceasefire, end the conflict, and provide life-saving aid.⁵⁷ Hence, this round of Shuttle diplomacy was ended by talks with one side—the federal government.

The Second Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

The second round of Feltman shuttle diplomacy started at the end of May. This comes after the US government took coercive diplomatic measures because the conflicting parties have not taken any tangible steps to pursue a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The US announced a visa restriction on people who are responsible for, or complicit in, and undermining the resolution of the conflict on May 23, 2021⁵⁸. Moreover, the period was a season when Ethiopia planned to fill the GERD for the second round, and Egypt warned a unilateral decision could “jeopardize regional stability” (East African, 2021, June 4).

U.S. SEHOA Feltman traveled to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kenya from May 31 to June 6 to discuss cooperative approaches to supporting a stable and prosperous HoA, including a resolution of the dispute over the GERD.⁵⁹ This Gulf States visit was mainly to deal with the GERD filing process, which added another layer of complexity to the HoA region. However, his last visit to Kenya on June 6 was concerned about the North Ethiopian conflict. This was demonstrated at the June 8 official visit of President Uhuru Kenyatta to Ethiopia (Nation, 2021, June 8). Although the visit focused on bilateral and regional issues, it is not far from true that they talked about the North Ethiopian conflict.

⁵⁶ Yemane G/Meskel tweet available at: <https://x.com/hawelti/status/1390358704013332480>

⁵⁷ <https://preview.state.gov/travel-by-u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-jeffrey-feltman/>

⁵⁸ Department of State press statement available at: <https://www.state.gov/united-states-actions-to-press-for-the-resolution-of-the-crisis-in-the-tigray-region-of-ethiopia/>

⁵⁹ Department of State press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-feltman-visits-qatar-saudi-arabia-uae-kenya/>

This is the conclusion of this stage of conflict shuttle diplomacy, predominantly conducted by US Ambassador Feltman. The appointment of SEHOA was a remarkable initiative to understand and deal with the conflict. However, Feltman failed to reach the TPLF and create a direct and formal communication line, which was very helpful in resolving the conflict.

Second Stage (July – December 2021)

The First Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

This round of shuttle diplomacy comes after the North Ethiopian conflict experienced major developments on the battlefield and in the country's politics as well. After Ethiopia's nationwide poll was conducted, the TPLF re-took Mekelle in late June and spread the conflict to neighboring regions, despite the federal government's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire, which was negotiated by the US. In addition, the US reiterated calls for a negotiated ceasefire, the importance of unfettered humanitarian access, and the withdrawal of Amhara and Eritrean forces from parts of the Tigray region and the TPLF from the Amhara and Afar regions. There was also public opinion, which perceived Western powers, particularly the US, as wanting to restore the TPLF to power.

Another critical development was when Samantha Power, the USAID administrator, visited Ethiopia in early August to “press the government of Ethiopia to allow full and unhindered humanitarian access to prevent famine in Ethiopia’s Tigray region.” Her visit was protested by many Ethiopian politicians, citing her bad experience in Ugozelavia, Syria, Yemen, and Somalia (Addis Zeybe, 2021, August 5). In her visit, she met with Ethiopia’s Minister of Peace, Muferiat, and reiterated that the federal government should remove the bureaucratic barriers and the urgency for all parties to negotiate a CoH and allow unfettered humanitarian access. She also criticized increasingly inflammatory and ethnically charged rhetoric—by the time PM Abiy used words to refer to TPLF as “weeds,” “cancer,” and “disease.”⁶⁰ (U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia, 2021, August 4).

Power's discussion with Muferiat comes after Abiy declined her visit to him. Foreign Policy (August 11, 2021) argued that the PM office did not respond to U.S. requests for a meeting with Power. Similarly, Anderson (2022, September 26) stated that Abiy was not interested in meeting with her. He stated that Abiy said:

⁶⁰ USAID press release at: <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/aug-6-2021-usaid-administrator-samantha-power-visits-ethiopia>

They [the US] made the mistake of talking publicly and down to me. Samantha Power announced she was coming to Ethiopia and was going to meet with me. Without even consulting me! That's not the way it's done. So I didn't see her, and she left upset. Now there is a different approach: they know they must behave respectfully.

Power also highlighted that the conflict was not at the stage of ripeness to bring the conflicting parties to the negotiation table by the time she visited Ethiopia (Shapiro, 2021, August 5). Power said:

The militarization of the conflict is getting worse by the hour of the day. You have the government not seeking to come to the peace table for an inclusive dialogue but rather deploying forces. You see the rebels inside Tigray who want a victory in effectively defeating the Ethiopian government.

After all these developments, Feltman traveled to Djibouti, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates from August 15 to August 24.⁶¹ White House National Security Advisor Jack Sullivan stated that the trip was conducted with a specific emphasis on urging the federal government of Ethiopia and the TPLF to urgently come to the negotiating table at this “critical moment.”⁶² (The Reporter, 2021, August 14). Feltman visited Ethiopia on August 17. In Ethiopia, he met with D.P. Demeke and briefed him about the diplomatic dissatisfaction of Ethiopia with US government policy. Demeke stated that US coldness toward TPLF aggression was incompatible with the fraternal relationship between the two states. The US government should officially condemn the TPLF for its “destructive act,” Demeke added. On his side, Feltman stated that the US government “perfectly understands the views of the people of Ethiopia on the TPLF” and that maintaining Ethiopia’s sovereignty and ensuring its peace and unity remain top foreign policy for the US government (Addis Standard, 2021, August 18).

According to some commentators, by the time Feltman arrived in Ethiopia, which expected to meet PM Abiy to have a discussion on the conflict, Abiy was in a position to talk with him. And this obviously indicates that the federal government was dissatisfied with the US. Plaut and Vaughn (2023, p. 258) also argued that after Abiy rebuffed Samantha Power, the relations between the two countries became increasingly strained, and Abiy snubbed Feltman until November 2021.

⁶¹ Department of State press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-feltman-visits-djibouti-ethiopia-uae/>

⁶² Jack Sullivan tweet available at: <https://x.com/jakesullivan46/status/1425922470440316928>

The Second Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

This round of shuttle diplomacy conducted during the period of Ethiopia and US relations was increasingly deteriorating and continued to deteriorate. Since the last visit of Feltman on August 17, the US has taken coercive diplomatic measures against Ethiopia and its ally Eritrea. On August 23, the US Treasury Department sanctioned Chief of Staff of the Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) General Filipos Woldeyohannes for being a leader or official of an entity that is engaged in serious human rights abuse committed during the ongoing Tigray conflict (U.S. Department of Treasury, 2024, May 16).

Another round of sanctions was also imposed by the US on those involved in the war. The sanction came in the form of an Executive Order (EO) from the President. It was stated that this came due to the threat to the stability of Ethiopia, the HoA, and that it constitutes an unusual and “extraordinary threat” to the national security and foreign policy of the United States (ibid.). The sanction was welcomed by the TPLF. On the battlefield, the TPLF continued to advance, and the federal government's framing of the conflict in terms of a Western neo-colonialism struggle was also another bone of contention in relation to the two countries (Debretsion, 2022, January 20). On the other hand, this period also witnessed the first concrete move of the AU: appointing Obasanjo as H.R. of the HoA. This found an ally for the US, which is reliable for the federal government to resolve the conflict peacefully.

Feltman started another round of shuttle diplomacy by the time he arrived in Addis Ababa on November 4 to address US “grave concern” about the escalating violence. He met and discussed with both federal government officials and international partners. Among these, Feltman initially met with AUC chairperson Moussa Faki Mahmet and exchanged views regarding developments in Ethiopia and Sudan.⁶³ By this time, the US has updated the travel advisory for Ethiopia to level IV, which means the US is advising its citizens not to travel to Ethiopia. And recommending its citizens in Ethiopia consider departing by using commercial options that remain available. The state department said that the US government was ready to provide a repatriation loan for its citizens, who could not afford it at the time.⁶⁴

⁶³ AUC chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat tweet available at: https://x.com/AUC_MoussaFaki/status/1456191785697435650

⁶⁴ Department of State press briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/departments-press-briefing-november-8-2021/>

Feltman also met with D.P. Demeke Mekonnen, Minister of Defense Abraham Belay, and Minister of Finance Ahmed Shide on November 4. For the first time, after PM Abiy discussed it with Senator Coons in March 2021, he received Feltman on November 5th (ibid.). According to Feltman (2021, November 23), in their discussion, Feltman tried to persuade Abiy he could achieve his goals—push the TDF northward back into Tigray—through the negotiating table rather than on the military battlefield. However, PM Abiy was concerned about the US and others who didn't properly credit the June 28th unilateral humanitarian ceasefire or properly attribute blame for what happened back in November with the assault on the Northern Command (ibid.).

Simultaneously, on November 5th, nine anti-federal government forces, the so-called UFEFCF, formed a coalition in the US to seize power either by negotiation or force and called on the US government to support them. This triggered another blowup and aggravated the federal government, and the wider public's opinion increasingly went against the US government. The State Department hesitated to immediately react to the coalition.⁶⁵ (Al Jazeera, 2021, November 5). From regional and international organizations He met with Obasanjo and Martin Griffiths.

The Department of State also reported that from November 7 to 8, Feltman traveled to Nairobi, Kenya, where he met with President Kenyatta and “other political leaders on the conflict in Ethiopia.” In this statement, the term “other political leaders” might indicate that the US government has also engaged with the TPLF leaders, who are close to Kenya. Of course, the department confirmed that Feltman was engaged with the TPLF, and Feltman (2021, November 23) also stated he met them in Kenya to try to put it on the track to a CoH, but it did not conform exactly when it was held.⁶⁶ In the engagement, Feltman underscored to TPLF leaders that the US opposes any TPLF move to Addis Ababa or any attempt by the TPLF to cut the Djibouti corridor (US DoS, 2021, November 3).

In this talk, Feltman can pursue some TPLF leaders who recognize that entering Addis Ababa could be catastrophic and don't want to be responsible for the collapse of Ethiopia. But still, they do want to lift the siege that's been imposed on Tigray since the end of June by advancing to the capital (Feltman, 2021, November 23). Finally, Feltman restated the US

⁶⁵ Department of State press briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-november-5-2021/>

⁶⁶ Department of State press briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-november-8-2021/>

calls for the federal government, TPLF, and OLA to enter negotiations without preconditions towards a permanent CoH and for the EDF to withdraw immediately and permanently (ibid.).

On November 8, when Feltman returned to Addis Ababa, he faced thousands of Ethiopians gathering on Mesqel Square to denounce the “terrorist” TPLF and OLA. The rally was organized and attended by higher government officials when the people were chanting slogans themed “I defend Ethiopia by paying any sacrifices.” At the event, city Mayor Adanech Abeby said that the purpose of the rally was to send a shockwave to their “enemies” and accused the TPLF and OLA of being Trojan horses of “neo-colonialists” (Walta Media, 2021, November 8). Furthermore, the rally was against the Western powers in general and the US in particular, Feltman also personally targeted. One of the demonstrator’s banners read, “Ethiopia does not take orders from Feltman” (Today News Africa, 2021, November 9).

He also met with Obasanjo, who was officially visited by Mekelle and discussed with TPLF President Debretsion the day before. In addition, he also met with D.P. Demeke and other UN officials in Addis.⁶⁷ Demeke also received a call from Blinken on November 10 to all parties, including the federal government, to “urgently and seriously” engage in negotiations on a CoH without preconditions and the need for immediate, unimpeded humanitarian access to northern Ethiopia as well.⁶⁸ Feltman left Ethiopia around November 12 and returned on November 18, which is the third round of shuttle diplomacy.

The Third Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

The State Department reported that Feltman will travel to Ethiopia from November 18 to November 20 and meet with higher government officials, AU representatives, and other international partners to seek a peaceful resolution of the conflict.⁶⁹ This comes after some developments in connection with the battlefield. TPLF continues to advance close to the capital, and regional and international calls constantly for negotiated ceasefires, unhindered humanitarian assistance, and the protection of civilians. The US government imposed another sanction on six targets, which are linked with the Eritrean government and ruling party. The US-accused targets have posed a significant obstacle to a CoH, prolonging the conflict in the

⁶⁷ Department of State press briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-november-9-2021/>

⁶⁸ Department of State press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-call-with-ethiopian-deputy-prime-minister-mekonnen/>

⁶⁹ Department of State press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-feltman-visits-ethiopia/>

north. However, the Ethiopian government denounced the sanction by listing the fact that the US government failed to consider the facts on the ground.⁷⁰

Another development seen in this period was the US senior general statement about the possibility of military intervention to evacuate US diplomatic missions and citizens if the TPLF further advanced to the capital and the city fell into their hands. M. General William Zana, who is commander of the joint task force HoA Camp Lemonnier, based in Djibouti, said that Ethiopian internal conflict complicated regional security at large and made Ethiopia vulnerable to external military or political action (BBC News Africa, 2021, November 12).

The General's remarks were perceived by many Ethiopians as the US government's support for the TPLF to replace the incumbent government and impose an old-fashioned regime change like 1991. The Djibouti Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf commented on the general statement and said his country would not be the launch pad for hostile intervention in neighboring countries by supporting warring parties (EPA, 2021, November 16). President Uhuru Kenyatta's visit to push the government towards negotiation was another key development in this period. The visit was conducted before the Belinken visit to Kenya on November 17 and focused on the North Ethiopian conflict as a priority agenda item.⁷¹

Feltman arrived in Addis Ababa on November 18 with a proposal that helped bring the conflict to an end. Feltman has briefed D.P. Demeke about the proposal that was stressed: there is no military solution to the conflict; both are agreed upon on some points, at least in principle. This includes the federal government's removal of shackles that are deterring humanitarian aid, a stop to the offensive, which was welcomed by the TPLF, and finally, the TDF's halting of its advance to Addis and withdrawal from the Amhara and Afar regions (Feltman, 2021, November 23).

Demek also explained the federal government's position and avowed that humanitarian assistance flights have been allowed to enter TPLF-controlled cities in the Amhara region, including Kombolcha and Lalibela, and of trucks transporting aid were also permitted to enter Tigray. They have also discussed the situation of US citizens found in various parts of Ethiopia and the pressure that should be exerted on the TPLF to leave the Amhara and Afra

⁷⁰ MoFA press statement available at: <https://www.facebook.com/MFAEthiopia/posts/5303428403017693>

⁷¹ US Department of state press release available at: [Secretary Blinken's Call with Kenyan President Kenyatta - United States Department of State](#)

regions. (ENA, 2021, November 18). Finally, Feltman back to the US on November 22; a day earlier, PM Abiy marched to the battlefield under the banner “Save Ethiopia!”

The Fourth Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

After several rounds of shuttle and coercive diplomacy failed to de-escalate the north Ethiopian conflict, the US still argued that there was some “nascent progress” in trying to get the parties to a negotiating process, but it was fragile progress (Feltman, 2021, November 23). This indicated that the US was not giving up on resolving the conflict peacefully. Therefore, Feltman continued to shuttling not only the conflicting parties but also countries that had diplomatic leverage over the warring parties.

Accordingly, Feltman reported traveling to the UAE and Turkey from December 10 to 15. The visit aimed to create a platform for those two countries to discuss opportunities to support a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Horn of Africa.⁷² However, their discussion was closed. According to Reuters (2021, December 22), Feltman raised the issue of armed drone use in Ethiopia and the attendant risk of civilian harm. Both the UAE and Turkey were the two countries from which Ethiopia purchased UAV drones, which have a critical role in the federal government's counter-offensive military operations. The MoFA spokesperson, Dina Mufti, said that the US move to talk to other countries about Ethiopian affairs is rather better than directly contacting Ethiopia.

In conclusion, this stage of conflict tests the strengths of US shuttle diplomacy to deal with the conflict. The priority of Feltman-led shuttle diplomacy in this situation of conflict was to de-escalate the conflict, which is very fast and dynamic. However, such intensive engagement failed to stop the conflict from spreading to neighboring regional states and brought the warring parties to the negotiation table.

Third Stage (late December 2021 – August 2022)

This stage of the second phase of the conflict has been relatively calm. The federal government pushed the TPLF back to its origin, Tigray, and declared a temporary halt to pursuing them. This stage also saw three different US special envoys deal with the North Ethiopian conflict, including Feltman. Therefore, it is better to break down the envoy's

⁷² US Department of state press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-feltman-visits-uae-and-turkey/>

mandate into three: Jeffry Feltman from December 23, 2021–7 January 2022; David Satterfield from January 7–1 June 2022; and finally Mike Hammer from June 1, 2022–now.

I. Ambassador Jeffry Feltman

This was the last trip of Feltman to Ethiopia as US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. This comes after the US delisted Ethiopia from the list of AGOA trade preference beneficiary programs due to “gross violations” of human rights perpetrated by the Ethiopian government and other parties amid the widening conflict in northern Ethiopia, which was an action in violation of AGOA status.⁷³

According to Addis Fortune (2022, January), the termination has a significant impact on Ethiopia’s exports to the USA worth US \$525 million (9.4% of its overall exports) in 2020, and half are duty-free under AGOA. This impacted the Ethiopian economy mainly in three areas: firstly, the country’s 10-year development plan promotes export-led economic growth as the main driver of growth and employment; secondly, it affects the nascent manufacturing industry, resulting in an estimated 1 million job losses, mainly young and women, which may have further economic and political ramifications; and finally, it results in disruptions of the established market linkage that AGOA created, which discourages investors and leads to reduced FDI (ibid.). This was another round of sanctions imposed by the US, and it indicated the US used both shuttle and coercive diplomacy simultaneously to deal with the conflict.

Feltman arrived in Ethiopia on January 6, 2022, for a two-day visit to push the warring parties to a negotiation table. On his visit, he met with PM Abiy and held “constructive and substantive” discussions on the issues of bilateral and regional issues. The US State Department also reported that Feltman had the opportunity to formally inform the PM to step down and for Ambassador Satterfield to take his post as SEHOA in the coming days.⁷⁴ A few days after his visit, surprisingly, the federal government released political prisoners and TPLF senior and retired leaders, including Abay Weldu and Sebhat Nega, who were captured during the second phase of the military operation. PM Abiy and his party deny that the release of TPLF leaders was not related to external pressure (Borkena, 2022, March 23).

⁷³ United State Trade Representative press release available at: <http://surl.li/txkxp>

⁷⁴ Department of State press briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-january-6-2022/>

Feltman's last visit marked the end of his post. According to the Department of State, Feltman, in his mandate since late April 2021, has held over 300 engagements with the AU, UN, EU, and other regional neighbors as well.⁷⁵ But the reason for his resignation is not clear so far. According to Anonymous,⁷⁶ the issues of his profession were mentioned as a cause for his resignation. Feltman failed to manage the crisis in the Horn of Africa. The one-year-old north Ethiopian devastating conflict and other fresh tensions in Sudan after the October 2021 military coup were directly against US policy in the Horn.

Yayeseu (2024, p. 316) argued that US officials who had different stances on the conflict are accountable for his resignation. This coincides with Getachew Reda's statement about the US's interest in the conflict. Getachew identified different contradictory interests of the US about the conflict and concluded by saying, "However, it is important to know that the Americas have no uniform attitude towards the conflict (VOA, 2021, December 13). Feltman is also perceived as pro-TPLF; directly accountable to President Biden, he declined to submit a report for Ambassador Mary Catherine Phee, who is the U.S. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, and pro-PM Abiy. This tension gradually aggravated their differences and resulted in his resignation from his post.

II. Ambassador David Satterfield

On January 6, 2022, Antony Blinken announced former ambassador to Turkey, Ambassador David Satterfield,⁷⁷ who has decades of diplomatic experience as US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. Since January, Satterfield has served the US until June 1st.

First Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

The first round of Satterfield shuttle diplomacy started on January 20. This visit comes after PM Abiy and US President Biden had a telephone conversation on January 10th about the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia and opportunities to advance peace and reconciliation. Biden commended the Ethiopian government's release of several political prisoners and TPLF

⁷⁵ Department of State press briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-november-8-2021/>

⁷⁶ Interview with Anonymous: the person familiar with the North Ethiopia conflict (March 26/2024).

⁷⁷ Department of State press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa/>

members, which opened the way to dialogue and led to a negotiated ceasefire. Biden also stressed the urgency of addressing humanitarian crises and human rights violations.⁷⁸

Satterfield visited Ethiopia after his trip to Saudi Arabia and Sudan, accompanied by Assistant Secretary of African Affairs Molly Phee, and they had a “productive” discussion with PM Abiy and other government officials. Their discussion focused on encouraging the federal government to seize the current “opening for peace” and recommending what they believe is the “best path” forward to end the conflict. This path includes first halting the conflict, then negotiating a ceasefire, then releasing all political prisoners, then restoring unimpeded humanitarian aid, and finally laying the foundation for an inclusive national dialogue with the participation of all actors.⁷⁹ Satterfield and Phee also have a discussion with AUC chairperson Mossa Faki on regional issues (Al-ain News, 2022, January 22).

Satterfield had continued his travel to region and other countries that have diplomatic leverage in Ethiopia, like Kenya, the UAE, Turkey, and Israel.⁸⁰ In Kenya, he met with President Uhuru Kenyatta on January 24 and agreed to continue engaging the warring parties in Ethiopia to bring a swift resolution to the conflict in the country. Satterfield commended President Kenyatta for his efforts to halt the conflict in Ethiopia (The Star, 2022, January 24).

Second Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

Another round of Satterfield shuttle diplomacy was conducted on February 13. The minister of state reported that he will travel to Addis Ababa for a two-day working visit and meet with the Ethiopian government, the AU, the UN, and representatives of humanitarian organizations as well.⁸¹ Following his visit, the federal government left the state of emergency, which was commended by the US government and considered an important step to pave the way for a peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict.⁸² However, there are no updates about his engagement in Ethiopia, both from the US and the Ethiopian government.

⁷⁸ US Embassy in Ethiopia press release available at: <https://et.usembassy.gov/assistant-secretary-of-state-for-african-affairs-phee-and-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-satterfield/>

⁷⁹ Department of State briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-january-27-2022/>

⁸⁰ Department of State press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/travel-of-the-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-to-kenya-egypt-the-uae-turkey-and-israel/>

⁸¹ Department of State Press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-satterfield-travel-to-addis-ababa/>

⁸² Department of State Press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/on-the-lifting-of-the-state-of-emergency-in-ethiopia/>

This month was also witnessed by the war between Russia and Ukraine, which started on February 24, 2022. This incident shifts US attention from the North Ethiopian conflict and focuses on the Russia-Ukraine war. The best indicator for this attention shift is that the Department of State briefing sessions have not mentioned the name Ethiopia from February to March 18th.

Third Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

As mentioned above, this round of shuttle diplomacy comes after the Russia-Ukraine war, which highly attracts the attention of the international community in general and the US in particular. Satterfield has not made an official trip to Ethiopia in more than a month, dating back to his last visit on February 13. In addition, this month was marked by the Ethiopian government, and citizens overseas protested the move of the US government's approval of the so-called “Ethiopia Stabilization, Peace, and Democracy Act,” H.R. 6600 and S3199 (Borkena, 2022, March 23).

Satterfield was traced to Ethiopia on March 21, when he discussed with Obasanjo and the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security, Bankole Adeoye, the issue of Sudan and Ethiopia.⁸³ However, the conversation details remained closed. On March 22, he met with D.P. Demeke and discussed the humanitarian support for the Tigray region, the peace initiative, and the bilateral ties between the two countries. In this regard, Demeke reiterated the federal government's commitment to allow unhindered access to humanitarian operators and briefed the TPLF's obstruction role over the flow of humanitarian assistance by its continued provocation in the Amhara and Afar regions. In connection with peace initiatives, he briefed Satterfield about the steps the federal government has taken to ensure lasting peace and stability in the country. This includes the release of political figures, the lifting of the state of emergency, and the establishment of a national dialogue commission.⁸⁴

Demeke also criticized the HR6600 and S. 3199 Acts, which do not promote peace and democracy in Ethiopia, and asked the US government to discard the draft bills (ibid.). Satterfield has appreciated and acknowledged the positive steps taken by the Ethiopian

⁸³ Department of State Press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-satterfield-travel-to-ethiopia/>

⁸⁴ MoFA Blog: A week in the Horn 25.03.22 available at: <https://mfaethiopiablog.wordpress.com/2022/03/25/a-week-in-the-horn-25-03-2022/>

government and stressed that the top US priority in Ethiopia is to ensure humanitarian access to the Tigray region and all other communities in need (Reuters, 2022, March 23).

According to Yayejew (2024, pp. 316-317), the above discussion between Demeke and Satterfield was the last phase of conversation regarding a month-long secret negotiation between GFDRE and TPLF. Further, he argued that Satterfield managed to bring federal government officials and TPLF authorities to Djibouti and the Seychelles at different times, and both agreed to open a humanitarian corridor. General Tsadikan stated that they had confidential meetings with the federal government three times organized by the US government (UMD Media, 2022, October 6). De Waal (2022, September 1) also argued that the US-backed pre-negotiation meetings were held and an agreement was reached that the federal government would lift the blockade of Tigray, the EDF would withdraw, and the parties would start full talks in Kenya, facilitated by President Kenyatta; a permanent ceasefire would be at the top of all agendas.

After Satterfield secured a green light from D.P. Demeke, he traveled to Mekelle, consulted, and agreed with authorities there to have a joint press release on the humanitarian truce. In between these, the federal government declined to issue a joint statement with the TPLF, which was designated as a terrorist group and declared unilateral “an indefinite humanitarian truce effective immediately” (Yayejew, 2024, pp. 316-317). This was welcomed by the IGAD, AU, US, EU, and others. TPLF also announced its commitment to respect declaration.

Fourth Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

This last round of shuttle diplomacy was conducted on April 13 and comes after several positive steps taken by both the federal government and the TPLF. This includes the unilateral declaration of a humanitarian truce by both parties, the TPLF announcement of its withdrawal from the remaining parts of the Afar region, and the federal government statement about its commitment to the peace efforts of the AU-led Obasanjo.⁸⁵ Oppositely, the US senate Foreign Relations Committee has passed S.3199 to be voted on by the Senate.

Accordingly, Satterfield, accompanied by his deputy Payton Knopf, has arrived in Ethiopia and met with Ethiopian government officials, representatives of humanitarian organizations,

⁸⁵ MoFA Blog: A week in the Horn 08.04.22 available at: <https://mfaethiopiablog.wordpress.com/2022/04/08/a-week-in-the-horn-08-04-2022/>

and other diplomatic partners.⁸⁶ In their discussions, humanitarian issues are again at the top of all agendas.⁸⁷ Other agendas were focused on efforts towards ending hostilities, impartial investigations into human rights abuses and violations, and a negotiated resolution to the conflict. However, details of their diplomatic engagement with Ethiopian government officials remained closed.⁸⁸ Therefore, one can argue that this round of shuttle diplomacy was conducted essentially to assess the humanitarian situation described three weeks ago.

This was the last official travel of Satterfield, and since April, he has not officially engaged with any other warring parties, regional countries, or institutions. On June 1, the State Department announced that Satterfield would be replaced by Ambassador Mike Hammer. According to Plaut and Vaughn (2023, p. 272), a lack of support from the top of the Biden administration, together with frustration at resistance from the Africa Bureau within the State Department, might have contributed to his decision to resign from the post.

In general, Ambassador Satterfield's five-month shuttle diplomacy engagement was focused on two things: first, consolidating the relatively calm environment; and second, addressing the humanitarian crisis in the conflict-affected area in general and in Tigray in particular, where it was "de facto blocked." Hence, one can argue that he has had relatively better success compared to the former envoy, Ambassador Feltman.

III. Ambassador Mike Hammer

On June 1, 2022, Blinken announced that the former Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 2018–2022, Mike Hammer, will succeed Satterfield as US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. Blinken, in his statement, underscores the role of Hammer in Ethiopia, saying that the new envoy's appointment demonstrates US commitment to diplomatic efforts in Ethiopia. Furthermore, he pointed out that the Biden administration focused in Ethiopia: a cessation of hostilities, unimpeded humanitarian access, impartial and credible investigations into violations and human rights, and a negotiated resolution to the conflict.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Department of State Press release available at: <https://preview.state.gov/special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-satterfields-travel-to-ethiopia/>

⁸⁷ Department of State briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-april-22-2022/>

⁸⁸ Department of State briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-april-13-2022/>

⁸⁹ Department of State press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-2/>

First Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

The first round of Hammer shuttle diplomacy was conducted on June 10, 2022. In his visit, he met with D. P. Demeke, accompanied by Ambassador Tracey Jacobson, Chargé d’Affaires at the US Embassy in Ethiopia. In their discussion, they raised a varied range of issues, like humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas, measures that should be taken to ensure accountability for violations and abuses of human rights, and the AU-led peace initiatives. Demeke briefed the Hammer about the federal government's effort to address accountability by establishing an inter-ministerial committee and trying to implement the recommendations of the EHRC and OHCHR Joint Investigation Report. Furthermore, Demeke reaffirmed the federal government’s commitment to the AU peace initiative led by Obasanjo to end the conflict peacefully (Walta, 2022, June 11).

Second Round of Shuttle Diplomacy

The second round of shuttle diplomacy will be conducted in July 2022. Mike Hammer's visit comes after the two parties announced their readiness to start peace talks and set up a negotiation committee. Hammer came to Ethiopia after his visits to Egypt and the UAE to forge a diplomatic resolution to issues related to the GERD, and he also consulted with the AU in regard to this. He also sees the opportunity to review progress on the delivery of humanitarian aid and accountability for human rights violations and abuses, as well as efforts to advance peace talks between the federal government and the TPLF.⁹⁰

Accordingly, Hammer met with D.P. Demeke and briefed him about the federal government's solid commitment to the ongoing AU-led peace process.⁹¹ He also visited Mekelle with EU and UN special envoys for the Horn of Africa. This was the first official Hammer visit to Mekelle, aimed at encouraging the launch of talks between the Federal Government and the TPLF under the African Union’s auspices. After this visit, the envoys released a joint statement of the US and EU that agreed to swiftly restore essential services in Tigray, which include electricity, telecom, banking, and other basic services in Tigray. In connection with

⁹⁰ Department of State press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-mike-hammers-travel-to-egypt-the-uae-and-ethiopia/>

⁹¹ MoFA Blog: A week in the Horn 29.07.22 available at: <https://mfaethiopiablog.wordpress.com/2022/07/29/a-week-in-the-horn-29-07-2022/>

this, Tigray regional government President Debretsion provided the international community with a letter that gives security assurance for those who need to work to restore services.⁹²

The researcher argues that the envoys' acceptance of the TPLF precondition was driven by their fear of the resumption of TPLF aggression against the federal government. Mike Hammer said that when he visited Mekelle on August 2, he noted that the Tigrayan authorities were preparing for potential aggression if there wasn't a restoration of services.⁹³ However, this statement was unwelcome by the federal government, which called for the restoration of essential services in Tigray after a negotiated ceasefire. This was demonstrated on August 4, 2022, in Ambassador Redwan Hussin's statement about their travel to Mekelle. He stated that the team of envoys failed to press for an unequivocal commitment to peace talks but rather fulfilled the preconditions of the TPLF.⁹⁴

In addition, the EFDRE government communication service accused the diplomatic delegation of "echoing the false narrative of the TPLF." And just a week earlier, for the resumption of the conflict, the PM Office Press Secretary, Billene Seyoum, said, "The Government of Ethiopia affirms it is ready at any time and at any place suggested to engage in peace talks under the auspices of the AU-led process." In connection with the restoration of service, she stated that to carry out such technical tasks on the ground, an operational and enabling environment—security and administrative—is required.⁹⁵ Later on, this argument won the hearts and minds of the envoys. In late August, the federal government and the TPLF accused each other of humanitarian truce violations, and finally, they have engaged in devastating conflict since August 24, 2022.

4.2.3. African Union and United States Coordinated Shuttle Diplomacy in the Third Phase of Conflict

The third phase of the conflict started on August 24, 2020, after eight months of relative calm, and ended on November 2, 2020, when the permanent cessation of the hostility agreement was signed in Pretoria, South Africa. However, since October 26, the warring parties have sat around the table to resolve the conflict through political dialogue. In contrast to the above phases of the conflict, the AU and the US were working more coordinated than

⁹² US Embassy in Ethiopia press release available at: <https://et.usembassy.gov/u-s-and-eu-joint-press-statement/>

⁹³ Department of States Digital briefing available at: <https://et.usembassy.gov/digital-press-briefing-with-u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-mike-hammer/>

⁹⁴ Ambassador Redwan statement available on : <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/72676>

⁹⁵ MoFA Blog: A week in the Horn 19.08.22 available at: <https://mfaethiopiablog.wordpress.com/2022/08/19/a-week-in-the-horn-19-08-2022/>

ever. Therefore, this section deals with the coordinated shuttle diplomacy engagement of the AU and US until October 26, 2022.

4.2.3.1. The Coordinated Responses and Shuttle Diplomacy

The intensive shuttle diplomacy and coercive diplomacy approaches to dealing with the north-Ethiopian conflict failed to produce any tangible outcome to end more than a year and a half of conflict in Ethiopia. On August 26, the federal government communication service released an urgent notice stating that the TDF attack forced the government to reserve its radiance for unconditional peace talks and that it would take military action.⁹⁶ Since this moment, the third phase of the conflict has started. According to General Tsadkan, this phase of the conflict was a “huge war,” with roughly one million fighters mobilized from both sides (UMD Media, 2022, October 6).

The resolution of the conflict concerned the wider international community. The AUC chairperson strongly calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and urges the parties to de-escalate and resume talks to seek a peaceful solution.⁹⁷ Similarly, the US stated that it was concerned by reports of renewed military confrontation in Ethiopia and called on the federal government and the TPLF to redouble efforts to advance talks to achieve a durable ceasefire without preconditions and ultimately bring a permanent end to the conflict.⁹⁸

The swift reaction comes from US special envoy Mike Hammer, who traveled to Ethiopia and the region from September 4–16. This trip was predominantly focused on trying to get the warring parties to stop the military confrontation and to accept and participate in an AU-led process of peace talks.⁹⁹ This statement indicated that the US exerted pressure on the TPLF to pull into the AU-led peace initiative because the federal government was already interested in the AU-led peace process.

Accordingly, Hammer meets with the Ethiopian government and AU officials, political actors, and civil society, which represent different regions of the country, and discusses how

⁹⁶ FDRE Communication Service statement available at : <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/73273>

⁹⁷ AUC press release available at: <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20220824/chairperson-deeply-concerned-reports-renewed-military-confrontation-ethiopia>

⁹⁸ Department of State press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/departments-press-briefing-august-24-2022/>

⁹⁹ Department of State Digital press briefing available at: <https://et.usembassy.gov/digital-press-briefing-with-u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-mike-hammer/>

to end the conflict.¹⁰⁰ On September 5 and 6, Hammer met with D. PM Demeke and the prime minister's national security advisor, Ambassador Redwan, to discuss the urgency of an immediate CoH and the way forward to peace talks under the AU's auspices. Hammer also delivered the same message to President Debretsion. However, the researcher couldn't verify the means of communication between them.¹⁰¹

In between these, Obasanjo arrived in Ethiopia on the 10th of September. The AUC Chairperson, Moussa Faki, received him and extended his mandate for a year. Faki reiterated his full confidence in Obasanjo and encouraged his continued engagement with both parties and international actors to work towards peace and reconciliation in Ethiopia.¹⁰² This statement darkens TPLF's slight hope towards its expectation that the AU will change its higher representative in the region. This was followed by the TPLF statement, which announced its stance on the peaceful resolution of the current conflict.

The statement announced that the "Government of Tigray," represented by Getachew Reda and General Tsadikan, was prepared to participate in credible peace processes under the auspices of the AU and to abide by an immediate and mutually agreed-upon CoH. Furthermore, it stated that the AU should be accompanied by mutually acceptable mediators and international mediators.¹⁰³ This statement has two basic substances different from the earlier calls for peace. The first thing is that it recognized the AU-led peace process, and secondly, it surrendered all its preconceptions of peace talks. The statement was welcomed by the wider international community. At this critical juncture, Hammer met with Moussa Faki and agreed on the need for international partners to support the AU-led process with the parties to end the conflict in Ethiopia.¹⁰⁴

Hammer, accompanied by US Ambassador to the African Union Jessye Lapenn, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Molly Phee, and the Chargé d'affaires in Ethiopia Ambassador Tracey Jacobson, discussed with the AU and other key actors in the region envoys. Lapenn was facilitating consultations with the AU official. The next day's dozens of

¹⁰⁰ Department of State press release available at: <https://www.state.gov/special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-mike-hammers-travel-to-ethiopia/>

¹⁰¹ Department of State press briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-september-7-2022/>

¹⁰² Moussa Faki tweet available at: https://x.com/AUC_MoussaFaki/status/1568603447049478148

¹⁰³ Tigray External Affairs Office press release available at: <https://x.com/TigrayEAO/status/1568988898532925440/photo/1>

¹⁰⁴ MoFA Blog: A week in the Horn 16.09.22 available at: <https://mfaethiopiablog.wordpress.com/2022/09/16/a-week-in-the-horn-16-09-2022/>

meetings will be held as part of the ongoing diplomatic efforts. In particular, Hammer and Obasanjo have met on several occasions to discuss a move forward.¹⁰⁵ One can argue that the main objective of the US engagement at this moment was to mobilize diplomatic efforts to press the federal government and the TPLF to end the conflict.

The first concrete move towards the peaceful resolution of conflict appeared on October 1, 2022. The African Union Commission Chairperson extends its official invitation to conflicting parties to the peace talks scheduled to take place in South Africa on October 8, 2022, led by Obasanjo with the support of Uhuru Kenyatta and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. The objective of these peace talks was to agree on the guiding principles, agencies, issues, modalities, formats, and timeline for a negotiated settlement.¹⁰⁶

The TPLF accepted the proposed peace talks in its statement issued on October 5. It also criticized the AU for sticking to the initial welcoming statement in September and recommending to the CoH that it be part of the substantive agenda. Furthermore, TPLF asked the AUC for clarification of the presence of additional actors to be invited to participate, to observe, to provide guidance, and to raise the logistical issues of travel and security arrangements.¹⁰⁷ TPLF, for the second time, reviles its speculation about another party's participation. This might be driven by two things: the AU PSC extends its invitations to Eritrea to be part of peace talks, and some Amhara forces make a strong claim to be represented in the negotiations. The federal government also accepted the invitation as per its principled position regarding the peaceful resolution of the conflict and the need to have talks without preconditions.

On October 6, AUC welcomes the avowed committee of two parties and accepts the invitation. He informed the parties that the peace talk would be conducted through a high-level panel of Africans established purposefully for this peace talk.¹⁰⁸ However, on October 7, 2022, former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta wrote a letter to the AUC chairperson to notify them he would not be attending the peace talks scheduled for October 8, 2022. He

¹⁰⁵ Department of State Digital press briefing available at: <https://et.usembassy.gov/digital-press-briefing-with-u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-mike-hammer/>

¹⁰⁶ AUC chairperson invitation letter for peace talk Available at: <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/74117>

¹⁰⁷ Tigray External Affairs Office Available at: <https://x.com/TigrayEAO/status/1577717638045863953/photo/1>

¹⁰⁸ AUC chairperson statement to welcome commitment of warring parties <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/74193>

further asks for clarity on the structure and modalities of the talk.¹⁰⁹ Finally, this initiative failed because of logistics issues (Reuters, 2022, October 7).

Hammer returned to the US and has had dozens of meetings with different stakeholders. Among these, he participated in the US-South Africa Working Group on African and Global Issues (WGAGI) meetings held in Washington on September 27th. In this meeting, they discussed the condition in northern Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Later, Hammer traveled to Pretoria to meet with South African government officials to advance efforts in support of the AU-led mediation effort.¹¹⁰

In this phase of the conflict, for the second time, Hammer returned to the region again. In his visit, Hammer traveled back and forth to Kenya, South Africa, and Ethiopia from October 3–18, 2022. The main objective of the trip was to boost diplomatic efforts to achieve an immediate CoH in northern Ethiopia and support the launch of African Union-led peace talks. Accordingly, Hammer traveled to Ethiopia and consulted with the Ethiopian government and African Union officials. In particular, he stressed the importance of accountability on human rights issues in resolving the conflict and achieving national reconciliation.¹¹¹

On October 6-7, Hammer was in Nairobi, Kenya, consulting with the Kenyan leaders as well as other regional and international partners to prepare for this AU-led effort. Hammer met with President Ruto on October 7th in Nairobi. He also met with former President Uhuru Kenyatta and stated support for his participation in the AU-led mediation effort as well.¹¹² He also continued to meet with members of the federal government to encourage warring parties to end the conflict.

However, by this time, the federal government forces had advanced to some cities in the Tigray region. On October 15, the AUC issued a statement that expressed “grave concern” about the increased fighting in Tigray and urged the parties to recommit to dialogue as per their agreement to start direct talks. The US also reiterates calls on the ENDF and the EDF to

¹⁰⁹ Uhuru statement available on: <https://x.com/MwangiMaina/status/1578376733828390912>

¹¹⁰ Department of State available at: <https://www.state.gov/special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-hammer-travels-to-kenya-south-africa-and-ethiopia/>

¹¹¹ Department of State available at: <https://www.state.gov/special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-hammer-travels-to-kenya-south-africa-and-ethiopia/>

¹¹² Department of State briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/departments-press-briefing-october-7-2022/>

immediately end their military offensive and for Eritrea to withdraw its forces from northern Ethiopia. The US further calls on the TDF to cease additional provocations at this time.¹¹³

Since the full-fledged conflict re-erupted in late August 2022, the battlefield dynamic has been decisively in the allied forces's favor. In particular, mid-October, the week before the negotiation started, witnessed the peak of the conflict, when the Allied forces broke through their defensive lines in key areas, capturing the northern cities of Shire, where a strategic crossroads could allow the Allied forces to have broader access to other Tigray parts such as Axum and Adwa, or even Mekelle, located 140 km away. The allied forces also controlled the southern towns of Alamata and Korem as well (Crisis Group, 2022, November 23). Meanwhile, on October 24, Hammer jetted with TPLF negotiators into South Africa. This was followed by the federal government's announcement that Ethiopian delegations had also traveled to South Africa.¹¹⁴ On October 25, the AU announced that the launch in South Africa was the first direct talk between the GFDRE and TPLF after two years of devastating conflict.¹¹⁵

TPLF's negotiators departed for South Africa desperate for a pause in conflict, and reaching that goal came at a high price (Crisis Group, 2022, November 23). If they had not been negotiated, they would have faced the worst scenarios. Indeed, the terms of the peace agreement reflect the heavy military pressure Tigray's forces were under in the face of superior allied forces logistics, manpower, and firepower, including in the air and technological advancement (ibid.). Therefore, one can argue that despite the intensive diplomatic engagement of the AU and US, the main attraction force of the TPLF to the negotiation table was not shuttle diplomacy but the battlefield success of allied forces.

¹¹³ Department of State briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/departments-press-briefing-october-17-2022/>

¹¹⁴ Federal Government Communication Service available at: <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/74398>

¹¹⁵ Available at: <https://t.me/tikvahethiopia/74417>

CHAPTER FIVE

THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS ON SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY IN THE NORTH ETHIOPIA CONFLICT

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the study deals with the intensive shuttle diplomacy engagement of the African Union Higher Representative, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, and three United States Special Envoys for the Horn of Africa, Ambassador Jeffry Feltman, Ambassador David Satterfield, and Ambassador Mike Hammer, to bring GFDRE and TPLF to the negotiating table. This chapter deals with the strengths and drawbacks of the shuttle diplomacy efforts taken by the actors mentioned above.

5.1. The Strengths of Shuttle Diplomacy

5.1.1. Established Robust Platform for Direct Talks

The one and foremost success of shuttle diplomacy in the North Ethiopian conflict was establishing a robust direct talk platform for the conflicting parties. This comes after an intensive shuttle diplomacy engagement between Addis and Mekelle. This back-and-forth created a communication channel between the federal government and TPLF, which was interrupted when the conflict started and even before.

In this regard, Obasanjo and US envoys can contact both parties and serve as a medium of communication. In particular, Obasanjo, who was authorized to have an official visit to Mekelle and made at least eight trips there, was able to bring the ideas and positions of the TPLF and debrief the government, and vice versa.¹¹⁶ In the conflict, there was a communication blackout in most parts of Tigray. This, together with a propaganda statement released from both sides, made such third-party-led communication very important.

A frequent shuttle diplomacy engagement between Obasanjo and US envoys to bring the conflicting parties to a negotiation table failed. To be specific, in the second round of the second stage of the conflict, which covered July 2021 to December 2021, Obasanjo, accompanied by US Envoy Feltman, tried to de-escalate the conflict by proposing that the TPLF not advance to Addis Ababa. However, it failed. The second regrettable episode to

¹¹⁶ Interview with Lt. Col. Sheku Tejan: Military Plans and Operations Officer in Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department at African Union Commission (April 20/2024).

resolve the conflict was the second phase of the third stage of the conflict. This period was relatively calm since late December 2021, formalized in March 2022, and continued until late August 2022. According to Fana, this stage of the conflict was the ideal environment to bring the conflicting parties to a negotiation table through shuttle diplomacy.¹¹⁷ Again, the shuttle diplomacy couldn't secure a direct dialogue between the conflicting parties other than a unilateral declaration of a humanitarian truce.

Even though the shuttle diplomacy engagement increased in the third phase of the conflict, the dynamic of the battlefield on the ground significantly determined the conflicting parties' engagement in a direct negotiation. In particular, TPLF's continuous scarification of its preconceptions indicated how far the battlefield dynamics shaped its negotiation position. In this movement, shuttle diplomacy efforts, which were considered an alternative, established a way to peaceful resolution of the conflict rather than a strategic primary choice and got a chance to manage the conflict.

Ambassador Minilik also argued that Obasanjo and US envoys provide the framework for negotiation and keep the option of a shuttle diplomacy-centered peaceful resolution of the conflict open. And they were waiting for the right movement by engaging in proxy talks.¹¹⁸ However, the researchers couldn't verify either shuttle diplomacy or another approach of diplomacy influence to bring the conflicting parties into three secret deals led by the US government.

5.1.2. Mobilized Diplomatic Efforts

The Pretoria permanent cessation of hostilities agreement was not the result of unilateral parties' participation. Rather, domestic, regional, national, and international actors directly or indirectly contributed to the peace agreement. The nature of the conflict divides the wider international community and lines up the conflicting parties. For instance, the differences among superpower countries in UNSC votes paralyze the UN from acting swiftly on the conflict. The mediation process and leadership were also another point of divergence. Therefore, shuttling diplomacy has succeeded in bridging this gap and keeping diplomatic support flowing through a single channel. In this regard, Obasanjo and the US envoys toured the regional and far-reaching countries to mobilize diplomatic efforts to end the conflict.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Fana G/Senebet (PhD): Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University (March 03/2024).

¹¹⁸ Interview with Ambassador Menilik Alemu: Political Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister at Ministry of Foreign Affairs (February 20/2024).

After the appointment of Obasanjo as AU Higher Representative for the HoA, he visited the neighboring countries of Ethiopia, the European Union and member countries, and the US. The tour brought recognition and diplomatic currency to the African Union and Obasanjo. There, the AU and Obasanjo enjoyed global support in their efforts to peacefully resolve the north-Ethiopian conflict. Similarly, the US envoys have made transnational and transcontinental visits to get mediator legitimacy from the international community and to support the AU-led peace process.

This mobilization of diplomatic efforts had an impact on the last phase of the conflict. This phase witnessed the highest level of diplomatic coordination between the African Union and the United States. This comes after the US turned to supporting the AU-led peace process. This cooperation and coordination, as opined by US special envoy Hammers, “is very good communication, a very good understanding of what we’re trying to get done”¹¹⁹.

5.1.3. Non-Intervention

The other example of the success of shuttle diplomacy conducted in the North Ethiopian conflict was its principle of non-intervention in the mediation process. The Pretoria Cessation of Hostility Agreement was exclusively conducted by the conflicting parties themselves.¹²⁰

This means Obasanjo and US envoys were merely to play the role of facilitating and observing negotiations rather than setting agendas. According to Fey and Ramsay (2010), cited in Touval & Zartman (1985), such a type of mediation is called facilitation communication meditation. The mediator limited itself to facilitating the transfer of information between parties. In other words, the mediator serves as a channel of communication as contact cuts off between the parties in conflict. They may carry information, proposals, or concessions back and forth between the conflicting parties.

This was also emphasized by US envoy Mike Hammer in his digital press briefing when he asked the Al Jazeera correspondent, “What is the U.S.’s solution to the crisis that is going on in Ethiopia?” Hammer answered as follows:

The solution has to come from Ethiopians. It’s their country. All that we can do as the United States is encourage them to work to resolve these very difficult differences diplomatically through dialogue, and that is what we’re

¹¹⁹ Department of State briefing available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/departments-press-briefing-october-17-2022/>

¹²⁰ Interview with Ambassador Menilik Alemu: Political Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister at Ministry of Foreign Affairs (February 20/2024).

*doing. We see the great potential of Ethiopia—an Ethiopia where all Ethiopians can flourish.”*¹²¹

This statement proved that the mediators were not in a position to set an agenda or impose their interests on the conflicting parties. In addition, the mediators acknowledged that the parties have the potential to deal with their problems once they come into negotiation. This can be broadly referred to as an “African solution to African problems”.

5.2. The Drawbacks of Shuttle Diplomacy

5.2.1. The Perception of Impartiality and Credibility

In any mediation process, the issue of impartiality is cited as one of the cornerstones of successful peace agreements. The conflicting parties' perceptions of partiality and lack of trustworthiness in mediators contributed to lost trust in the envoys and prevented shuttle diplomacy from moving forward. This perception was driven by basically two things: the envoys' experiences and their actions.

TPLF leaders and a significant number of people in Tigray perceived Obasanjo and the AU as not impartial and credible. Similarly, the AU has faced difficulties dealing with such internal conflicts. Therefore, the issue of capability can also be mentioned as a drawback¹²². This turned worse when the AUC chairperson appointed Obasanjo as its higher representative for the HoA. Even though Obasanjo has decades of diplomatic and negotiation experience, his engagement in the Biafra civil war in Nigeria as a higher military leader was the black point of his shuttle diplomacy engagement to resolve the conflict.

The Nigeria-Biafran civil war of 1967–1970 happened because of the Igbo-populated territory of the Biafran separatists' movement against the Nigerian government. In the war, General Obasanjo played a senior role in combat and accused the use of starvation as a weapon” to make the separatist Wadlow surrender (2021). This coincides with the Ethiopian federal government's blockade of aid to Inter Tigray, accused by the UN of being “starvation being used as a weapon of war” and a “de facto humanitarian aid blockade” (IPIS, 2024, January 8). Therefore, many Tigrans imagine themselves as Biafrans, and this makes

¹²¹ Department of State Digital press briefing available at: <https://et.usembassy.gov/digital-press-briefing-with-u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-mike-hammer/>

¹²² Interview with Martin Plaut: Journalist, specializing in the Horn of Africa and South Africa (February 24/2024).

Obasanjo an unacceptable mediator.¹²³ In addition, Obasanjo's legitimization of the 2021 Ethiopian election as AUEOM to the Ethiopian leader further complicated his mediation role.

When we came to action, the TPLF blamed the AUC, under the leadership of Moussa Faki Mahamat and Obasanjo, as an ally of the federal government, which has provided tacit approval to the regime's "genocidal assault" on Tigray (Getachew, 2022, August 22). The AU failed to acknowledge that there was a war; instead, it echoed the federal government's story of a "law enforcement operation" against a rebellion (Berhe, 2022, October 18). This concern of TPLF can be analyzed from the realist perspective of institutions.

As John Mearsheimer argued, "institutions have no independent effect on state behavior." Therefore, the strongest states could have influenced the institutions (Aidi, 2021). Ethiopia, as the founder and headquarters of the organization, influenced the AU to be reluctant to address the conflict in northern Ethiopia. As evidenced by the AUC's first statement about the conflict and the dismantling of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights mandate in Ethiopia, the PSC failed to have it on its agenda for a year (Africa, 2022, p. 40; Amani Africa, 2022, February 10; Berhe, 2022, October 18). In connection with this, the Obasanjo visit of Bale with PM Abiy in June 2022 was taken by the TPLF's as a partiality.

This all complicated both the AU-led mediation process and Obasanjo's shuttle diplomacy engagement with the TPLF. After his late May 2022 visit to Mekelle, the TPLF was a bit reluctant to see Obasanjo on the basis that they believed that Obasanjo was not serving their interests.¹²⁴ Obasanjo (2022, November 20) stated that he refused to be discouraged and continued with visits, consultations, and discussions to get faces to start talks between parties. The exceptional authorization of Obasanjo by the federal government to visit Mekelle and its persistent blockage of diplomats and Special Envoys of the EU, the US, and the UN until August 2022 proved the above argument.

The federal government was also not interested in negotiation, framing the conflict as domestic law enforcement at the beginning. Later, the Biden administration appointed the most experienced Ambassador, Jeffry Feltman, as Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. However, the federal government was very conscious of this appointment. After the TPLF recaptured Mekelle and advanced to the capital, Addis Ababa, a nationwide protest erupted

¹²³ Interview with Fana G/Senebet (PhD): Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University (March 03/2024).

¹²⁴ Interview with Lt. Col. Sheku Tejan: Military Plans and Operations Officer in Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department at African Union Commission (April 20/2024).

against the Western powers, in particular the US. By this time, the conflict was framed as an anti-colonialism struggle, and the US was perceived as pro-TPLF and wanted to restore the TPLF and dismember Ethiopia. This narration fosters anti-western sentiments, and Feltman fervently tried to explain the US position on the conflict. In light of this, he delivered the following speech:

Many in the government falsely assert that the United States seeks to replace the Abiy government with another TPLF-dominated regime. This is just not true. We know full well and respect the view of the overwhelming majority of the Ethiopian public who oppose a return to Meles-style rule. This is not 1991, when the TPLF led the forces that discharged the hated Mengistu regime (US DoS, 2021, November 3).

Despite such statements, the federal government and its supporters strengthened their protests until the peace agreement was signed on November 20, 2022. This could be taken as a strategy for the government to present itself as a government that enjoyed wider legitimacy.

In general, the represented envoys' professional records and actions were responsible for the failed shuttle diplomacy effort. In particular, Obasanjo and Feltman appointed parties to build trust and had a direct conversation. The CoH agreement was also signed after the AU enlarged its panel with the addition of former President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya and former D.P. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka of South Africa (Abel, 2023).

5.2.2. Too Late to start Too Late to Stop

Even though the diplomatic efforts to curb the conflict were started immediately, shuttle diplomacy was a let-go approach to resolving the conflict peacefully. Moreover, shuttle diplomacy also takes too long to bring the warring parties to the round table. This timing setback in shuttle diplomacy is deeply rooted in the nature of conflict and the opportunistic behaviour of the conflicting parties.

Ethiopia, as put at the centre of Africa's geopolitics in security, history, diplomacy, economy, and demography, has the potential to stabilize and destabilize the region. In light of this, it is hardly conclusive that the international community moved on to deal with the conflict compared to the attention it paid. Despite this, the initial move to settle the conflict was revealed on November 20, 2020, by a three-person mediation team appointed by President

Cyril Ramaphosa. However, they almost failed when PM Abiy prevented them from visiting Mekelle. Then the first concrete step was taken in late April 2021 by the US, which appointed a special envoy for the region almost six months later. Then the African Union appointed Obasanjo on August 20, 2021, as the Higher Representative of the region, with a particular focus on the Ethiopian conflict. These bring back the AU's peace and security architecture after 10 months of disengagement by the principles of non-interference under a pan-Africanist narrative (Abel, 2023).

In addition to this, the nature of the conflict contributed to the mediation process, which took two years. The rapid battlefield-dynamic nature of the conflict posed a challenge to shuttle diplomacy, which by nature needs more time. Feltman (2021, November 23) argued that the military developments on the ground were moving more rapidly than the envoys had been able to get the diplomatic process to move. For instance, in the second phase of the conflict, the TPLF spread the conflict under the banner of breaking the siege in the first week of July and closing Addis Ababa in the second week of November. In this phase, there was some progress in negotiation as a result of the battleground reflection.

However, on November 20, the conflict turned 180 degrees, and the federal government forces, which were in charge of defending the capital, opened a counter-offensive and chased away the TPLF forces from the occupied areas of Amhara and Afar in a month. In this particular period, Obasanjo and Feltman had only two rounds of shuttle diplomacy engagements each. Which was unprecedented compared with the rapid military developments on the ground. This was also similar to the third phase of conflict that re-emerged on August 26th. Surprisingly, a few weeks earlier, before the conflicts escalated; The AU-PSC meetings were held on November 8, 2021, and August 4, 2022, respectively. Even though both sessions concluded optimistically about the peaceful resolution of the conflict, the conflict escalated. This shows how the military developments were on the head of shuttle diplomacy.

The opportunistic behavior of the warring parties was another main reason for the conflict to be extended. Even though parties in conflict have elements of negotiation that they pronounce essential to getting to de-escalation, such as a negotiated ceasefire intersection—an end to offensive military operations, the opening of humanitarian corridors, the TPLF withdrawing back to Tigray, and removing the TPLF from the terrorist designation—their opportunistic behavior prevents the mediators from materializing in direct talk negotiations. Feltman (2021, November 23) summarized this argument as saying that the main hurdle to moving decisively

to a diplomatic negotiating track is not the US, the AU, or the international community; it is the political will of the parties themselves.

It would be understandable if the TPLF refused to negotiate with the federal government when a significant part of Tigray was under the federal forces occupation; similarly, it would be politically costly for the federal government to sit down with the TPLF across the table when parts of Amhara and Afar were under occupation. Unfortunately, both the federal government and the TPLF declined negotiations when they were in positions of superiority. After Mekelle fell under ENDF control, the federal government not only declined the proposal for negotiation but also denied the presence of the TPLF as a unit. And in public speeches, the government would not negotiate with "terrorists."

Similarly, on the eve of the conflict anniversary, the TDF took over Dessie, a strategic city in the Amhara region, and declined to negotiate with the government. General Tsadikan stated that "the war is almost over; with whom are we negotiating?". In addition, he opined that the incumbent government is not the legitimate party to sit for negotiations. Rather, we are working to setup a transitional government (Tigray TV, 2021, November 1).

Meanwhile, the opportunistic behavior of parties was highly manifested in the second phase, the third stage of the conflict—the relatively calm period of the conflict from late December 2021 to late August 2022. This period witnessed several good gestures and confidence-building measures from both parties to create a conducive atmosphere for negotiation. However, they still lack trust because of the opportunistic behavior of their DNA.¹²⁵ There was no confidence on either side that the other could be trusted, and that is why peace efforts failed (ibid.). This kept the opposing parties in mutual suspicion and animosity, prompting the mobilization of force as they engaged in another round of conflict.

5.2.3. Multi-task Shuttle Diplomacy: Region-Focused, not Case-Focused

Another drawback of the shuttle diplomacy employed in the North Ethiopian conflict was its multi-task mandate. The regional higher representative, or the envoys' mandate, was not limited to the specific case of the North Ethiopian conflict. Rather, it extends to the whole of the Horn of Africa. Hence, both Obasanjo and the US envoys legally have obligations to deal with state issues and other regional developments. However, de facto, Obasanjo's almost all his diplomatic engagements were focused on the North-Ethiopian conflict. The US envoys'

¹²⁵ Department of State Digital briefing available at: <https://et.usembassy.gov/digital-press-briefing-with-u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-mike-hammer/>

priority in the region was the North Ethiopian conflict, but they also tried to deal with other regional issues. Among these were the filling of the GERD issue, the Ethio-Sudan border tension, and the October 2021 Sudan Military coup, which were regional crises that divided the diplomatic efforts of the US envoys.

In particular, the filling of GERD was an unresolved chronic conflict in the region. Therefore, since July 2020, in every summer season in Ethiopia, the issue of filling GERD has been on the highest geopolitical agenda of the Horn of Africa. Hence, the second and third phases of filling the GERD dam reservoir were completed on July 19, 2021, and August 12, 2020, respectively. This period falls between the second and third phases of the North Ethiopian conflict. In this respect, the US envoy traveled to Egypt, Sudan, and other Middle Eastern countries and consulted with the Ethiopian government. In addition, the October 2021 military coup in Sudan, led by General Al Burhan, added a layer of complexity to the region. Such a crisis was directly or indirectly related to the conflict; the Sudan and Egypt governments were supporting the TPLF and other militias to exert pressure on the federal government and obstruct the filling process.

Similarly, global incidents also affected the shuttle diplomacy effort in the northern conflict in Ethiopia. For instance, when the US left Afghanistan to end the 20-year conflict and the Taliban returned to power in mid-August 2021, the north-Ethiopian conflict intensified, and the TPLF aggressively moved towards the neighboring regional government. However, this shifts the US focus from the Horn of Africa conflict in Ethiopia. Furthermore, the Russia-Ukraine war, which began on April 24, 2021, is an inter-state conflict that has captured the attention of the international community. In particular, the Westerners, led by the US, were primarily focused on this conflict. Therefore, high-level diplomatic efforts from western countries were distracted and declined.

5.2.4. Swift Changes of Envoys

This setback of shuttle diplomacy directly goes towards the US. Since April 2021, when the US appointed its first special envoys to the region, the US has twice changed its envoys. In other words, three special envoys were engaged in the North Ethiopian conflict for 18 months, an average of 6 months per half of their regular term. This affected the US shuttle diplomacy effort in the conflict in several ways. Firstly, it took additional time and effort to create a communication line between the newly appointed envoy and the warring parties. Secondly, it may trigger a suspension of US capacity to manage the regional crisis.

6. CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, the study attempted to explain how the African Union and the United States employed shuttle diplomacy to address the devastating conflict in northern Ethiopia. The study tried to examine the nature of the conflict by looking at what the root and immediate causes of the conflict were, how best to understand the course of the conflict, and what consequences it had brought to the country. It has also examined the African Union and United States' responses to the conflict and assessed their engagements in shuttle diplomacy to address the conflict and its strengths and drawbacks as well. This conclusion highlights the major findings and arguments that give us the overall picture of the study.

In regards to the nature of the conflict, the study found that the conflict had different perspectives and that there was no clearly defined root causes. This is because the main actors in the conflict—GFDRE and TPLF—create smokescreens to materialize their actual interests. This includes constitutionalism, the rule of law, public opinion, political transformation, and others. However, this study found that the immediate cause of the conflict was the preemptive attack of TPLF on the North Command of ENDF.

Concerning the course of the conflict, it is better to summarize it in three phases based on the developments on the battlefield and the turning points of the conflict. Accordingly, the first phase of the conflict is the shortest phase. It was conducted from November 3, 2020, to early January 2022, and concluded with the decisive victory of allied forces. The second phase was hard to define exactly when it was started; rather, it was a gradual process of revival of TPLF forces and reorganization under the banner of TDF to fight the allied forces. This phase is a complex and long because of the rapid battlefield dynamics, high-tiered diplomatic intervention, and extended range of battlegrounds. This phase of conflict ends on August 24, 2022, when the full-fledged conflict re-erupts. Finally, the third phase of the conflict started on August 24, 2022, and concluded with the Pretoria CoH agreement on November 2, 2022.

The consequences of the conflict were one of the most costly civil wars in the 21st century, which claimed close to one million lives for Ethiopians and directly affected 20 million people in the country. All parties to the conflict committed international crimes that amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity. And its total economic damage goes beyond 28 billion dollars, nearly two times the 2023–2024 county budgets. Politically, the conflict redoubled the violent armed conflicts in the country and threatened the integrity of

Ethiopia as a state. Diplomatically, the conflict also affected the country's international image and its relations with states and international and regional organizations.

The study also found that the African Union and the United States employed a shuttle diplomacy approach to deal with the conflict. This approach was chosen because the conflict needs third-party intervention to create a communication line between parties in the conflict through proxy talk. Accordingly, this shuttle diplomacy is primarily, but not exclusively, led by the AU Higher Representative for the Horn of Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo, and the United States Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, the three Ambassadors. Those are Amb. Jeffery Feltman, Amb. David Satterfield and Amb. Mike Hammer. Obasanjo had eight full rounds of visits between Addis Ababa and Mekelle from August 2021 to November 2, 2022. However, this study traced only four official full-round shuttle diplomacy engagements. In addition, his engagement was also beyond Ethiopia and favored by the federal government.

The US envoys have a few official full-round shuttle diplomacy engagements. However, it was the first to appoint a special envoy to deal with the conflict. They had more than 15 shuttle diplomacy engagements in Ethiopia and beyond. Among these, half of them were conducted by the first envoy of the region, Feltman. Even though the engagement of the US envoys was in support of the AU-led mediation process, they were more effective in pressuring the warring parties. This US engagement was favored by the TPLF, which was protested by the federal government.

Since the beginning, the conflict has received high international community attention and complicated the Horn of Africa regional security architecture. However, this wider attention to the conflict was not decoded into concrete steps. Despite the above-mentioned intensive shuttle diplomacy engagements, the conflicting parties believe they will not secure their best interests through negotiation and don't want to trust the mediators. Therefore, shuttle diplomacy has failed to achieve its goal, which was to bring warring parties to a negotiation table based on their goodwill. The fact that battlefield dynamics created extremely asymmetric power relations between the federal government, which is the actor in the position of power, and the TPLF, which is the weak one, At this point, the federal government forced the TPLF to come up with a coercive ceasefire; otherwise, it could end at a military level.

Therefore, the driving factor for the Pretoria peace agreement, which ended the two-year-long devastating North Ethiopian conflict, was beyond shuttle diplomacy. This study disproved its core argument: shuttle diplomacy significantly contributed to the cessation of hostility

agreements signed between the FDRE and TPLF. The researcher argues that the primary reason for bringing the warring parties to Pretoria, South Africa, to negotiate was the battlefield dynamic in favor of the federal government. This forced the TPLF to surrender all preconditions and agree to go without substantive preconditions. This means shuttle diplomacy did not significantly contribute to the permanent cessation of hostilities agreement signed between the GFDRE and TPLF. But next to the battlefield dynamic, the established communication channel and the envoys engaged in shuttle diplomacy were able to materialize the chance for a concrete peace agreement.

References

Books

- Africa, A. (2022). *The African Union Peace and Security Council Handbook 2022: Guide on the Council's Procedure, Practice and Traditions*. <https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Hand-Book-2022-English.pdf>
- Aloysius Michaels, Hassan Saliu and Gerald Ezirim (2019). *State governance and regional integration in Africa*, Nigeria political science association.
- Andrew, H. (2011). *Global Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bell, C. (2008). *On the law of peace: peace agreements and the lex pacificatoria*. OUP Oxford.
- Berridge, G. R. (2022). *Diplomacy: theory and practice*. 5th ed. Springer Nature.
- Birhanu Bayih. (2013 E.C). *Yaletasebew yehiwotie fetagn guzo ena ye Ethiopia abyiot*. Ethiopia Science Academy. Addis Ababa
- Bjarnason, M. (2001). *The War and War-Games in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995. The Main Events, Disagreements and Arguments, Resulting in, a" De Facto" Divided Country*. Reykjavik: Magnus Bjarnason.
- Brounéus, Karen. (2003). *Reconciliation–Theory and Practice for Development Cooperation*.
- Burg, S. L., & Shoup, P. S. (1999). *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic conflict and international intervention*. ME Sharpe.
- Christer Jönsson. (2011). *Theorising diplomacy from: Routledge Handbook of Diplomacy and Statecraft*; Routledge; <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203807804.ch2>
- Dunne, T., Kurki, M., & Smith, S. (Eds.). (2021). *International relations theories: Discipline and diversity*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Forster, Robert. (2019). 'Ceasefires'. In Romaniuk, S., Thapa M., and P. Marton (eds.) *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Global Security Studies*. Cham, Palgrave MacMillan https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74336-3_8-2
- Gienow-Hecht, J. C., & Donfried, M. C. (Eds.). (2010). *Searching for a cultural diplomacy* (Vol. 6). Berghahn Books.
- James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. (1977). *Contending Theories of International Relations*. J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY. 2^{ed} ed. USA. 2
- James, D. (2001). *Contending Theories of International Relations*. New York: Priscilla McGeehon.
- Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. 2^{ed} ed. New Age International.
- Kumar Ranjit (2011). *Research Methodology: a step-by-step guide for beginners*. 3rd ed. India Lederach, John Paul. (2014). *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*. United States of America.
- Leguey-Feilleux, J. R. (2009). *The dynamics of diplomacy* (pp. 63-64). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

- Mc Glinchey, S., Walters, R., & Scheinflug, C. (2017). *International relations theory*. E-International Relations.
- Mount Kenya University. (n.d.). *Introduction to diplomacy*. School of Social Sciences Department of Criminology.
- Obermeier, Anna Marie & Siri Aas Rustad (2023). *Conflict Trends: A Global Overview 1946–2022*. PRIO Paper. Oslo: PRIO.
- Paul R. Viotti, Mark V. Kauppi. (2012). *International Relations Theory*. 5th ed.
- PILPG, P. (2013). *Ceasefire Drafter's Handbook: An Introduction and Template for Negotiators, Mediators, and Stakeholders*.
- Plaut, M., & Vaughan, S. (2023). *Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray War*. Hurst Publishers.
- Richmond, N. (2014), Digital Ethnography: Understanding Faculty Use of an Online Community of Practice for Professional Development. Retrieved 18 June, 2022 from <https://repository.library.northeastern.edu/files/neu:336511/fulltext.pdf>
- Scott B. and Andrew L. (2003). *Theories of International Relations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Smith, S., Hadfield, A., & Dunne, T. (Eds.). (2016). *Foreign policy: theories, actors, cases*. Oxford University Press.
- Thomas Diez, Ingvild Bode and Aleksandra Fernandes da Costa (2011), *Key Concepts in International Relations*. SAGE Publications Ltd. ISBN 978-1-4129-2847-2
- United Nations Department of Political and Peace building Affairs. (2022). *Guidance on the Mediation of Ceasefires*, <https://peacemaker.un.org/thematic-areas/ceasefires-security-arrangements>.
- Wallensteen, P. (2018). *Understanding conflict resolution*. Sage.
- Walliman, N. (2011). *Research Methods: The Basics*. USA and Canada, Avenue, New York.
- Yayeseew Shimeles. (2024). *Yesira eirkab; yedem meber*.

Journal Articles

- Abdulkadr, A. A., & Neszmelyi, G. I. (2021). Root Causes and the Socio-Economic Impact of the Ongoing War between the TPLF and the Federal Government of Ethiopia (2 November 2020-15 October 2021). *Hungarian J. Afr. Stud.*, 15(4), 37-52.
- Admassu, T. F. (n.d). IGAD and the Mediation of Conflict in the Horn of Africa. [EDITED-Tana-Essay-Final-version.pdf \(tanaforum.org\)](#).
- Aidi, H. (2021). The Tigray War and the African Union. *Policy center for the new South*.
- Akcaay, E. Y., & Kanat, S. (2018). Carrot And Stick Approach In International Relations: An Evaluation Throughout Turkey's Accession Negotiations With The European Union. *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, (31), 1-22.
- Alier G. and Bill A. (2022). The role of diplomatic relations on conflict resolution in South Sudan. *Journal of Advance Research in Social Science & Humanities*. Upper Nile University, 7 (2), 185-198.
- Bailey, S. D. (1977). Cease-fires, truces, and armistices in the practice of the UN Security Council. *American Journal of International Law*, 71(3), 461-473.

- Clayton, G., & Sticher, V. (2021). The logic of ceasefires in civil war. *International Studies Quarterly*, 65(3), 633-646.
- Constantinou, C. M., & Sharp, P. (2016). Theoretical perspectives in diplomacy. *The SAGE handbook of diplomacy*, 13-27.
- Deleglise (2024). African Special Envoys in Practice: A research Agenda for Studying Complex Diplomatic Intervention. *Peace Research Institute of Frankfurt*.
- Deudney, D., & Ikenberry, G. J. (1999). The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order. *Review of International Studies*, 25(2), 179–196.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20097589>
- Fey, M., & Ramsay, K. W. (2010). When Is Shuttle Diplomacy Worth the Commute? Information Sharing through Mediation. *World Politics*, 62(4), 529–560.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0043887110000183>
- Forster, R., & Romaniuk, I. S. (2019). Peace agreements. The Palgrave encyclopedia of global security studies. *Edinburgh, UK: Cham, Palgrave MacMillan*, 1-7.
- Graham, V. (2008). Deconstructing quiet diplomacy: pinning down the elusive concept. *Journal for Contemporary History*, 33(1), 117-135.
- Hoffman, D. A. (2011). Mediation and the art of shuttle diplomacy. *Negotiation Journal*, 27(3), 263-309.
- Höglbladh, S. (2011). Peace agreements 1975-2011-Updating the UCDP peace agreement dataset. *States in armed conflict*, 55, 85-105.
- Jima, A. O. (2023). Ethiopian political crisis after reform: Causes of Tigray conflict. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(1), 2209991.
- Joseph C. Ebegebulem and John A. Adams (2022). The Role of Diplomacy in International Dispute Resolution. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.10, No.7, pp.57-64
- Kelman, Herbert C. (2010) "Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation: A Social-Psychological Perspective on Ending Violent Conflict between Identity Groups," *Landscapes of Violence*. Vol. 1, no. 1.
- Mapendere, J. (2005). Track One and a Half Diplomacy and the Complementarity of Tracks. *Culture of Peace Online Journal*, 2 (1), 66–81.
- Meester, J., Lanfranchi, G., & Gebregziabher, T. N. (2022). A Clash of Nationalisms and the Remaking of the Ethiopian State: The Political Economy of Ethiopia's Transition. *Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations*.
- Mulugeta Wodaje Arage, Henok Kumsa, Mulu Shiferaw Asfaw, Abebe Tarekegn Kassaw, Ephrem Mebratu Dagneu, Abayneh Tunta, Woldeteklehmanot Kassahun, Amanuel Addisu, Molla Yigzaw, Tilahun Hailu and Lebeza Alemu Tenaw (2023). Exploring the health consequences of armed conflict: the perspective of Northeast Ethiopia, 2022: a qualitative study. *BMC Public Health*. 23:2078 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-16983-z>
- Nte, T. U. (2018). Conflict resolution mechanisms and the traits of effective mediation in Africa. *International Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 5(2), 133-142.

- Ostebo, T. and Tronvoll, K. (2020). Interpreting contemporary Oromo politics in Ethiopia: An ethnographic approach. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14(4), 613–632. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2020.1796255>
- Pellet, P. (2021). Understanding the 2020-2021 Tigray conflict in Ethiopia—background, root causes, and consequences. *KKI ELEMZÉSEK*, 2021(39), 1-20.
- Raeff, C., Fasoli, A. D., Reddy, V., & Mascolo, M. F. (2020). The concept of culture: Introduction to spotlight series on conceptualizing culture. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(4), 295-298.
- Sosnowski, M. (2020). Towards a typology of ceasefires: order amid violence. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 74(5), 597-613.
- Steiner, B. H. (2004). Diplomacy and International Theory. *Review of International Studies*, 30(4), 493–509. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20097934>
- Van Bergeijk, P. A., & Moons, S. J. (2018). Introduction to the Research Handbook on Economic Diplomacy. In *Research Handbook on Economic Diplomacy* (pp. 1-29). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Veton, Z. (2014). Shuttle Diplomacy as a Tool for Solving the Balkan Conflict Emphasis on Kosovo Problem Solving. *Vizione international magazine for social sciences*, 22(1).
- Yohannes, Y. Gedamu, 2018. Understanding Ethiopia's Survivalist EPRDF Coalition and Recent Political Changes. *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 12(2), pp.97-118.
- Yonas, A. and Kassahun, B., 2021. Implications of protest and reform for domestic governance in Ethiopia. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 56(5), spp.988-1006.
- Zubarenko, I. (2020). “Shuttle Diplomacy” in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Retrospect and Realities. *Ukraine Analytica*, 02 (20), 50-56.

Research and Conference Papers

- Abel Abate Demessie (2023). *Navigating the regionalization of Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: How regional and international actors can help consolidate peace*. Chatham house.
- Annys, S., Vanden Bempt, T., Negash, E., De Sloover, L., Ghekiere, R., Haegeman, K., Temmerman, D., Nyssen, J., (2022). *Tigray: atlas of the humanitarian situation*. Version 2.2. Ghent (Belgium): Ghent University, Department of Geography; London (U.K.): Every Casualty Counts. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5881561>
- Bell, C. (2015). *Text and context: Evaluating peace agreements for their gender perspective*. UN Women. https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/research/Bell_EN.pdf.
- Blanchard, L.P., 2021. *Ethiopia's Transition and the Tigray Conflict*. Congressional Research Service.
- Gebreyesus, A., Mulugeta, A., Woldemichael, A. et al (2023). *Immediate health and economic impact of the Tigray war on internally displaced persons and hosting households*. *Sci Rep* 13, 18071. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-45328-4>
- Institutional. social science*. Budapest Hungary.
- Klavins, D. (2011). *Understanding the Essence of Modern Diplomacy*. In The ICD Annual Academic Conference on Cultural Diplomacy (pp. 1-7).

- Moses Tofa, Alagaw Ababu Kifle and Hubert Kinkoh (2022). *Political and media analysis on the Tigray conflict in Ethiopia*. European institute of peace.
- Natan T. (2022). *The implication of the US response on the war in Northern Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa University
- OCHA (2011). *Glossary of terms: pauses during Conflict*.
- Siyum, B. A. (2021). *Underlying Causes of Conflict in Ethiopia: Historical, Political, and Institutional*. social science. Budapest Hungary.
- Demissie, A. A. (2023). *Navigating the regionalization of Ethiopia's Tigray conflict*. Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Retrived from <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/09/navigating-regionalization-ethiopias-tigray-conflict>
- Tefera, N. (2019). *The party that consumes the state: The rise of oligarchy in post-1991 Ethiopia*, PhD dissertation, Erasmus University Rotterdam.
- Trefe, B. (2019). *The recent Ethio-Eritrea rapprochement: challenges and prospects*. Addis Abba University

Unpublished papers

- Annette Weber, EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa (2022), *EUSR mission to Ethiopia, 14–16 September 2022*, <https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/files/2022/09/02-Weber-brf-comments-250922.pdf>.

Internet Sources

- Addis Fortune (2022, January). *Ethiopia's AGOA-EXIT: looking beyond the headlines*. Retrieved May 25, 2024, from <https://addisfortune.news/ethiopias-agoa-exit-looking-beyond-the-headlines/>
- Addis Standard (2021, August 18). *News: Ethiopia tells US special envoy to the region to condemn TPLF; Special envoy says Peace and Unity in Ethiopia remains top US foreign policy*. Retrived May 23, 2024, from <https://addisstandard.com/news-ethiopia-tells-us-special-envoy-to-the-region-to-condemn-tplf-special-envoy-says-peace-and-unity-in-ethiopia-remains-top-us-foreign-policy/>
- Addis Standard. (2022, May 31). *AU Horn envoy meets Tigray's leader*. Retrieved May 17, 2024, from <https://addisstandard.com/?p=27413>
- Addis Zeybe (2021, August 5). *US aid chief Samantha Power criticizes Abiy's 'dehumanizing rhetoric' on visit to Ethiopia*. <https://addiszeybe.com/featured/politics/currentaffairs/us-aid-chief-samantha-power-criticizes-abiy-s-dehumanizing-rhetoric-on-visit-to-ethiopia>
- Africa A. (2022, August). *Monthly digest on the African Union Peace and Security Council – August 2022*. Retrieved May 22, 2024, from https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/August_monthly-Digest.pdf
- Africa. A. (2022, February). *Monthly digest on the AUPSC – February 2022*. Amani Africa. Retrieved May 21, 2024, from https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/February_monthly-Digest-.pdf
- African Reporter (2022, June 15). *Ethiopia: Abiy says new committee will handle peace negotiations with TPLF*. Retrieved May 22, 2024, from

<https://www.theafricareport.com/214077/ethiopia-abiy-says-new-committee-will-handle-peace-negotiations-with-tplf/>

African Union (2021, August 26). *The Chairperson of the AU Commission appoints former President H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria as High Representative for the Horn of Africa*. Retrieved May 13, 2024, from <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20210826/appointment-president-obasanjo-high-representative-horn-africa>

African Union (2021, June 20). *African Union Election Observation Mission to the 21 June 2021 General Elections in the Federal Democratic Republic Of Ethiopia| Preliminary Statement*. Retrieved May 18, 2024, from [https://au.int/sites/default/files/pressreleases/40474-pr Preliminary Statement African Union Election Observation Mission to the 10.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/pressreleases/40474-pr_Preliminary_Statement_African_Union_Election_Observation_Mission_to_the_10.pdf)

Al Jazeera, (2023, November 2). *One year on, peace holds in Tigray, but Ethiopia still fractured*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2023/11/2/photos-one-year-on-peace-holds-in-tigray-but-ethiopia-still-fractured>

Al Jazeera. (2021, November 11). *Ethiopia gov't outlines terms for possible Tigray ceasefire talks*. Retrieved May 20, 2024, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/11/ethiopia-government-outlines-terms-for-possible-tigray-ceasefire-talks>

Al Jazeera. (2021, November 4). *TPLF says Ethiopian gov't claim of Mekelle withdrawal a 'lie.'* Retrieved May 7, 2024, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/30/army-can-re-enter-tigray-within-weeks-if-needed-govt-official>

Al Jazeera. (2021, November 5). *Nine anti-gov't groups team up as Ethiopia recalls ex-soldiers*. Al Jazeera. Retrieved May 19, 2024, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/5/nine-anti-abiy-groups-team-up-as-ethiopia-recalls-ex-soldiers>

Al-ain News (2022, January 22). *Ye Africa hiberet commission likemenber Moussa Faki Mahamat ke America ye Africa qend leyu melektegna gar teweyayu*. Retrieved May 25, 2024, from <https://am.al-ain.com/article/moussa-faki-mahamat-discuss-with-us-assistant-secretary-of-state-for-africa-molly-phoe-and-amb-david-satterfield-us-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa>

Amani Africa. (2020, February 10). *Update on the 2020 elections of the PSC*. Retrieved May 18, 2024, from <https://amaniafrica-et.org/update-on-the-2020-elections-of-the-psc/>

Amnesty International (2020, November 20). *Ethiopia: Investigation Reveals Evidence That Scores of Civilians Were Killed in Massacre in Tigray State*, accessed 6 April 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/ethiopia-investigation-reveals-evidence-that-scoresof-civilians-were-killed-in-massacre-in-tigray-state/>

Amnesty International (2023, November 2). *Armed conflict*-Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/armed-conflict/>

Anderson, J. L. (2022, September 26). *Did a Nobel Peace Laureate Stoke a Civil War?*. The New Yorker. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/10/03/did-a-nobel-peace-laureate-stoke-a-civil-war>

AP News (2021, June 18). *EU envoy: Ethiopian leadership vowed to "wipe out" Tigrayans*. Retrieved May 14, 2024, from <https://apnews.com/article/europe-ethiopia-africa-ffd3dc3faf15d0501fd87cafe274e65a>

Arega Arega. (2020, June 16). *Yeshimigilinaw guday*. News.et. Retrieved May 13, 2024, from <https://news.et/2020/06/16/%E1%8B%A8%E1%88%BD%E1%88%9D%E1%8C>

[%8D%E1%88%8D%E1%8A%93%E1%8B%8D-%E1%8C%89%E1%8B%B3%E1%8B%AD/](#)

- BBC (2021, July 11). *Ethiopia election: Abiy Ahmed wins with huge majority*. Retrieved May 18, 2024, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57791868>
- BBC (2022, June 1). *Focus on Africa - Tigray war: "slow but steady" progress, says Obasanjo - BBC Sounds*. Retrieved May 22, 2024, from <https://t.co/562xsusltI>
- BBC News Africa (2021, November 12). *US force "ready to respond" to Ethiopia crisis - BBC Africa*. YouTube. Retrieved May 24, 2024, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4Kc_xA8nVk
- BBC News Amaregan (2020, May 7). *"Silitan yale miricha kalesetachihugn ager ateramisalehu' bemil hayiel lay ermija eniwesdalen" tekelay minister Abiy Ahemed*. <https://www.bbc.com/amharic/news-52574818>
- BBC News Amaregan (2021, February 9). *Tigray: Tikimit 24 be semin eiz lay derese yetebalew tikat min neber?*. Retrieved May 3, 2024, from <https://www.bbc.com/amharic/news-55984483>
- BBC News Amarega (2021, July 13). *YeTigray hayloche Alamatane ena koremin mekotater-achew tenegere*. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from <https://www.bbc.com/amharic/news-57816164>
- BBC News Amarega (2020, November 21). *Tigray: liukanu ketekelay minister yinegageralu enji diridi aynorem tebale*. Retrieved May 16, 2024, from <https://www.bbc.com/amharic/news-55000111>
- BBC (2021, December 15). *Ethiopia civil war: How PM Abiy led fight-back against rebel advance*. Retrieved May 20, 2024, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59552888>
- BBC (2022, March 26). *Ethiopia's civil war: The women who paid the price*. Retrieved May 10, 2024, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-60648163>
- Berhe, M. G. (2021, October 1). *Not Impartial, Not Principled, Non-Starter: African Union Mediation in Ethiopia - World Peace Foundation*. (2024, April 8). World Peace Foundation. Retrieved May 13, 2024, from <https://worldpeacefoundation.org/blog/not-impartial-not-principled-non-starter-african-union-mediation-in-ethiopia/>
- Berhe, M. G. (2022, October 18). *Tigray war: two years on, the AU has failed to broker peace and silence the guns*. The Conversation. Retrieved May 13, 2024, from <https://theconversation.com/tigray-war-two-years-on-the-au-has-failed-to-broker-peace-and-silence-the-guns-192420>
- Beshah Z. (2022, September 22). *The Role of the African Union in the Mediation Process in Ethiopia*. ACCORD. Retrieved May 14, 2024, from <https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/the-role-of-the-african-union-in-the-mediation-process-in-ethiopia/>
- Blanchard, L.P.(2021). *Ethiopia's Transition and the Tigray Conflict*. Congressional Research Service. Retrived from <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R46905.pdf>.
- Borkena Ethiopian News (2022, March 23). *US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa David Satterfield in Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 26, 2024, from <https://borkena.com/2022/03/22/us-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-david-satterfield-in-ethiopia/>
- Cambridge dictionary. (n.d.). shuttle diplomacy. In *dictionary.cambridge.org*. Retrieved May 10, 2024, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/shuttle-diplomacy>

- Crisis Group. (2022, November 23). *Turning the Pretoria Deal into Lasting Peace in Ethiopia*. Retrieved February 12, 2024, from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/turning-pretoria-deal-lasting-peace-ethiopia>
- Crisis Group (2020, June 12). *Bridging the Divide in Ethiopia's North*. Retrieved May 31, 2024, from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/b156-bridging-divide-ethiopias-north>
- Crisis Group (2020, November 5) *Clashes over Ethiopia's Tigray Region: Getting to a Ceasefire and National Dialogue*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/ethiopias-clash-tigray-getting-ceasefire-and-national-dialogue>
- Crisis Group. (2020, November 10). *Ethiopia: Not too Late to Stop Tigray Conflict from Unravelling Country*. Retrieved May 7, 2024, from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/ethiopia-not-too-late-stop-tigray-conflict-unravelling-country>
- Crisis Group. (2021, February). *February 2021 Crisis Watch Digest on Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from <https://www.icg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/ethiopia-jan-2022.pdf>
- Crisis Group. (2022, April). *April 2021 Crisis Watch Digest on Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from <https://icg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/ethiopia-mar-2022.pdf>
- Crisis Group (2021, April 14). *Ethiopia's Tigray War: A Deadly, Dangerous Stalemate*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/b171-ethiopias-tigray-war-deadly-dangerous-stalemate>
- Crisis Group. (2021, September). *August 2021 Crisis Watch Digest on Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/ethiopia-august-2022.pdf>
- Crisis Group. (2021, October). *September 2021 Crisis Watch Digest on Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from <https://icg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/ethiopia-sep 2021.pdf>
- Crisis Group. (2021, November). *October 2021 Crisis Watch Digest on Ethiopia*. International Crisis Group. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from [ethiopia-oct-2021.pdf](https://icg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/ethiopia-oct-2021.pdf) (icg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com)
- Crisis Group. (2021, December). *December 2021 Crisis Watch Digest on Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from <https://icg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/ethiopia-nov-2021.pdf>
- Crisis Group. (2022, August 4). *A Dramatic Turn in Ethiopia's Tigray War*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/dramatic-turn-ethiopias-tigray-war>
- Crisis Group. (2022, October). *September 2022 Crisis Watch Digest on Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/ethiopia-september-2022.pdf>
- Crisis Group (2022, September 6). *Eight Priorities for the African Union in 2022*. Retrieved May 18, 2024, from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/african-union-regional-bodies/eight-priorities-african-union-2022>
- Crisis Group. (2022, November). *October 2022 Crisis Watch Digest on Ethiopia*. International Crisis Group. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/ethiopia-october-2022.pdf>
- Crisis Group (2022, November 23). *Turning the Pretoria Deal into Lasting Peace in Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 28, 2024, from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/turning-pretoria-deal-lasting-peace-ethiopia>

- Davison. W. (2021, July 30). *The Dangerous Expansion of Ethiopia's Tigray War*. Crisis Group. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/dangerous-expansion-ethiopia-tigray-war>
- De Waal, A. (2022, September 1). *Ethiopia civil war: Why fighting has resumed in Tigray and Amhara*. BBC. Retrieved May 26, 2024, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-62717070>
- De Wall A. (2020, November 29). *Viewpoint: How Ethiopia is undermining the African Union*. BBC. Retrieved May 16, 2024, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55099908>
- Desalegn, H. (2020, November 25). *An Ethiopia-TPLF Dialogue Won't Lead to Peace*. Foreign Policy. Retrieved May 16, 2024, from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/24/ethiopia-tigray-war-end-tplf-abiy-ahmed-federal-government-not-morally-equivalent/>
- Deutsche Welle. (2020, June 17). *Yehaimanot meriwochena meriwoce yehager shemegliwoche kfefederal menegisit gar lemenegager tiyakie akerebewal*. dw.com. Retrieved May 13, 2024, from [የኃይማኖት መሪዎችና የሀገር ሽማግሌዎች ከፌዴራል መንግስት ጋር ለመነጋገር ጥያቄ አቅርበዋል – DW – 10 ሰኔ 2012](https://www.dw.com/en/yehaimanot-meriwochena-meriwoce-yehager-shemegliwoche-kfefederal-menegisit-gar-lemenegager-tiyakie-akerebewal/a-55604577)
- Deutsche Welle. (2021, December 20). *Tigrayan fighters announce withdrawal from rest of Ethiopia*. dw.com. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from <https://www.dw.com/en/tigrayan-fighters-announce-they-are-withdrawing-from-rest-of-ethiopia/a-60195811>
- Deutsche Welle. (2021, June 9). *Rockets from Ethiopia's Tigray hit Eritrean capital: envoys*. dw.com. Retrieved May 4, 2024, from <https://www.dw.com/en/rockets-fired-from-ethiopia-tigray-hit-eritrean-capital-diplomats-say/a-55604577>
- Dutch Welle. (2022, January 2). *Torinet yawedemachew ye tina tequamattesefa*. dw.com. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from [ጦርነት ያወደማቸው የጤና ተቋማት ተሰፋ – DW – 24 ታኅሣሥ 2014](https://www.dw.com/en/torinet-yawedemachew-ye-tina-tequamattesefa/a-60195811)
- EBC (2020, December 13). *Tekilay minister Abiy Ahemed be Mekelle ketema kekefitegna yemekelakeya serawit mekonnenochi gare yadergut wuyiyet*. YouTube. Retrieved May 4, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXgLGkvJ2jE>
- EBC (2020, November 4). *Yetewat 3 seat amaregan zina. . Tikimit25/2013 E.C.* YouTube. Retrieved May 3, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hKvWLpuUX0>
- EBC (2020, November 6). *Tekelay minister Abiy Ahemed bewektawi guday lay yesetut mulu meglecha. Tikimit 27/2013 E.C.* YouTube. Retrieved May 3, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hq-QwsDqELw>
- Embassy of Ethiopia (2021, May 1). *Ethiopia says U.S. Special Envoy's remark 'undiplomatic'*. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from <https://ethiopianembassy.org/ethiopia-says-u-s-special-envoys-remark-undiplomatic-april-30-2021/>
- ENA. (2020, November 23). *Law Enforcement Operation Enters Final, Crucial Phase: PM Abiy*. Retrieved May 4, 2024, from https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/en_18874
- Eritrea Ministry of Information. (2018, June 20). *President Isaias' Speech on Martyrs Day*. Retrieved May 3, 2024, from <https://shabait.com/2018/06/20/president-isaias-speech-on-martyrs-day/>
- Eritrean Embassy media (2021). *Sekoture Getachew admits TPLF attacked Northern Command*. Retrieved February 11, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2d4WAtbhBc>

- Ethio Forum (2020, March 2). *L.General Tsadikan Gberetensay sele atse Minilik; Issayas ena Abiy yetenagerut Part 1*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7-hwJtxUOE>
- Ethio Forum (2024, March 12). *Ye Abiy ena ye Obasanjo yalitesemu genegnunetoche; ke Derg eseke eheadeg ena bilitsigna*. YouTube. Retrieved May 18, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLHVVU5QkKjc>
- Ethiopia Peace Observatory. (2021, August 20). *EPO Monthly: June-July 2021 - Ethiopia Peace Observatory*. Retrieved May 8, 2024, from <https://epo.acleddata.com/2021/08/20/monthly-june-july-2021/>
- Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. (2023, October 12). *EHRC-OHCHR Joint Investigation Report on Tigray Conflict*. Retrieved May 10, 2024, from <https://ehrc.org/download/ehrc-ohchr-joint-investigation-report-on-tigray-conflict/>
- Ethiopian Monitor. (2020, December 21). *AU: Ethiopia Law Enforcement Operation in Tigray Legitimate*. Retrieved May 16, 2024, from <https://ethiopianmonitor.com/2020/12/21/au-ethiopia-law-enforcement-operation-in-tigray-legitimate/>
- Ethiopian Peace Observatory (2022, June 7). *EPO Monthly: June-July 2021 - Ethiopia Peace Observatory*. Retrieved May 7, 2024, from <https://epo.acleddata.com/2021/08/20/monthly-june-july-2021/>
- Ethiopian News Agency (2021, November 18). *Deputy Prime Minister Holds Discussion with U.S. Special Envoy to Horn of Africa*. Retrieved May 24, 2024, from https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/en_30634
- Ethiopian News Agency (2022, July 28). *Gov't of Ethiopia Expresses Readiness to Peace Talks Without Preconditions*. Retrieved May 22, 2024, from https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/en_37470
- Ethiopian News Agency (2018, June 13). *Ye hiwehat maekelawi committee aschekoay sibeseba ye akoam megelecha bemawutate tetenaqeqe*. Retrieved May 2, 2024, from https://www.ena.et/web/amh/w/am_5837
- Ethiopian News Agency (2020, June 19). *Ye Ethiopia yehager shemegliwoche memakirt be Tigray tiru koyta endeneberew geletse*. Retrieved May 13, 2024, from <https://www.ena.et/web/amh/w/am93694>
- Ethiopian News Agency. (2022, February 7). *Obasanjo Visiting Human, Material Damages Caused by TPLF in Amhara Region*. Retrieved May 19, 2024, from https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/en_33271
- Ethiopian Press Agency (2021, November 16). *Hostile intervention through Djibouti's territory won't happen: Djiboutian FM*. Retrieved May 24, 2024, from <https://press.et/herald/?p=45176>
- Ethiopian Reporter (2021, September 13). «*Shimgilina yeminorew teshemagayoche sinoru new*» Mesfin Araya (professor); *ye hager shimagliwoche medrek sbesabi*. Retrieved May 14, 2024, from <https://www.ethiopianreporter.com/75767/>
- Ethiopian Reporter (2023, June 11). *Beseminu torinet be sosit kililoche kewedemu temihirt betoche mekakil kesidist shihe belay yemihonut aletmetegenachewu tegeletse*. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://www.ethiopianreporter.com/119405/>

- Ethiopian Reporter (2023, May 21). *Yesemin Ethiopia torinet ke 1.5 trillion birr belay gudatina kisara madiresun mnegisit yifa aderege*. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://www.ethiopianreporter.com/118763/>
- Fana Broadcasting Corporate (2021, March 21). *Deputy Premier Demeke briefs US delegation led by Chris Coons on latest developments in Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from <https://www.fanabc.com/english/deputy-premier-demeke-briefs-us-delegation-led-by-chris-coons-on-latest-developments-in-ethiopia/>
- Fana Broadcasting Corporate (2022, February 7). *AU Special Representative for HoA visits mass grave, institutions ravaged by TPLF in Kombolcha town*. Fana Broadcasting Corporate S.C. Retrieved May 21, 2024, from <https://www.fanabc.com/english/au-special-representative-of-hoa-visits-mass-grave-institutions-ravaged-by-tplf-in-kombolcha-town/>
- Feltman, J. (2021, November 23). *Briefing with U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman on the Ongoing Situation in Ethiopia*. U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia. Retrieved May 24, 2024, from <https://et.usembassy.gov/briefing-with-u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-ambassador-jeffrey-feltman-on-the-ongoing-situation-in-ethiopia/>
- Financial Times (2023, January 13). *War in Tigray may have killed 600,000 people, peace mediator says*. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://www.ft.com/content/2f385e95-0899-403a-9e3b-ed8c24adf4e7>
- Foreign Policy (2020, November 5). *'Is Ethiopia Headed for Civil War?'*. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/05/is-ethiopia-headed-for-civil-war/>.
- Foreign Policy (2021, August 11). *'Why Did Ethiopia's Prime Minister Rebuff Samantha Power?'*. Retrieved 26 April 20, 2022, from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/11/ethiopia-abi-ahmed-samantha-power-usaid-biden-tigray-conflict-humanitarian-crisis/>.
- France 24 (2021, November 22). *Ethiopia's Abiy vows to head to war front amid rebel advance*. Retrieved May 20, 2024, from <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20211122-ethiopia-s-abi-yows-to-head-to-war-front-amid-rebel-advance>
- France 24. (2020, December 27). *The midnight confrontation that helped unleash Ethiopia's conflict*. Retrieved May 3, 2024, from <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20201127-the-midnight-confrontation-that-helped-unleash-ethiopia-s-conflict>
- France 24. (2020, November 16). *African leaders mount effort to mediate Ethiopia conflict*. Retrieved May 19, 2024, from <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20201116-african-leaders-mount-effort-to-mediate-ethiopia-conflict>
- Getachew, R. (2022, August 22). *Ethiopia: The African Union cannot deliver peace to Tigray*. The Africa Report.com. Retrieved May 13, 2024, from <https://www.theafricareport.com/234090/ethiopia-the-african-union-cannot-deliver-peace-to-tigray/>
- Haass, R. (2020, August 11). *Present at the Disruption: How Trump Unmade U.S. Foreign Policy*. Foreign Affairs. Retrieved May 17, 2024, from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-08-11/present-disruption>
- Hochet-Bodin, N. (2022, June 9). *En Ethiopie, des négociations s'organisent en coulisse entre le gouvernement et les rebelles du Tigré*. Le Monde.fr. Retrieved May 26, 2024, from https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2022/06/09/en-ethiopie-des-negociations-s-organisent-en-coulisse-entre-le-gouvernement-et-les-rebelles-du-tigre_6129507_3212.html

- ICHREE. (2022). *Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (A/HRC/51/46) (Advance Unedited Version) - Ethiopia*. ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/report-international-commission-human-rights-experts-ethiopia-ahrc5146-advance-unedited-version>
- IPIS (2024, January 8). *Famine as weapon of war - A timeline of the Tigray conflict*. <https://ipisresearch.be/publication/famine-as-weapon-of-war-a-timeline-of-the-tigray-conflict/>
- Irrera, D., Diehl, P. F., Regan, P., Beardsley, K., Lo, N., Shannon, S. E. G. M., . & Kinne, B. J. (2015). *The relevance of third-party intervention in conflict management*. University of Catania.
- ISS. (2021, September 28). *Hopes guarded as another envoy heads to the Horn | PSC Report*. Retrieved May 19, 2024, from <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/hopes-guarded-as-another-envoy-heads-to-the-horn>
- Lyndsey. (2022). *Impact of the Northern Ethiopian War on Education - Link*. Link. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://linkededucation.org.uk/impact-of-the-northern-ethiopian-war-on-education/>
- Manek, N., & Omer, M. K. (2020, November 16). *In Ethiopia's Civil War, Sudan Will Decide the Outcome*. Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/14/sudan-will-decide-outcome-ethiopian-civil-war-abi-y-tigray/>
- Miller. (2024, February 29). *Scars of War and Deprivation: An Urgent Call to Reverse Tigray's Humanitarian Crisis*. Refugees International. Retrieved, from <https://d3jwam0i5codb7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Ethiopia-Report-MAR-2024.pdf>
- Nation (2021, June 8). *Uhuru says Safaricom deal good for "mutual prosperity with Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/uhuru-says-safaricom-deal-good-for-mutual-prosperity-with-ethiopia--3430332>
- News Business Ethiopia (2022, February 9). *AU mediator Obasanjo arrives Afar region of Ethiopia – New Business Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 19, 2024, from <https://newbusinessethiopia.com/politics/au-mediator-obasanjo-arrives-afar-region-of-ethiopia/>
- Obasanjo. (2022, November 20). *Olusegun Obasanjo: How Ethiopia's peace plan will work*. Semafor. Retrieved May 19, 2024, from <https://www.semafor.com/article/11/19/2022/how-ethiopia-tigray-peace-will-work-obasanjo>
- Perez, A. M. (2015). *Coercive diplomacy in the 21st century: A new framework for the "carrot and stick"*. University of Miami.
- Politics (2022, February 23). *UN Sec-General appoints Hanna Tetteh Special Envoy for Horn of Africa*. Retrieved May 14, 2024, from <https://www.classfmonline.com/news/politics/UN-Sec-General-appoints-Hanna-Tetteh-Special-Envoy-for-Horn-of-Africa-30917>
- Reuters (2021, December 22). *EXCLUSIVE U.S. concerned over Turkey's drone sales to conflict-hit Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 24, 2024, from <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/exclusive-us-concerned-over-turkeys-drone-sales-conflict-hit-ethiopia-2021-12-22/>
- Reuters (2021, March 26). *Ethiopia rejected U.S. call for unilateral ceasefire during talks, U.S. says*. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN2BH3JJ/>
- Reuters (2022, March 23). *U.S. focused on delivery of humanitarian aid to Ethiopia's Tigray*. Retrieved May 26, 2024, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN2LK1ZK/>

- Reuters (2022, October 7). *Ethiopia peace talks delayed for logistical reasons*. Retrieved May 28, 2024, from <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopia-peace-talks-delayed-logistical-reasons-diplomats-2022-10-07/>
- Sanjeev Kumar (28 June 2023), *China's Shuttle Diplomacy on Ukraine*. Indian Council of world affair, New Delhi, https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=9542&lid=6194#skipCont
- Sarah Lu (2019). *Henry Kissinger and the Roots of Shuttle Diplomacy: Realpolitik, Bilateral Relations, and Domestic Motivations*. The YALE review of international Studies. Retrived from <http://yris.yira.org/comments/2888>
- Shapiro, A. (2021, August 5). *After Ethiopia Trip, USAID Administrator Samantha Power Shares View Of Conflict*. NPR. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/05/1025248684/after-ethiopia-trip-usaid-administrator-samantha-power-shares-view-of-conflict>
- Tadias Magazine. (2021, March 24). *UPDATE: U.S. Senator Chris Coons Says Ethiopia Trip Was 'Constructive'*. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from <http://www.tadias.com/03/24/2021/update-u-s-senator-chris-coons-says-ethiopia-trip-was-constructive/>
- The East African (2021, June 4). *US Special envoy visits Gulf countries, plans Kenya trip in shuttle diplomacy*. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/world/us-special-envoy-visit-gulf-countries-3425318>
- The Presidency Republic of South Africa (2020, November 20). *African Union Chairperson appoints AU Special Envoys to Ethiopia*. Retrieved May 16, 2024, from <https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/african-union-chairperson-appoints-au-special-envoys-ethiopia-0>
- The Reporter (2021, August 14). *Feltman set to visit Ethiopia again*. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/11817/>
- The Reporter (2024, June 1). *Conflict recovery could require USD 44 billion in five years, study reveals*. Retrieved June 5, 2024, from <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/40250/>
- The Star (2022, January 24). *Kenya, USA call for speedy resolution of Ethiopian conflict*. Retrieved May 25, 2024, from <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2022-01-24-kenya-usa-call-for-speedy-resolution-of-ethiopian-conflict/>
- The Times (2021, July 19). *Genocide fears after Ethiopian PM vows to crush 'weeds' of Tigray*. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/abiys-pledge-to-crush-weeds-of-tigray-raises-fears-of-genocide-in-ethiopia-sx0xkqb2v>
- Tigray Tv. (2021, November 1). "TTV Forum" koyita ke General Tsadikan Gebretensaye. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0znM0zm7nj8>
- Today News Africa (2021, November 9). *Jeffrey Feltman returns to Ethiopia after meetings in Kenya, as many rally against him in Washington*. Retrieved May 24, 2024, from <https://todaynewsafrika.com/jeffrey-feltman-returns-to-ethiopia-after-meetings-in-kenya-as-many-rally-against-him-in-washington/>
- U.S. Department of The Treasury (2024, May 16). *Treasury Sanctions Eritrean Military Leader in Connection with Serious Human Rights Abuse in Tigray*. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0329#:~:text=WASHINGTON%E2%80%94Today%2C%20the%20U.S.%20Department,rights%20abuse%20committed%20du ring%20the>

- U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia (2021, August 4). *Press Conference: USAID Administrator Samantha Power*. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from <https://et.usembassy.gov/press-conference-samantha-power-usaid-administrator/>
- UMD Media (2022, October 6). *General Tsadkan Gebretensae, Tigray Defence Forces' Central Command at the Heritage Foundation*. You Tube. Retrieved May 18, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PV-odJLPT1Y>
- United States Department of State (2021, November 3). *A Perspective on the Ethiopian-U.S. Relationship After a Year of Conflict - United States Department of State*. Retrieved May 24, 2024, from <https://www.state.gov/a-perspective-on-the-ethiopian-u-s-relationship-after-a-year-of-conflict/>
- US State Departement, (n.d.). *Shuttle Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974–1975*. Retrieved June 23, 2023, from US State Departemnet : <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/shuttle-diplomacy>
- Voice of America (2021, December 13). *United States hiwuhatin aberetatita enedematawiiq yewuchi geday meseriyabytoa asetaweqe*. Retrieved May 20, 2024, from https://amharic.voanews.com/a/6352448.html?utm_medium=affiliate&utm_campaign=VOA-player6352448&utm_source=mereja.com/&utm_content=player#player-start-time=49.167138
- Voice of America (2021, February 10). *Yehaymanot abatoche ena yehager shimagliwoche be Mekelle*. Retrieved May 14, 2024, from <https://amharic.voanews.com/a/mekele-delegation--2-9-2021/5771671.html>
- Voice of America (2020, November 21). *AU Appoints 3 Envoys to Help Resolve Ethiopian Conflict*. Retrieved May 16, 2024, from <https://www.voanews.com/a/africa-au-appoints-3-envoys-help-resolve-ethiopian-conflict/6198659.html>
- Voice of America (2021, March 22). *US Delegation, Top Ethiopian Officials Discuss Tigray Conflict*. Retrieved May 23, 2024, from https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_us-delegation-top-ethiopian-officials-discuss-tigray-conflict/6203603.html
- Wadlow, R. (2021). *Ethiopia's Tigray, a New Biafra?* The Federalist Debate. Retrieved May 29, 2024, from <https://www.federalist-debate.org/archive/year-xxxiv-number-2-july/comments/ethiopia-s-tigray-a-new-biafra>
- Walsh, D. (2021, December 15). *The Nobel Peace Prize That Paved the Way for War in Ethiopia*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/15/world/africa/ethiopia-abiy-ahmed-nobel-war.html>
- Walta Media and Communication Corporate (2021, November 8). *Millions in Addis Denounce Terrorists TPLF, Shene*. Retrieved May 24, 2024, from <https://waltainfo.com/millions-in-addis-denounce-terrorists-tplf-shene/>
- Walta Media and Communication Corporate (2022, June 11). *DPM, Demeke Mekonnen Receives US Special Envoy Michael Hammer*. Retrieved May 26, 2024, from <https://waltainfo.com/dpm-demeke-mekonnen-receives-us-special-envoy-michael-hammer/>

APPENDICES:

Appendix I: List of Key Informants

No.	Interviewees	Institute	Position	Place	Date
1.	Ambassador Menilik Alemu	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Political Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister at Ministry of Foreign Affairs	MoFA, Addis Ababa	February 20/2024
2.	Anonymous		Senior Researcher	Addis Ababa	March 26/2024
3.	Fana G/Senebet (PhD)	Addis Ababa University	Director of the Institute for Peace and Security	AAU, Addis Ababa	March 03/2024
4.	Lt. Col. Sheku Tejan	Africa Union	Military Plans and Operations Officer in Political Affairs, Peace and Security	African Union, Addis Ababa	April 20/2024
5.	Martin plaut	University of London	Journalist and Senior research specializing in the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa;	London, England [Via zoom]	February 24/2024

Appendix II: Interview Guide/Check List Questions for Key Informants

The purpose of this interview guide is to collect information to conduct research for the partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations and Diplomacy at Addis Ababa University. The title is called '**The Role of Shuttle Diplomacy in the Cessation of Hostilities between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the TPLF in the North Ethiopia Conflict: From 2020-2022**'. The information that you have provided is intended to help understand state and non-state actors' diplomatic engagement to mediate the conflicting parties in general and the shuttle diplomacy mechanism in particular. Therefore, you are kindly requested to provide as much accurate information as possible. The researcher confirms to you that all data you provide will be treated confidentially.

1. **Name:**_____

2. **Institution:**_____

3. **Position of work:**_____

1. What were the root and immediate causes of the conflict?
2. Do you think the conflict could be avoided? If so, how?
3. How do you understand the nature and course of the conflict?
4. What factors contributed to bringing the conflict to an end?
5. Which state and non-state actors were highly involved in the mediation process? And why?
6. How far is diplomacy (particularly shuttle diplomacy) employed in the mediation process?
7. What were the strengths and drawbacks of such diplomatic efforts?