



**EXTERNAL INTERVENTION IN THE CURRENT  
ETHIOPIA-SUDAN BORDER DISPUTE**

**By**

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**A Thesis submitted to**

**College of Development Studies**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Regional and Local Development Studies (RLDS)**

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**July, 2022**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

## DECLARATIONS

I, Beyene Ejigu Sefera, undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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## APPROVAL

### **Addis Ababa University, College of Development Studies, Regional and Local Development Studies (RLDS)**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Beyene Ejigu Sefera, entitled a study on External Intervention in the Current Ethiopia-Sudan Border Dispute and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements Degree of Master of Arts in Regional and Local Development Studies complies with the regulation of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First of all, I would like thank the almighty God for giving me passion and wisdom for doing this study. In the absence of His full grace, forgiveness and good turn, it would difficult for me to be able to achieve this work. Then, I would like to thank my families, my wife and lovely children, who missed their family time until the end of this work. I will forever owe a favor.

My gratitude goes to my advisor, Dr. Yeshitila Wondemeneh for his guidance and helpful comments and advices in my study. Also, I would like to express my whole hearted thanks to those who collaborated in providing me access to the data relevant to make this study successful. Thanks Ministry of Foreign Affairs African Affairs Department particularly, International Boundary Affairs Unit for candidly input data for this research. And finally, I would like to express my deep appreciation to everyone who directly or indirectly helped me in achieving this study.

## ABSTRACT

*The border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan was full of complication since the start of negotiation process for treaty making during Emperor Menilik II. Even if in 1972 both countries have agreed to re-demarcate the boundary upon reaching an amicable solution, till now they have not reached into any solution. Currently the Sudanese government has occupied the land which is under the effective control of Ethiopian administration.*

*The main objective of this study is to assess the role of external interventions on the ongoing Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute. I used qualitative approach in this research. In addition to document analysis and researcher observation, the primary data was collected from respondents' interviews that are selected from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant institutions. Major findings and conclusions of this study shows that Egypt is the main actor behind the current Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute either in relation to GERD stalemate or other geopolitical interest. In addition, some Western countries, Arab countries and emerging super powers from other parts of the world have been complicating the problem to advance their own national interest.*

*As short term solution, diplomatic efforts should be made intensively until Sudan shows good faith to evacuate from the disputed territory for a fruitful discussion to be made. The government of Ethiopia should raise international awareness about the continuing provocative action of Sudan. As a long term solution, they should re-activate joint boundary mechanisms to finalize the remaining task of finding an amicable solution. In addition, economic cooperation & joint development programs should be applied to ease the tension.*

*Key Words: Border Dispute, proxy war, Geopolitics, external intervention, demarcation*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATIONS.....	i
APPROVAL .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iiiv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	iv
ACRONYMS.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1. Background of the Study .....	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3. Research Objective and Questions .....	5
1.3.1. General objective .....	5
1.3.2. Specific objectives .....	5
1.3.3. Research Questions.....	6
1.4. Significance of the Study.....	6
1.5. Limitations of the Study .....	6
1.6. Scope of the Study .....	7
1.7. Organization of the Study.....	7
CHAPTER TWO.....	8
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	8
2.1. Theoretical Review .....	8
2.1.1. Concept of Border.....	8
2.1.2. Border Dispute.....	8
2.1.3. Different Theories of International Relations in Relation to Borders.....	9
2.1.4. Geopolitics and Intervention.....	10
2.1.5. African Union Border Programme (AUBP) and its Role .....	16
2.2. Empirical Review .....	17
2.2.1. History of Borders .....	17
2.2.2. Border Disputes in Africa .....	19
2.2.3. Ethiopia-Sudan Relations .....	22
2. 3. Conceptual Framework.....	30

CHAPTER THREE .....	32
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	32
3.1. The Study Area.....	33
3.2. Research Approach.....	34
3.3. Research Design .....	34
3.4. Source of Data .....	34
3.5. Data collection Methods .....	35
3.6. Sampling Techniques.....	35
3.6.1. Sample population .....	36
3.6.2. Method of Sampling .....	36
3.6.3. Sampling Procedure.....	36
3.7. Sample Size .....	37
3.8. Methods of Data Analysis .....	37
3.9. Validity and Reliability.....	37
3.10. Ethical consideration .....	38
CHAPTER FOUR .....	39
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	39
4.1. Introduction .....	39
4.1.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents .....	39
4.2. Al Fashaqa: the gravity of border dispute.....	41
4.3. The causes of the ongoing border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan .....	42
4.3.1. Root causes .....	42
4.3.2. Proximate causes .....	45
4.4. Major actors in Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute .....	48
4.5. The role of external forces in aggravating the current Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute .....	50
4.6. The Implications of the Ethiopia-Sudan border conflict in the Regional Geopolitics Rivalry and Stability of the region .....	52
CHAPTER FIVE .....	55
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	55
5.1. Conclusion.....	55
5.2. Recommendations.....	57
REFERENCES .....	62
Appendix I.....	69

## **ACRONYMS**

AU	African Union
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
JBC	Joint Boundary Commission
JSC	Joint Special Committee
JTBC	Joint Technical Boundary Committee
MoI	Ministry of Information
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSDS HUB	NATO Strategic Direction South Hub
UN	United Nations
UAE	United Arab Emirates

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 2.3. Conceptualization of theoretical framework.....31

Figure 3.1. Map showing disputed area.....33

Table 4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents .....39

Figure 4.2. Map showing Al-Fashaqa Triangle.....41

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Borders are of key importance to nation states since the modern nation states are based on territorial sovereignty, and that this sovereignty is the basis for the inclusion and exclusion of many types of rights, the most basic of which is the right to citizenship. According to Stephen D. Krasner (1999) there are four general types of sovereignty, domestic sovereignty, which is about controlling one's own territory; second, interdependence sovereignty which is about the ability to control trans-border movements; third, international sovereignty, i.e. being recognized by other states; and finally, Westphalia sovereignty, which is about the ability to exclude external actors from domestic authority configurations. For all four, a border and the ability to defend it, is important. Borders thus have both territorial as well as human consequences.

As Aremu cited Alabi (2006) and Cammack et al (1988), they have observed that the colonization of Africa by European powers in the 19th century created political units that divided ethnic groups in some cases and combined rival groups in others. As currently composed, boundaries of most African states were arbitrarily drawn without regard to ethnic and cultural affinities. In some cases, European boundaries forced starkly different, rival cultures to cohabit within the confines of a single state. The impacts of these borders were felt to varying degrees from one country to the other throughout Africa. For instance, the Akan speaking peoples were split between Ghana and cote d' Ivoire; the Ewe ethnic group has also been split between Ghana and Togo while many Yoruba are found in the Benin Republic. It should be noted that since the 1950's when Africa nations started to gain independence, these arbitrary borders have more often than not become source of conflict. As Fonkem (2014) cited Ambassador Herman J. Cohen; 'the sources and consequences of Africa's internal conflicts have their roots in colonialism, the subsequent processes of de-colonization and state formation, and the ensuing crisis of nation building'. For Cohen, the colonial state was fraught with contradictions. As he put it, 'The modern African state was created by colonial powers out of ethnic and regional diversities, and rendered conflictual by gross inequities in power

relations, and in the uneven distribution of national wealth and development opportunities' (Cohen 1995).

Ethiopia and the Sudan have deep-rooted historical relation, which dates back to the predecessors of present-day Ethiopia and the Sudan – the Abyssinian kingdoms like Aksumite and Zagwe on the one hand, and the Nubian and Merowe on the other. Beside the long boundary, Ethiopia and Sudan share many common features including common people, languages, religion, natural resources, culture and history. Geographical, cultural, historical and economic proximities between the two neighbors have made them strategically significant in the region (Beyene, etal, 2018).

Relations between Ethiopia and Sudan have been fluctuating between harmony and conflict over the years. Military conflict broke out between Ethiopians and Sudanese in the 1850s. Sudanese Mahdists, or dervishes have advanced into Ethiopia in 1885, resulting in a series of battles with Ethiopian troops led by Yohannes IV (Shinn & David, 2015).

There were various causes which led to the two countries in to disputes, tensions and conflicts. One of the differences was territorial disputes existed for more than a century. Particularly, the advent of British colonial rule in the Sudan with their expansionist policies posed a greater menace to the Ethiopia-Sudan border. However, the founder of the modern state of Ethiopia showed persistent resilience and wisdom in settling the disputes peacefully giving priority to nurturing the friendly relations and cooperation between the two countries and their peoples that endured to date. For instance, in the 1972 Exchange of Notes, the two countries agreed to settle the dispute arising from the settlement and cultivations, and to maintain the status quo until they arrive at an amicable solution (1972 Exchange of Notes, Article III). To this end, they set up structures and mechanisms that accomplished a number of tasks to reach the final disposition of the problems. Recently, they convened high-level meetings to reactivate the various mechanisms to finalize their tasks in order to complete the re-demarcation process.

According to international Crisis Group report (2021), Sudan took control of the al-Fashaga borderland when the Ethiopian National Defense Forces left the area for low enforcement operation in Tigray region. Sudan was disregarding a relatively amicable land-use arrangement that had governed the area for more than a decade and evicting thousands of farmers in

Ethiopia. Ethiopia is saying that the invasion of the Sudanese army to Ethiopian territory is clearly the breach of the principles of international law and the border demarcation treaties signed between them. To contrary of this, Sudan is saying the Sudanese army never invaded Ethiopia but recaptured their lands. The report also added that the recurrent dispute is now raising fears of an escalation that could draw in regional allies. Latest iteration of the border dispute has arisen against the backdrop of growing regional tensions that involve not just Ethiopia and Sudan, but also Eritrea and Egypt. Still, the Ethiopia-Sudan border is unresolved issue and need further discussion and negotiation to bring long-lasting solution.

This study, therefore, analyzed the causes of the renewed border dispute and assessed the role of external forces in the current border dispute between Ethiopia and the Sudan and its implication on regional stability as well geopolitical rivalry. Besides this, it showed the role of various actors in the border disputes between the two countries.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

According to Emmanuel (2016), boundary disagreements occur both locally and internationally between and among communities of the same geopolitical entity as well as at the international level. A boundary dispute arises when one country claims a piece of land in an adjacent country because of some quality that land possesses. That quality could include an important historic or cultural shrine, strategic position or economic resources, such as an oil field or a deep water port. A good example is the Bakassi Peninsula tension between Nigeria and Cameroon. Disputes exist when two countries hold opposite opinions concerning the status of a boundary or the ownership of an area.

Border disputes on the African continent remain a trigger factor for many interstate disputes. Following waves of independence across Africa, the borders poorly and selfishly established by colonialists were accepted by African leaders without changes that would facilitate the aspirations of their respective communities. The subsequent negative effects have been conflicts and political instability due to poor border management, leading to contestations and discourses as to whether national borders are necessary and can contribute to the development and cohesion of the African continent.

Ethiopia's boundary with Kenya, Djibouti and northern part of Somalia is demarcated and so that Ethiopia has not experienced any serious dispute with these countries related to border claims. Ethiopia's bilateral relation in boundary issues with these countries should be directed towards strengthening border management including inspection and maintenance of boundary pillars. Whereas, the boundary with Sudan, other southern parts of Somalia, Eritrea and South Sudan is not demarcated and has caused a serious of border disputes that culminated in to two full scale wars ( Ethio-Somalia 1977-78 war and Ethio-Eriteria 1998-1999 war) . It seems the third full scale war between Ethiopia and Sudan has been looming unless the ongoing border dispute is peacefully settled through negotiation and diplomatic means. Otherwise it may seriously affect Ethiopia's bilateral relation with Sudan. The crisis that drives from the border dispute may not only confine to both countries but it has also regional and global implications.

Since 2001 a relatively serious attempts was made by the two governments to carry out the re-demarcation task through joint boundary mechanisms. The JBC has convened twelve rounds of meeting, conducted the preliminary work and survey and some other preparatory works through its technical body so called JTBC. While JSC, has convened eight meetings but couldn't provide an amicable solution which is the pending issue.

According to NigusAdem (2021), the current confrontation between Addis Ababa and Khartoum is, however, different from the past ones for the following reasons. First, this is happening after Eritrea and South Sudan gained independence. Second, this confrontation follows the Ethiopia-Egypt confrontation over the Nile River, which shifted from veiled animosity to overt hostility following the official beginning of the construction of the GERD over the Blue Nile in 2011. Third, the military, political and economic roles of emerging actors such as China, Turkey, UAE, and Saudi Arabia are increasing in the Horn of Africa and Northeast Africa regions as never before.

Some aspects of Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute are briefly mentioned in a considerable number of books and papers on the causes in relation to historical background. These publications hardly discuss the roles of external forces in relation to GERD and other geopolitical interests of external actors on the current Ethiopia-Sudan boundary dispute. For instance, Mulatu (2015) in his Journal identified the major factors that have frustrated efforts to address the Ethiopia-Sudan boundary problem and also proposed solutions on how Ethiopia and Sudan could

resolve their differences prior to 2007. Another writer, Alemayehu (2019) examines the roots of boundary tensions and frontier claims between Ethiopia and Sudan with the special focus on Sätit-Humära and Mätäma from 1950s-1974. Wondwosen (2009) studied the merits and the demerits of colonial boundaries in Africa by using the Ethiopia-Sudan boundary as a case study from historical perspective.

Thus, this study assessed external intervention on the current Ethiopia-Sudan boundary dispute because it is the core objective of the study, but it does not ignore the historical background of the dispute and other factors. In addition, its implications on regional security were analyzed. By looking at the current state of affairs an attempt is also made to forecast what the future of the Ethiopia-Sudan border will look like and proposed the possible ways/recommendation in relation to settling the contention.

### **1.3. Research Objective and Questions**

The border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan may have implications on the bilateral relation, regional stability and regional geopolitics rivalry. As mentioned earlier, the theme of the study is the external intervention in the current Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute; and to this end, the following are the pertinent research objectives and questions of the study: The objectives of this thesis are classified into the main and specific objectives that revealed as follows: -

#### **1.3.1. General objective**

The main objective of this thesis is to assess the external intervention in the current Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute.

#### **1.3.2. Specific objectives**

- a) To explore the role of external forces in aggravating the ongoing border dispute.
- b) To depict the major actors in the two countries border dispute.
- c) To identify the root and proximate causes of the ongoing border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan.

- d) To analyze the implication of the border conflict in the regional geopolitics rivalry and stability of the region.

### **1.3.3. Research Questions**

- a) How do external forces aggravate the ongoing border dispute between the two countries?
- b) Who are the major actors in the two countries border dispute?
- c) What are the roots and proximate causes of the ongoing border dispute between Ethiopia and the Sudan?
- d) What is the implication of the border conflict in the regional geopolitics rivalry and stability of the region?

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

As Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute is common since 1960's, there are different academic researches and articles conducted which have direct or indirect relations with the topic. But the ongoing border conflict is slightly different from the past disputes, requiring further and new study; because, the current border conflict is new dynamic which coincidentally happened with the filling of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and at the same time many actors having national interests in the Horn of Africa region. These are among the factors driving the researcher to conduct this study. In this regard, the study is very significant because it may contribute an input for Academicians, policymakers, and negotiators on border issues. To fill the gap by indicating how external forces are aggravating the current Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute and the way forward in resolving the border dispute based on the academic research method. It also serves as a source of information and be an additional knowledge on the current debates on border dispute settlement.

### **1.5. Limitations of the Study**

The researcher faced some challenges during data collection. Collecting government documents was not an easy task. Some are very confidential and inaccessible even for respective organized authorities. To overcome these challenges, the researcher made sure that

the study is conducted for academic purpose and the respondent's anonymity already disclosed or their names was kept confidential. Unable to include direct reflection of the Sudanese citizens in my key informants was another limitation of the research.

### **1.6. Scope of the Study**

Spatially, this research work is conducted in Ethiopia-Sudan border mainly in north of Mount Dagleish<sup>1</sup>. Thematically, this study focused on the role of external forces on the current Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute. Ethiopia has many unresolved border issues with her neighboring countries; therefore, this work limited itself to the main and the ongoing border dispute between Ethiopia and the Sudan. Temporally, the research is mainly focused on the period since 1950s up to June 2022. However, it has reviewed historical trends of the Ethiopia-Sudan border in the years before 1950s.

### **1.7. Organization of the Study**

The research paper has organized into five chapters. Chapter one is an introduction of the thesis. It consists Background of the study, Statement of the Problem, Objectives of the Research, Significance of the Study, Scope of the Study, Limitations of the Study, and Organization of the paper. The second chapter is literature review, which exhaustively deal with a theoretical, empirical, and conceptual framework regarding different concepts, principles, theories, and other border, geopolitical, related issues. The methodology part is outlined in the third chapter consists research methods, design, and sampling procedure and also includes a brief description of participant that involved in this study. In Chapter Four: the findings from interview, document review and other relevant data collection methods are discussed. In the fifth chapter; summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations are included.

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<sup>1</sup> For this study purpose, North of Mount Dagleish covers the area mostly Metema Woreda, West Armachiho Woreda and Humera areas in which Ethiopia borders with Sudan. While South of Mount Dagleish mostly covers the area starting from Quara woreda towards the Southern direction including Benishangul areas, Gamebella etc in which Ethiopia borders with Sudan and South Sudan according to the 1972 Exchange of Notes.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Theoretical Review

##### 2.1.1. Concept of Border

It is essential to distinguish a boundary line from a frontier which is merely a zone or the territory about the line. Although the two words have different meanings, the "boundary" and "border/frontier" are still employed interchangeably as if they are synonymous. This practice is confusing and will not help matters especially when legal technicalities dominate a boundary question. The accepted meanings of boundary and border/frontier are as follows:

As African Union Border Program case study report cited (ICJ, 2013), boundary is a line as it traverses the land and maritime regions of the earth's surface, and 'border' (a spatial concept) that relates to the zone extending along either side of this line. However, conceptually the term 'border' in reality defines both 'the boundary' and 'the delimited zone', even though current usage most often reflects the following: 'the line delimiting the area under the jurisdiction of each of the States'. The examination of the substance of treaties generally indicates that the border is defined, from a legal viewpoint, as 'the line that separates the territory of one State from the territories of neighboring States.' It is understood that each of the States exercises its sovereignty within the confines of its territorial space. International jurisprudence considers in this respect that the border is, amongst other definitions, 'the line created by the succession of the furthestmost points of the spatial domain valid for a State's legal system'; or also, a line separating territorial spaces where two different sovereignties are exercised (judgment of ICJ, 1994).

##### 2.1.2. Border Dispute

A border dispute is when two governments or more do not agree on the location of the border between their lands. Black's law Dictionary circumscribes dispute as a conflict or controversy, especially one that has given rise to a particular lawsuit.

According to Sumner (2005) in international law a border relates to ownership of territory and this is significant because sovereignty over land defines what constitute a state. Boundary or territorial disputes are often related to the possession of natural resources such as rivers, fertile farmland, mineral or oil resources although the disputes can also be driven by culture, religion and ethnic nationalism.

### **2.1.3. Different Theories of International Relations in Relation to Borders**

#### **2.1.3.1. Realism**

According to Ashworth (2002) the realism theorist, the main players in the international relations are countries which constantly compete in pursuit of their own interests particularly for their security and power. The realism international theory has been subject to criticism as it accentuates states need for power and ignores the imperative nature of ethical standard in establishing quality relations between countries and communities. He further said, in essence the realism theory presumes national politics as a realm of command and influence while international politics is regarded as a field deficient in justice thus possess“ large potential of clashes between nations Donnelly (2000).

According to Mehari (2017) in the case of the horn of Africa, various conflicting factors influence the high level of hostility between the communities and nations. Nonetheless, the incorporation of the realism international relation theory is imperative in underpinning the source and resolutions to the conflict in this region. For decades, the United Nations and other international non-governmental organizations have constantly incorporated the realism international relations theory in resolving conflict in this region, the horn of Africa (Hensel and Mitchel, 2005). International relations experts also present the important issue of theories as presented in different social settings. In fact, some researchers maintain that social issues cannot be separated from the study of international relations theories (Jackson and Sorensen, 2016).

#### **2.1.3.2. Liberalism Perspective**

In essence, liberalism in international relations views that states need to interact with one another via negotiations and peace treaties with conflict being the absolute final resort.

Liberalists argue that states, in the political environment, have several options and should not always be at each other's throats (King & Lanche, 2001). The preposition of the liberal thought is that the economic interdependence discourages states from applying force against each other since warfare would threaten the prosperity of each side. In addition, liberals, particularly the forefather of liberalism, John Locke, argues that the state of nature is the perfect place of liberty, free from interference from external actors. Locke never made claim that the state is a perfect mechanism for peace, instead it can make errors and it is the predisposition of people to go against the state or dissolve it and replace it when it fails to protect them and their property. As Mehari (2017) cited Whilst King & Lanche (2001), argued that people can only revolt and overthrow the state when they can ensure victory over it, otherwise they would remain under authority at all times. Liberalism maintains that poor distribution of "social power" is the root cause of international conflict.

The researcher of this study supports the view of Liberalism to solve the existing Ethiopia-Sudan boundary dispute. There are already established joint boundary mechanisms such as Joint Special Committee as well as the 1972 Exchange of Notes. Therefore, in my view both countries need to interact with one another via negotiations and peace treaties (the 1972 Exchange of Notes) to give the solution for the deadlock. In addition, as the core concept of liberal thought is that cooperation discourages states from applying force against each other since warfare would threaten the security of each side, it is vital to apply the Liberal thoughts to solve the border problem of two countries to create stable geopolitical atmosphere in the Horn of Africa.

#### **2.1.4. Geopolitics and Intervention**

The Horn of Africa is a complex site of geopolitical and geostrategic importance, inextricably linked to key aspects of its history and geography. It is located in a crucial geostrategic position. Since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the region's waters provide a swift naval connection between the Euro-Mediterranean region, the Middle East, Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean (Joe & Guido, 2021). Due to its proximity to the oil-rich countries of the Persian Gulf, and the vital commercial lanes that transit the Bab al-Mandab and the Gulf of Aden, reinforce the region as a crucial maritime chokepoint and port. Now a days, an estimated

10 to 20 percent of global trade – including over 6 million barrels of oil per day – reportedly transits along the Horn’s shores. This makes the region a key geostrategic hub for countries all across the world (Faith, 2020). Beside this, additional economic, political and security considerations attract a large number of external players to actively engage in the Horn of Africa. These include countries with a longstanding historical presence in the region, such as United Arab Emirates, Qatar, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Turkey, US, Japan, and China (International Crisis Group, 2021). The involvement of these actors and their vested interests, alliances and agendas, underscore the pivotal role of geopolitics in shaping the security and economic trajectory of the region.

NSDS HUB (2019) also stated that those regional powers are also involved, either in collaboration with global powers or separately, to maintain their influence. Also, as the Horn of Africa is a network hub for religion-inspired violent extremist groups from the Middle East and Africa, it is of primary security interest for all international actors, including NATO, to closely monitor the global trade routes and regional security. A new security competition is underway in the Horn of Africa involving the Gulf States, Turkey, and Iran, as well as China, Russia and the United States.

The strategic situation should be understood as an extension of two Middle Eastern power struggles (Hisham, 2020). Hisham added that the Saudi/Iranian conflict, on the one hand, and the intra-Gulf quarrel (pitting Saudi Arabia and UAE against Qatar and Turkey), on the other, are playing out across the Red Sea, as Gulf states have come to see the Somali coastline as their “western security flank.” These two struggles - driven by security considerations and commercial interests - and aggravated by the climate change and food and water insecurity - have prompted a political realignment in Africa, and spurred a wave of investment in ports, bases and infrastructure in Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and Eritrea. The security competition in the Horn is also unfolding against the backdrop of China’s expansion into Africa, and two ongoing democratic changes in Ethiopia and Sudan.

#### **2.1.4.1. Geopolitics in Boundaries Issues**

Boundaries are product and process of geopolitical agency (Flint, 2006). Understanding why some parts of the world see borders, as markers of identities, have to be examined as Anderson

1996a highlighted (cited in Donnan& Wilson 2001). Violence and conflicts are not sudden events but a slow process, hiding many tactical strategies from both domestic and international politics. Geopolitical concepts need to be enhanced especially concerning the strategic region of the Horn of Africa. Hence, finding solution to border conflicts through the mechanisms available by only looking at the two states in conflict neglect other aspects of its occurrence. Henceforth, geopolitically driven boundary issues will be important to research, accordingly, some authors look at the question of power and the impact of regional and international implications in such conflicts. For instance, Donnan and Wilson (2001) argued that borders are “sites and symbols of power”. The remaining significance of territorial sovereignty is common mainly in newly independent or less developed states.

Boundary changes will be indications of a shift in the balance of forces caused either by an increase in driving force on one side of the frontier [boundary] or by a decrease in resistance on the other(Prescott 1987). Another important concept is critical geopolitics that Ó Thuathail explained and which, relates to power relations and the multiple practices to gain it. Indeed, the notion of geopolitics will also be combined with the principle of power and realism. Accordingly, Myers (1999) would be used as a reference on questions of national interests, the geopolitics is interlinked with, and he calls, the ‘political realism’. Donnan and Wilson (2001) will also be looked at in terms of the dynamic structures in power relations between states.

#### **2.1.4.2. The Geopolitical Implication of the Conflict**

Concerning the dynamic of geopolitics, the conflict has a wider cause and impact. To strengthen this statement, the region of the Horn of Africa, has always been prone to invasions, colonization but also interests by Great Powers. Accordingly, during the Cold War, the Horn was one of the centerpieces of interests by both the Soviet Union and the US, both battling to keep their hands on the region as “source of concern for decades” (Woodward 2006). In addition, it is important to keep in mind how, during the Cold War; the Horn of Africa was the base for military defense force of both Great Powers. Moreover, the European Parliament concerning the Horn of Africa stated in April 1984 that “noting the strategic importance of the Horn of Africa for both Western countries and the Eastern bloc, being adjacent to the Arabian Peninsula” (Firebrace& Holland 1984).

According to Berouk (2012) Ethiopia is the pivotal power of the Horn of Africa where many dangerous conflicts are occurring simultaneously. Many of these conflicts tend to get out of hand and Ethiopia ends up being bogged down in these conflicts for many decades. The sheer number of variables including long histories of grievance and recrimination and the extent of uncertainties combine to undermine Ethiopia's capacity to effectively address these conflicts on its own. As a result, Ethiopia is forced to maintain constant vigilance, carefully observing all kinds of changes taking place in all parts of the Horn of Africa at all times. In the longer term, however, Ethiopia is bound to confront the hard reality that turmoil and conflict will most probably continue to threaten large portions of the Horn of Africa. The importance of having a stable region was the main reason as conflicts, which often are internal can quickly spread throughout a whole region especially on the African continent (Goulding 1999). The latest iteration of the al-Fashaga dispute has arisen against the backdrop of growing regional tensions that involve not just Ethiopia and Sudan, but also Eritrea and Egypt. Ethiopia's relations with Egypt have also reached a low point. Almost completely dependent on the Nile for its water supply, Egypt fears that a huge dam on the river's largest tributary will reduce downstream flow (Crisis Group Report, 2021).

#### **2.1.4.3. The role of external forces Intervention on the Current Ethio-Sudan border dispute**

As Al-Monitor in 2021 reported, Ethiopia claims third parties are fueling the border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan. This is a clear allusion to Egypt, with which Sudan has signed a military cooperation agreement that is said to include a common defense pact which was signed in 1950. Egypt's high officials reported that Egypt was waiting for Sudan's request for support and assistance in its legal position to regain and liberate its lands. Egypt also showed it's committed to the Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation, under the umbrella of the Arab League, which stipulates in Article 2

“The Contracting States consider any [act of] armed aggression made against any one or more of them or their armed forces, to be directed against them all. Therefore, in accordance with the right of self-defense, individually and collectively, they undertake to go without delay to the aid

of the State or States against which such an act of aggression is made, and immediately to take, individually and collectively, all steps available, including the use of armed force, to repel the aggression and restore security and peace” ... Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation (1950).

As wuhibegezer et.al, (2014) stated the conflictual relations of Ethiopia with Sudan related with use of the Nile waters. In this regard, the agreement that Sudan signed with Egypt in 1959 that excluded Ethiopia from the use of the river is an example above worth mentioning. Ethiopia is the main source of the Nile, but it does not adequately utilize the river for hydro - electric power and irrigation like Sudan and Egypt until 2011 declared to begin Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. In support to this Ethiopia is the source of the lion's share of Nile water, while Egypt is the region's largest consumer of the water (John, 2020). This indicate that, Sudan is the second biggest source of Nile river and it has a wide territory used for irrigation but the interest of Ethiopian restricted by the 1959 agreement but Sudan partially secure its interest by the 1959 agreement which is disproportional to Egypt. This is still the great concern and interest of Egypt.

As mentioned by Young (2020) most of Middle East countries have agricultural investment in the region and they are seeking to further expanding their farm land interest. They have also aimed at gaining military advantage in the region. Although Ethiopia and Sudan have benefitted from investment and loans from Gulf States, and Ethiopia's long, tense relations with Eritrea have improved with assistance from Saudi and Emirati mediation, Gulf engagement has not been motivated by altruism, but is aimed at gaining political and military advantage and undermining competitors in the Middle East. Moreover, Saudi, Emirati, and Egyptians support Sudan's generals during the country's recent uprising was geared towards halting the democratic tide, weakening the Muslim Brotherhood, and backing conservative authoritarian governments. Sudanese and Ethiopians are aware of the real interests of these countries, but their own countries are politically instable and face major economic crises, so despite a long history of defending their national sovereignty, it is very difficult for them to reject the advances of their powerful neighbors (Jhon, 2020).

Westerners have the great desire to control the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa region with geopolitical interests and their interference in region is visible in different countries. For example, the European Parliament concerning the Horn of Africa stated in April 1984 that “noting the strategic importance of the Horn of Africa for both Western countries and the Eastern bloc, being adjacent to the Arabian Peninsula” (Firebrace& Holland, 1984).

Other countries have also geopolitical interest in the region that is manifested in a different ways. During the Cold War, the Horn was one of the centerpieces of interests by both the Soviet Union and the US, both battling to keep their hands on the region as “source of concern for decades” (Woodward, 2006). Some others have also geopolitical and economic interest in the region, for example, China needs to expand its economic as well as geostrategic connectivity with region.

Some Sudanese Generals also condemn Eritria over border dispute with Ethiopia. They believed that Eritria has been supporting the Ethiopian side (Washington post, 2021). On the other side, the AU, UAE, EU, UK and U.S have encouraged both sides to set up a channel for military dialogue in order to avoid accidental clashes that might trigger a wider conflagration that would harm the region. Simultaneously, they have tried to facilitate talks between Ethiopian and Sudanese civilian and military leaders and encourage both parties to stop sending troops to al-Fashaga. Notably the UAE, should keep pushing Addis Ababa and Khartoum to engage more constructively on this issue and the GERD matter. Sudan’s transitional cabinet has backed an initiative by the United Arab Emirates to mediate in a border dispute with Ethiopia, as well as over a controversial large dam built by Addis Ababa on the Blue Nile River (Al-Jazeera, 2021).

The increasingly unstable environment in the region and beyond poses new challenges to Ethiopian–Sudanese relations. Some scholars argued that Gulf interest in the Ethiopia and Sudan has the potential to produce positive outcomes, pointing to Qatari efforts to broker a settlement between Somalia and Kenya and Saudi-Emirati efforts to broker peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia (Brooking Report, 2020).

Ethiopia appears to have accepted the Conflict and Cooperation embrace of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and although Sudanese demonstrators during the uprising opposed these countries

and Egypt for their support of the generals, political and economic necessity may well bring Sudan into their orbit, the more so because they are key regional allies of the United States, who's backing the fledgling Sudanese government believes is needed to address Sudan's many economic and political problems.

Also of concern is the competition between the United States, on the one hand, and China and the Russian Federation, on the other, which will be played out in Africa, and the United States is unlikely to permit countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan to be neutral. Working their way through this morass will prove a major challenge for those in both countries tasked with managing Ethiopian–Sudanese relations including border disputes.

### **2.1.5. African Union Border Programme (AUBP) and its Role**

The African Union Border Programme was established in 2007 as part of African Union's efforts to strengthen the structural conflict prevention capacities of its Member States. The main objective of the AUBP is the promotion of peace, security and stability through: delimitation and demarcation of borders, cross-border cooperation, and capacity building. The African Union Border Programme offers a platform for the negotiated resolution of border disputes and the promotion of regional and continental integration through cross border cooperation.

The African Union Strategy for a Better Integrated Border Governance was adopted in 2020 by the AU Heads of State and Government. The Continental Strategy is an important milestone in the implementation of the African Union Border Programme (AUBP), in line with existing political and legal instruments adopted by Member States to guide their efforts in the management of border issues. It is designed to use borders as an instrument to promote peace, security and stability; to improve and accelerate integration. The Strategy provides guidelines and recommendations for coordination and cooperation on border policies at the continental, regional and national levels with a focus on enhancing coherence.

## **2.2. Empirical Review**

### **2.2.1. History of Borders**

According to Tahira and Shazia (2020) borders and borderlands concept was found from the very beginning of human society. In early period of time borders demarcation was physical like rivers, mountains, forest etc. but with passage of time it converted to lines. Defense of the territories are traced back from the hunters communities who protect it without materially making definite limits: even in between the hostile tribes wide respect were there for areas of ‘no men’s land. Everyone was aware that approaching ‘no men’s land is dangerous and deadly. With passage of time when the broad areas becomes thinner, the contacts and trade did not exclude from these areas and they become exchange areas for neighboring tribes. In ancient period the main attempt to transform frontier into borders were in the 7th century BC of emperor Qinshi’s great wall while on the West the main border activity come to the front from Roman Empire. Another important activity was the no man land of semi desert between Mongol and Chinese empire (Bellezza, 2013). The history of borderlands are roughly traced back from 3500 B.C.E when the Samaritans asserted their control over the Alluvial lands of the Tigris and Euphrates by peaceful and sometimes violent contacts with rural immigrant to their West, where Savannas amalgamated into the immense Arabian desert, and to the north and east where the plains abutted up against the wooded foothills of the Taurus and Zagros mountains. The mutual interaction between these lowland settled people and upland herders where their life ways was so different produced the first borderland (Mears, 2001).

The treaty of Westphalia in 1648 not only ended a long war among the European powers but also created a framework for modern international relations; the origin of modern international concepts like state sovereignty, diplomacy, negotiations for resolving conflicts and mediations between states are lies in this milestone accord (Tahira and Shazia, 2020). The outstanding features of the agreements were the ending of thirty years war (1618-1648) that was a conflict between the Catholics and Protestant in the Great Roman Empire and another eighty year war between Netherlands and Spain. The treaty revolutionary changed the relation between Church and state and established a precedent that states would be sovereign entities and have immunity from the political pressure of orthodoxy. According to the treaty it was legitimate form of

solving conflicts before the peace, but after the treaties were agreed upon, no state was allowed to be destroyed and compensation was to be awarded to these states that gave up strategically advantageous possessions” (Patton, 2019).

As Patton, 2019 explained; the treaty defines “the condition under which state could acquire valid title to territory either by discovery, cessation and annexation.” The treaty has established the territorial state as the basic unit of international system (Okhonmina, 2017). The treaty has been credited that it provide foundation to the modern state system and eloquent the concept of territorial sovereignty by granting territories or confirm sovereignty of territories to a number of states like Sweden, France, Netherland, Switzerland, England, Germany, Turkey, Spain. Before and during the war German territories were under the authority of the Holy Roman Emperor but territorial superior authority was granted to these areas in all matters under the treaty. Many international authors in the field of history and international relations considered the treaty as model for the birth of America, and the modern relations of European nations and for creating Nation of League and United Nations.

As described by Laine (2015) another important real spark in the evolution of border formation was the introduction of democracy after French and American revolutions in the late eighteenth century. The emergence of nations-states with democracy gave rise to popular legitimacy or sovereignty that state is created and sustained by the consent of the people. Along with nationalism democratic values signify that territory should be not molded in national space separated by borders only rather it should be enclose to population as well for separate and particular culture. These sorts of things contributed to the phenomenon of nations equivalency of society and borders demarcation progressively become a social phenomenon as well.

According to Adesina, 2019; the concept of borders today in this globalized world is more significant and complex than ever. Today in international relations states and its borders are the main actors in the transnational political and economic processes. Today borders are multi-dimensional, ambiguous and contradictory. They are not only demarcations between states but have tremendous implications for trade, population mobility, connection and security and so many others areas. In current international scenario borders nations are confronted complex and multifaceted security challenges both in physical borders as well as with the traditional

sovereignty of the country. Borders are considered as symbol of identity and serve the purpose of barriers, bridges, resources and means of communication for the concerned states. International borders are linear points of contacts between countries, cultures and societies that give prospects to examine the best and the worst in human nature and the exercise of statecraft. Both conflicts and cooperation in the borderlands of the two countries provide an opportunities of insights for the solution of various problems that today world community is facing throughout the world. The various challenges today in these borderlands like illegal movements of people and goods, crime increasing ratio, smuggling are not in the interest of any country and tools of effective border management is in dire need.

### **2.2.2. Border Disputes in Africa**

Disputes are bound to occur, taking into account the heterogeneous nature of human beings and their diverse interest over a given situation. According to Boyd (1979), modern African life has been profoundly affected by the brief period of European colonial domination during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While the past is prologue for all states, the ramification of Africa's colonial past have been felt with particular acuity in the current era due to the speed of Africa's transition from colonial status to that of independence. Many aspects of contemporary Africa reflect the residual effects of colonialism, but few do so with the clarity of the boundary situation-boundary conflict. The boundaries of modern Africa were the creation of European diplomats who partitioned Africa among themselves with little regard for, or knowledge of, the socio-cultural characteristics of the continent. As a result of the capriciousness of the European partition, a typical African boundary may group together many ethnic groups in one state, it may cut across many ethnic or national boundaries of the past, or it may create a state whose physical characteristics hinder political, social, or economic stability. Since the colonial boundaries were used, with few exceptions, as the basis for the devolution of sovereignty in Africa, the current leaders of the continent have had to deal with the effects of this boundary situation.

There are a couple of interstate border disputes scattered all over Africa. One thing is certain, and it's that these disputes are all undergoing resolution processes. The major challenge is the effectiveness of these resolutions. It is evident that most of the mechanisms put in place to

resolve these disputes are ineffective and that explains why the disputes are still ongoing, a case in point is the Sudan and South Sudan border dispute. Despite the use of various methods of resolution, peace is still non-existent in many areas, and the citizens of the disputing states still experience human rights violations from their counterparts. According to Cohen (1996), Africans have been depending more on foreign intervention such as the UN peacekeeping forces and the Western countries including, former colonial masters, while failing to realize that these bodies have been resolving African disputes superficially regardless of their intensity, especially if they have no interest in any of the disputing states.

As Pippie (2018) explained, most often, they do not focus on the root causes of the issue or the concern of the disputing parties; instead they merely separate the warring parties and request that they sign an agreement to terminate the dispute. This is the case namely; the Sudan and South Sudan border dispute and the Ethiopia and Eritrea border disputes where the UN and its peacekeeping forces and those that intervened were only interested in the parties to sign peace agreements. If the root cause(s) of a dispute are not eradicated then it cannot be guaranteed that the dispute will not reoccur in the near future, especially if both parties have a strong interest in controlling the territory in contract.

Hugues (2018) explained that, another major problem with the resolution of interstate border disputes in Africa is centered around the fact that Africans depend mostly on foreign bodies. African leaders lack the statesmanship to face or resolve their crises independently. This is why president Mkape of Tanzania urged African leaders at the First Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to take up the challenge and responsibility to establish a roadmap towards improving peace and stability on the continent. He reiterated that Africans must realize that most of the states have been independent for a long time – thus, the leaders have a duty to rectify negative colonial legacies by working harmoniously towards peaceful coexistence and the development of Africa. This advice was echoed by President Barack Obama during AU Summit in Addis Ababa on 28th July 2015.

According to AUBP (2014) since African countries gained independence, the border drawn in the wake of 19<sup>th</sup> century colonialism have been recurrent sources of conflicts and disputes on the continent. Most of the borders are poorly defined. Approximately two-thirds of the African

land boundaries are neither clearly delimited nor demarcated. The location of strategic natural resources in cross border areas poses additional challenges. Non-demarcated boundaries are a factor for contention between states and local populations, and a threat for peace and security on the African continent.

Disputes are an inevitable part of international relations and it is hardly denied that, among international disputes, territorial and territorial-related disputes are the most complicated ones. Undoubtedly, these disputes have been the primary source of the growing tensions in relations among States which are likely to lead to armed conflicts or eventual wars when they are not settled amicably and peacefully (Dong, 2005). According to Article 1 and 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, the sanctity of the territorial issue to the peoples in question – nationalism and associated passions – have made these disputes extremely difficult to resolve. Furthermore, these disputes are further complicated by historical, cultural, political, military and economic phenomena. Nevertheless, states are required under international law, to resolve their international disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law so that international peace, security, and justice will not be breached.

It is important for states to know the exact location of their borders because this indicates the extent of their territory and governmental authority; any external intrusion may spark a conflict between the territories bordering the two states. As mentioned above, most of the border disputes in Africa have arisen since the late 1950s, while most African states gained their independence. For their own, economic, political and strategic calculations, the imperialist capitalist powers (colonial powers) in the 19th century partitioned and divided African territories and people among themselves without considering the languages, social and cultural infirmities of the African people. In many instances, the same ethnic nationality found itself divided into two or more colonial territories and ruled by different colonial masters (Hugues, 2018). He added, although existing literature holds the colonial factors as the major cause of interstate border disputes in Africa due to the unclear and porous borders created during colonial times, the researcher here argues that besides the colonial factors, most of the disputes revolve around securing economic interests (searching for vital economic resources), expansionist policies, political rivalry, increasing population, land grasp and continental drift (water). This can preclude peaceful coexistence with neighboring states and also plays a

critical role in fueling interstate border disputes in Africa. This factor demonstrates why Ethiopia and Sudan have had long tussles over their various disputed area.

### **2.2.3. Ethiopia-Sudan Relations**

As Endalkachew et al (2021) cited MoI, there is a long historical relationship with the Sudan starting from the time of the states of Axum and Merowe; there are also long-standing ties between the two peoples who have lived in one another's country over the years. It is evident that this relationship has had its own positive and negative features. In particular, since the end of World War II, when the Sudan became independent, the relationship has not developed in a positive manner as much as it should have. One of the driving factors for skirmished relationship was religious extremism; such phenomena have also harmed the relationships between the two countries. Besides attempting to spread religious extremism in Ethiopia, there were different attempts supported by the Sudan that were planned to make the country a victim of terrorist attacks.

The other factor for the conflictual relations of Sudan concerns with use of the Nile waters. In this regard, the agreement that Sudan signed with Egypt in 1959 that excluded Ethiopia from the use of the river is an example above worth mentioning. Ethiopia is the main source of the Nile, but it does not adequately utilize the river for hydro -electric power and irrigation like Sudan and Egypt until 2011 declared to begin Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. In support to this Ethiopia is the source of the lion's share of Nile water, while Egypt is the region's largest consumer of the water (Young, 2020). This indicate that, Sudan is the second biggest source of Nile river and it has a wide territory used for irrigation but the interest of Ethiopian restricted by the 1959 agreement but Sudan partially secure its interest by the 1959 agreement which is disproportional to Egypt (Ferede & Abebe, 2014).

The third factor for weak relationships is related to the support they provided to each other's military opposition groups. The Ethiopian led regional assault on Sudan in the wake of the 1995 attempted assassination of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa led the al-Bashir regime to conclude that Ethiopia, and not Egypt, was the primary threat to its existence, and this necessitated reconciliation (African Studies Center, 1995).

As Molla (2002) indicated in his study, Ethiopia and Sudan are neighboring countries in the Horn of Africa, which share a common boundary. The relations of these countries began anew as friendly in 1991 when the EPRDF seized political power in Ethiopia. These relations, however, deteriorated and a state of conflict prevailed between 1995 and 1998. Fortunately, the relations between Ethiopia and Sudan started to improve without leading to serious confrontation and have become cordial since the middle of 1998. In a nutshell, the relations of these countries have shown fluctuations between harmony and conflict since 1991. The relations between Ethiopia and Sudan have been mainly affected by internal conflicts and incompatibilities of foreign policies as expressions of their respective national interests. He further added, external factors, such as the impact of Middle East politics in the Horn Region, the political interest of the West in this Region, and the involvement of the interest of Egypt in the Nile water utilization by Ethiopia and Sudan also have been contributing in influencing the relations between the two countries. The nature of the relations affected by the stated factors was highly dependent upon the balance of power between the two countries.

Ethiopia and Sudan are both situated at the horn of Africa. Interstate disputes, compared to the rampant intra state disputes are very rare in the horn of Africa. When they do take place, however, they give rise to devastating effects to human life, property and environment. The border dispute that took place between Ethiopia and Sudan was mainly started from 1950s and stayed till now. According to Taha (1975), in or prior to 1965 there was no boundary or territorial dispute between Ethiopia and the Sudan. However, the relations between the two countries were tense as each of them accused the other of assisting ‘secessionist movements’ directed against its unity and territorial integrity. The Sudan believed that the Southern Sudanese insurgents, the Anya Nya, had training camps and operation centers in the Ethiopian Provinces adjacent to the eastern districts of the Sudanese Province of Upper Nile. Ethiopia, on the other hand, believed that the Sudan was aiding the Eritrean Liberation Front. These ‘secessionist movements’ were the subject of the talks held in July 1965 at Addis Ababa between the Ethiopia and Sudanese Prime Ministers.

According to Mulatu (2021), the people of Ethiopia and Sudan have had good relations for many years. In the last fifty years, there have been significant changes in the development of trade and infrastructure. Sudan has also served as home to thousands of Ethiopian refugees

displaced by war and famine. Similarly, thousands of Sudanese refugees that have moved into Ethiopia have received shelter during times of crisis. Sudan's plan to purchase power from the GERD is the latest evidence of economic integration between the two countries. These tangible regional integration programs should be encouraged to flourish. If Ethiopia and Sudan continue to expand their bilateral negotiations to address the border problem based on the Exchange of Notes and the AUBP principles, the two countries should be able to set up the institutional mechanisms for a free flow of people and goods between the states, with the border serving as a bridge that promotes cooperation and understanding. Specifically, the joint border commission should be involved to come up with an amicable resolution of the border problem.

### **2.2.3.1. Historical Background of the Ethiopia-Sudan Border**

The year 1981 was an important one in the history of defining the modern boundary between Ethiopia and the Sudan. This definition came from two sides: through bilateral agreements of the British and Italian colonialists and the unilateral declaration of Emperor Menilek. Although they were to be overtaken by developments in the second half of the decade, they were to have an enduring impact- in the former case in conditioning the territorial adjustments that both colonial powers were forced to make and in the latter in shaping the popular perception of Ethiopia's western boundary (Bahru, n.d., p.6). He added, it was of much direct pertinent to the Ethiopia-Sudanese boundary as it evolved in the following decade. It defined the perspective sphere of influence of the two powers (British and Italy) from the north most tip of their newly acquired colony of Eritrea, RasKasar, to the junction of longitude 35° East with the Blue Nile. The hazy nature of the two powers knowledge of the areas concerned is evident from two features that recur in both agreements- the preference for longitudinal and latitudinal lines and the provision for possible amendments in the future to conform to what they termed as "hydrographic and orographic conditions of the country".

According to Alemayehu (2019) although Ethiopia and Sudan, neighboring countries share several common values in their history, the border issue is still the source of cooperation and hostility two countries. The long stretch of boundary, which they share, appeared as a hot agenda in the Ethiopian and the Sudanese politics since the 1950s with the beginning of agricultural revolution in Metema and Setit-Humera. On the Sudanese part, following its

independence in 1956, the government developed aggressive policy towards the uninhabited sections of frontier territories. He added, both Ethiopia and the Sudan issued the speed possession of the frontier territories which had not yet been inhabited in the earlier years. When understanding between the two countries declined, the Sudan and Ethiopia started backing the Eritrean and the South Sudanese insurgents' one against the other. On the other hand, Ethiopia and the Sudan held diplomatic talks to settle frontier claims and boundary tensions since the early 1960s. In 1965, the two countries established the Joint Boundary Commission of Experts and the Joint Ministerial Committee, given the mandate to demarcate and fix the boundary. The boundary negotiation project, however, faced an intricate political crisis and divergent views.

As Sadik (2021) stated, the current border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan traces back to the unfair and cruel deal of partitioning Africa during the Berlin conference. Even though both countries shares the same cultural roots, the divide and rule system by colonial powers installed time bombs between the two countries as it did elsewhere in Africa. In order to understand the recent conflict between Ethiopia and Sudan, we should trace back to the border delimitation and demarcation process of the colonial periods. Though Ethiopia is an independent nation, it has been subject to various colonial agreements to ensure its survival. The Ethiopia-Sudan border was not studied very well during the delimitation process. Starting from emperor Yohannes IV (ruled from 1837-1889) of Ethiopia, negotiations and talks about the border have been started. However, the treaty signed by emperor Minilik II (ruled from 1889-1913) in 1902 with Britain led to the rough delimitation of the border. Long story short, the border is roughly delimited on a map without any significant marks on the real ground that disputed for more than a century.

In other words, the boundary between Ethiopia and the Sudan was delimited by the Treaties of 1902 and 1907, which was concluded between Emperor Menilik and Mr. John Harington representing the colonial power, the Great Britain. Major Gwynn, a British surveyor, representing the Government of Great Britain and in the absence of the representative of the Government Ethiopian, demarcated the boundary in 1903 unilaterally. It is worth noting that the 1902 treaty delimitation is different from the demarcation that took place in 1903. That is why the Ethiopian Government did not accept Major Gwynn's demarcation which was carried

out in the absence of its representative or authorization. Besides, it was neither fair nor consistent with the Treaty that delimited the boundary. However, after the necessary assessment of lack of consistency of the 1903 demarcation with the 1902 Treaty delimitation, both governments had given basic acceptance to Gwynn's line in the 1972 Exchange of Notes (Wuhib, 2022).

### **2.2.3.2. Essence of the 1972 Exchange of Notes**

According to Ambassador Ibrahim (2021), the Exchange of Notes was signed between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries on 18 July 1972. For the purpose of re-demarcation, it divided the boundary North and South of Mount Dagleish. The Exchange of Notes also rectifies the boundary line of Major Gwyn's demarcation South of Mount Dagleish to 'run across the crest points rather than at the baseline of the hills of Halawa, Umdoga, El Mutan and mount Jerok'. And they agreed to draw identification line to fix the limit of the de facto holdings of the two parties North of Mount Dagleish as well as to maintain the status quo until the final disposition of the case by an agreement. Prior to the re-demarcation of the Gwynn line North of Mount Dagleish, both sides agreed to arrive at an amicable solution to the problem arising from settlements and cultivations by establishing a special committee that will study and submit a final report recommending an amicable solution to the problems arising from settlements and cultivations.

### **2.2.3.3. Efforts to implement the 1972 Exchange of Notes and Joint Boundary**

#### **Mechanisms**

As Wuhib (2021) stated, a relatively serious attempt was made by the two Governments to re-demarcate the boundary in 2001 when the two countries agreed to establish Joint Boundary Commission. Therefore, the Ethiopia- Sudan Joint Boundary Commission convened its First Meeting in Khartoum from 27th March to 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2002 and established the Joint Technical Boundary Committee (JTBC) and the Joint Special Committee (JSC). The basic task of the Joint Boundary Commission is to re-demarcate the Ethiopia-Sudan boundary through its technical arm, the Joint Technical Boundary Committee that conducts the actual field works. The Joint Technical Boundary Committee on its part, under the overall authority and decisions of the Joint Boundary Commission, is charged with the responsibility of re-demarcating the

entire boundary between the Sudan and Ethiopia including preparation of joint budgetary provisions.

On the other hand, while negotiation was on going the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2005 to give temporary solution to a specific challenge until a final agreement is reached on an amicable solution. The MoU reasserted the status quo holdings of Ethiopian nationals as stipulated in the 1972 Exchange of Notes by agreeing not to displace them and that also prohibits new penetrations.

#### **2.2.3.4. Why the negotiation stalled and the re-demarcation task is not yet finalized?**

As Wendwosen cited Bahru (2002: 111-113), “The delimitation of the boundaries between Ethiopia and the surrounding colonies was dictated mainly by the colonial powers’ apprehension of the expansive potentialities of post-Adwa Ethiopia.” The first boundary that was delimited was between Ethiopia and the French Somaliland (Djibouti). It was delimited on 20 March 1897. In the same year, Ethiopia’s boundary with the British Somaliland was delimited. Then, in the treaty between Ethiopia and Italy on 10 July 1900, Eritrea was separated from Ethiopia. On 15 May 1902 Ethiopia signed a treaty with the British over its border with Sudan. This treaty was territorially advantageous to the British. This treaty gave Gambella to the British and guaranteed the British’s hydraulic interests at Lake Tana. In 1907, Ethiopia’s boundary with the British East Africa (Kenya) was delimited. In 1908, Ethiopia’s boundary with the Italian Somaliland was delimited (Bahru 2002: 113). According to Bahru (2002: 114), all the boundary delimitations which Ethiopia made with the colonialists who used to rule Ethiopia’s neighbors had the following problems:

*“Firstly, delimitation on the map was not always followed by demarcation on the ground. The long boundary with Sudan was only partially demarcated. The boundary with British Somaliland came to be demarcated only in the 1930s... Secondly, the absence of effective administration in the frontiers regions made the boundary delimitation little more than a cartographical exercise. The Southern and South Western boundaries were constantly violated by trans-frontier raids and incursions. In a sense, this was the frontier peoples’ way of nullifying boundary agreements which*

*were concluded without taking cognizance of their needs for seasonal movements of their flocks and for ethnic Unity.”*

Revising and narrowing their basic differences, Ethiopia and Sudan took some initiatives to settle the boundary problem in 1972. Aimed at settling the boundary problem once and for all, Ethiopian and Sudanese Foreign Ministers Dr. Minasie Haile and Dr. Mansour Khalid exchanged notes on 18 July 1972 confirming “basic acceptance” of the Gwynn line demarcated in 1903 and 1909 (IES n.d., p.2). Nevertheless, “basic acceptance” does not mean acknowledging and inheriting Gwynn's line as it was originally demarcated without rectification and modification of the boundary lines and the border marks. Rather it refers to accepting Gwynn's Line in principle, which both parties seek to use as a reference point to rectify the boundary line and identify irregularities that happened during Gwynn's demarcation.

Accordingly, both countries accepted a line that stretched from *RasKasar* to Abu Gamal (also called Talbot-Martini line), which was demarcated in 1903 and intensified in 1916 (MFA n.d., pp.1–2; MFA n.d., p.1). The process of negotiation and a re-demarcation plan north of Mount Dagleish border region, where thousands of Ethiopian farmers had invested heavily in the commercial agricultural sector, became very challenging and controversial. Regarding this area north of the Dagleish, “both governments have agreed to maintain and respect the status quo and to set up a special joint committee to study the issues related to the settlement and cultivation by the nationals of the either country in the territory of the other with a view to finding an amicable solution” (MFA n.d., p.2).

The boundary re-demarcation project was, however, aborted because the regime appeared in Ethiopia in September 1974, which caused a decline in the friendly relations between the two countries in subsequent years. As Ethiopia and Sudan had taken no meaningful initiatives to demarcate the boundary on the ground so far, the 1972 exchange of note is the agreement, and can be taken as an insightful way to demarcate the boundary. As the boundary problem is still unsettled and remains one of the major challenges in Ethio-Sudanese relations, recognizing the *de facto* holding can be an alternative solution to negotiating the boundary and maintaining the friendly relations between the two countries. Besides, negotiation based on the *de facto* holding

will not displace farmers from their possession of land and causes no major political repercussions in the border areas.

As Alemayehu (2021) stated, regime change frequently appeared in Ethiopia and Sudan and the shift in the power balance and periodic political tensions between the two countries has affected the boundary negotiation project so far. Among other factors, the boundary issue is still a source of cooperation and dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan. So far, neither Ethiopia nor Sudan has brought the border issue for mediation to the Organization of the African Unity/African Union (OAU/AU), even though escalations at the border areas continued. In fact, inviting the third party for negotiation may not be a best-case scenario for the boundary problem; instead, as both countries know the reality on the ground, they have opportunities to narrow the basic political differences on the boundary issue. Both countries have two possible options to demarcate the boundary. First, if Ethiopia and Sudan must go by the dictum “colonial boundary is sacrosanct”, then the solution is to demarcate based on the 1902 colonial map. Sudan has accepted the Gwynn line, but Ethiopia has not. The main reason is the reality on the ground has changed; most of the contested area is possessed by Ethiopian farmers. The colonial line would have major economic and political cost for Ethiopia and may not be acceptable. Second, both countries can demarcate the boundary maintaining the status quo line. Negotiation based on the status quo line could be an alternative solution to demarcate the boundary so that the farmers would not be impacted negatively or initiate joint development programs.

As per the 1972 Exchange, prior to the re-demarcation of the Gwynn line North of Mount Dagleish, the Special Committee should submit to the Joint Ministerial Commission a report containing an amicable solution to the problem arising from settlements and cultivations in this section of the boundary, a task that has not yet been finalized. Special Committee was established in 2002 as per the 1972 Exchange of Notes and so far conducted eight rounds of meetings to carry out the task of proposing an amicable solution but couldn't provide an amicable solution (WuhibMuluneh, 2021).

### **2.2.3.5. Recent military Incursions by the Sudan**

While the work of the Joint Special Committee was still in progress and when the Ethiopian National Defense Forces moved to the Tigray region on November 4, 2020 for law enforcement measures, the Sudanese Army took the advantage and entered deep inside Ethiopian territory and looted properties, burned camps, detained, attacked and killed Ethiopians. According to Wuhib (2021) in the meeting recently conducted after military incursion of Sudan, they were not only reluctant to de-escalate the tension, they have also disagreed to a Joint Fact Finding Mission that would investigate the forceful violation and to return back to the Status quo that would give an opportunity and to immediately resume the process of re-demarcation through the reactivation of the existing joint boundary mechanisms.

### **2.2.3.6. Sudan's View**

Sudan is claiming that its armed forces are operating within its territory. But it is the violation of the 1972 Exchange of Notes that recognizes effective control of the two parties. The Sudanese side attended eight rounds of meetings of the Special Committee to arrive at an amicable solution to the problem arising from settlements and cultivations.

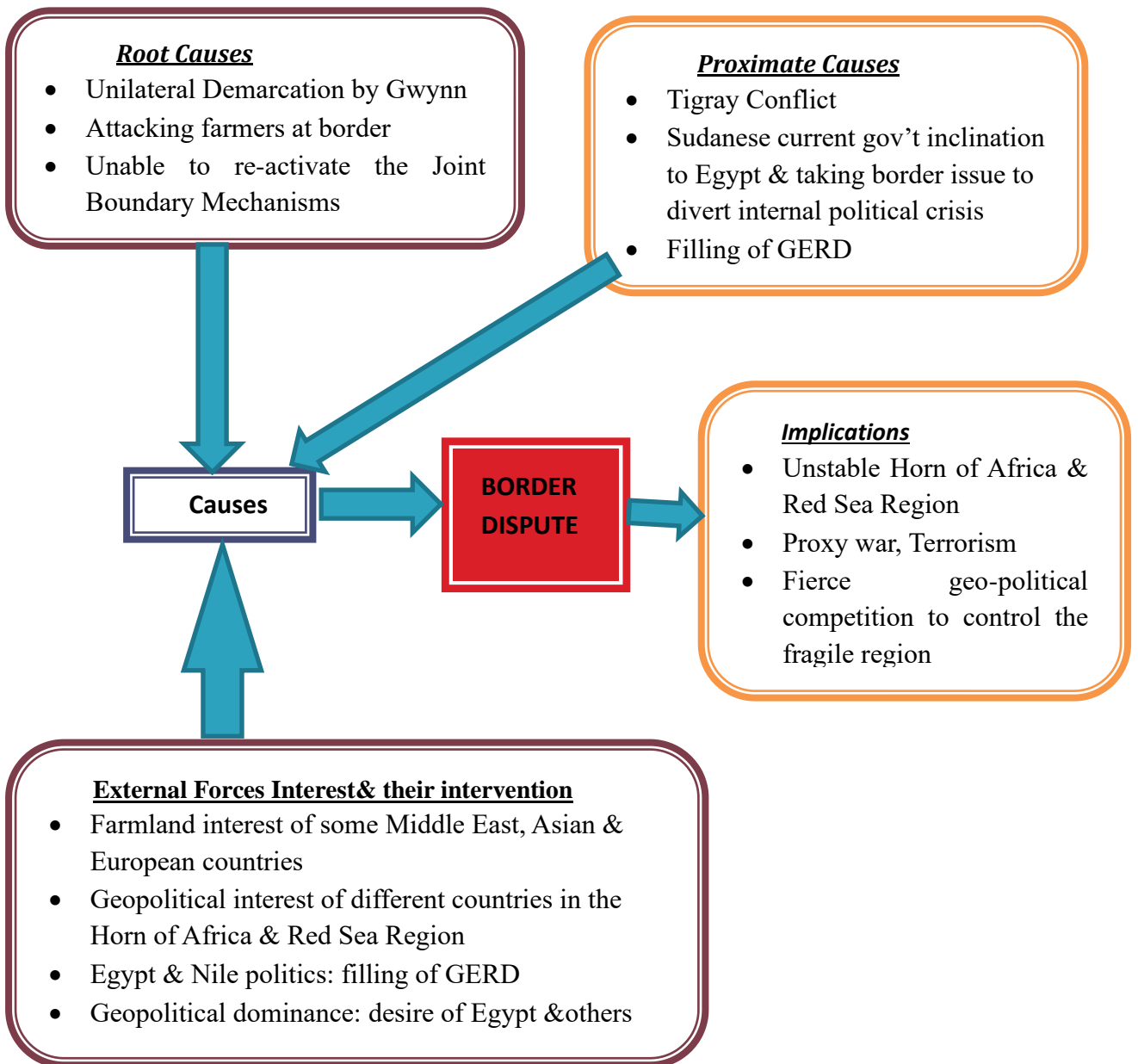
The Sudanese side is insisting to immediately re-demarcate the boundary before and without finalization of the work of the Joint Special Committee. For the Sudanese side, re-demarcation means reaffirmation, intensification or increasing the number of boundary pillars on the Gwynn line. For Sudan, the fate of Ethiopian farms and settlements are not a subject of discussion. They believe they are recovering their lands by force and for them what is remaining is erection of boundary pillars on Gwynn line (Ambassador Ibrahim, 2021).

## **2. 3. Conceptual Framework**

This conceptual framework is developed by the researcher by reviewing related concepts to the subject matter. The researcher has considered the border dispute as dependent variable resulted by different kinds of independent variables. Hence, independent variables including; external forces intervention, root causes, proximate causes as well as actors within Sudan and Ethiopia are resulted for the border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan. Whereas, the border dispute could have its own implication such as unstable Horn of Africa & Red Sea Region, proxy war,

terrorism and can cause to fierce geo-political competition to control the fragile region. In this case the border dispute can be considered as independent variable while the implication part is dependent variable influenced by border dispute. Based on this justification the conceptual framework has illustrated as follow:

**Figure 2.3.** Conceptualization of theoretical framework on the current Border Dispute between Ethiopia-Sudan:



**Source:** the researcher own computation

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter has contained the general methodology of the study in which the questions raised within the study were analyzed to meet its research objectives. It embraced the overall components of research design: research approach, data type, and sources, sampling design, sampling methods, the population, sampling frame, sampling size, data collecting instruments, data analysis strategy as well as Ethical consideration of the research.

Research methods are the philosophical bases on which research is based. Kothari (2004) stated that research methods may be understood as all those methods/techniques that are used for conduction of research. Research methods or techniques thus, refer to the methods the researchers use in performing research operations (Kumar and Krishna, 1993). They stated that the purpose of research rather than the paradigm that should determine the mode of enquiry.

### 3.1. The Study Area

The disputed border is found on the sector of the North of Mount Dagleish to Setit River, including the al-Fashaga area (situated between the Atbara and Tekeze River) in the North Western part of Ethiopia and in the Eastern part of Sudan, which is known for its very fertile agricultural land.



• Figure 3.1. Map showing disputed area between Ethiopia and Sudan

### **3.2. Research Approach**

The approach of this research is qualitative. The researcher was used this approach, because with analysis to look deeper into problems, this approach helped to discover new thoughts and individual views by deeply looking in to the problems and analyzing it. Since this method uses various kinds of unstructured or semi-structured practices for data collection such as group discussions, individual interviews, and participation of others; it helps in interaction among respondents, as they depend on the comments, perceptions, views, opinions and ideas of people. Also, qualitative research is based on purposive sampling, where a small sample size is selected with a view to get a thorough understanding of the target concept. It helps to engage the targeted groups who have better understanding on the matter. As a result, this approach enabled the researcher to explore and discover ideas used in the ongoing processes.

### **3.3. Research Design**

The researcher has used the case study design to look individuals' thoughts, institutions, and materials in order to analyze and interprets the entities various field of inquiry. So that, the researcher employed case study design focuses on individual thoughts and reflections on the role of external actors and related matters Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute.

### **3.4. Source of Data**

There are two kinds of sources for data collection and these are primary and secondary sources of data. In this study both Primary and secondary sources have been used in soliciting information for the study.

**Primary Sources:** -treaties, agreements, Aide Memoire, memorandum of understandings, and minutes are considered as primary sources.

**Secondary Sources:** - Books, journal articles, documents from workshops and conferences are utilized as secondary sources. Media outlets concerning current and timely issues such as press releases by government officials regarding the role of external forces on the current Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute.

### 3.5. Data collection Methods

The Researcher collected both primary and secondary data through interview, observation, and document analysis.

**Interview:** - Interviews provide in-depth information pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic" (Turner, 2010). Moreover, the interviewer overcome resistance of the respondents, samples was controlled more effectively and non-response generally remains very low and interviews are a frequent and important part of empirical research in political science due to the fact that quantification of ideas in the political studies believed will not create the understanding of the process (Tadele, 2017). Kothari (2004) added that this method helps the interviewer in order to gather more information in greater depth and provides greater flexibility in restructuring questions whenever necessary. For this study, the researcher has conducted an in-depth interview with Experts, diplomats, researchers, and other relevant stakeholders.

**Observation:** - as Turner (2010) stated usually interviews are coupled with other forms of data collection in order to provide the researcher with a well-rounded collection of information for analyses. Thus, to get well-rounded data, an observation was carryout as one source of data collection. The Researcher had/has an opportunity to engage in some events over Ethiopia-Sudan relation. Due to this, observation was one of the data collecting instruments.

**Document Analysis:** - the researcher has analyzed various governmental documents and used desktop research to examine the existing theories and concepts in relation to the subject matters.

### 3.6. Sampling Techniques

Sampling is the process or technique of selecting a suitable sample for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Jhon, 2014). There are two basic sampling techniques which are probability and non-probability sampling. Since the research approach is qualitative, the sample's representativeness is not an issue but the concern was to find units that would help the researcher learn about the issues at hand. For this reason, a non-probability sampling design specifically purposive sampling was applied in this research.

### **3.6.1. Sample population**

The populations that the researcher participated in the study are experts, diplomats, researchers, and some samples from border area communities. Beside this, academicians who have knowledge and experiences on the issue were participating in this study.

### **3.6.2. Method of Sampling**

The researcher selected the sample based on Purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and it occurs when “elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. The researcher believes that it could possible to obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgment, which would result in saving time and money”. This study requires specific information from a particular subset of population of interest; therefore, purposive sampling is the way to go. As the researcher is dealing with a small population of interest, purposive sampling helped to have a representative sample for this research.

Other justifications to use Purposive Sampling are; it is a cost-effective sample selection method. Here, the researcher depends on their knowledge to choose the best-fit participants for the systematic investigation. It also helps to save time. The other importance is it helped to make the most out of a small population of interest and arrive at valuable research outcomes. By and large, purposive sampling allows the researcher to gather qualitative responses, which leads to better insights and more precise research results, because, the researcher collects information from the best-fit participants, the results are relevant to the research context. Purposive sampling lowers the margin of error in the researcher data because the data sources are a close fit with the research context.

### **3.6.3. Sampling Procedure**

The researcher preferred to focus on certain individuals during data collection. So, subjects that of interviewed were chosen based on the criteria such as - Ambassador, Diplomat, Director General, Consultant and Experts (Academicians, Instructors). For document analysis, the researcher gave priorities for primary sources such as Government policy papers/documents,

treaties, agreements, communiqués, Aide Memoire, memorandum of understandings, and minutes. Secondary sources are also the area of analysis.

### **3.7. Sample Size**

Qualitative analyses typically require a smaller sample size than quantitative analyses. However, how small is this is? It is not clear. Moreover, there are no specific rules when determining appropriate sample size in qualitative research. So qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to obtain feedback for most or all perceptions and yet the size may best be determined by the time allotted, resources available, and study objectives (Patton, 1990). The researcher used 22 informants to collect sufficient information. Since there are no specific rules when determining appropriate sample size in qualitative research, the researcher has determined this number by taken in to account the availability of relevant individuals on the issue.

### **3.8. Methods of Data Analysis**

There are many ways of analyzing qualitative data (content analysis, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, etc.). The researcher used a hybrid method to follow a pragmatic approach than a pure system. The researcher is well aware of the fact that many qualitative methods require researchers to carefully coding of data and discern and documenting them consistently and reliably. Accordingly, Interview data were organized through thematic categorization to make it more understandable and easier for analysis.

### **3.9. Validity and Reliability**

**Validity:** the researcher was take care to establish trust and respect with the participants. Concerning the interview, the relationship between the researcher and subjects is kept; hence, a more cooperative atmosphere, which increases the validity of the subjects' responses. Such kind of affinity improves the level of trust between the researcher and subjects, which, in turn, increases the validity of answers received.

**Reliability:** reliability with regards to the consistency of the results is obtained from the instrument used in the research. This study kept reliability due to its valid strategies and

techniques appropriate to the research objectives. As much as possible it included detailed evidence of the research plan (i.e., details of the research site, method of sample selection, instruments used) and its implementation in the methodology section to assure the study's reliability.

### **3.10. Ethical consideration**

In this study, the ethical issue has been taken into consideration. The respondents were assured that the response they give would use with complete confidentiality of the research and the participants were informed about the purpose of the questioner by the researcher. The researcher tried to be open and honest while communicating with the respondent. In addition to this, in all circumstances, this researcher was considering the psychological well-being, health, values, and dignity of the respondents.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter is focused on results and discussions of the findings based on data attained from both primary and secondary sources of information. The data which were collected through interview, observation and document review was presented, interpreted and analyzed to answer the research questions. It focuses on value of data in relation to the four research questions consistent with the research objectives which are specified in chapter one of this study. Hence, this study was aimed at addressing the relevant issues related to the root and proximate causes of the ongoing border dispute between Ethiopia and the Sudan and major actors, external forces in aggravating the ongoing border dispute as well as the implication of the border conflict in the regional geopolitics rivalry and stability of the region.

In view of that, the findings of the analysis of data from the interviews, document review, and observation are structured around these major thematic areas. During the interview sessions, the questions were posed to the respondents in a spirit of establishing rapport with them, encouraging them to be more open. Primacy was also given to the natural ideal flow of the respondents rather than strictly adhere to the sequential flow of the research questions drawn.

#### 4.1.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

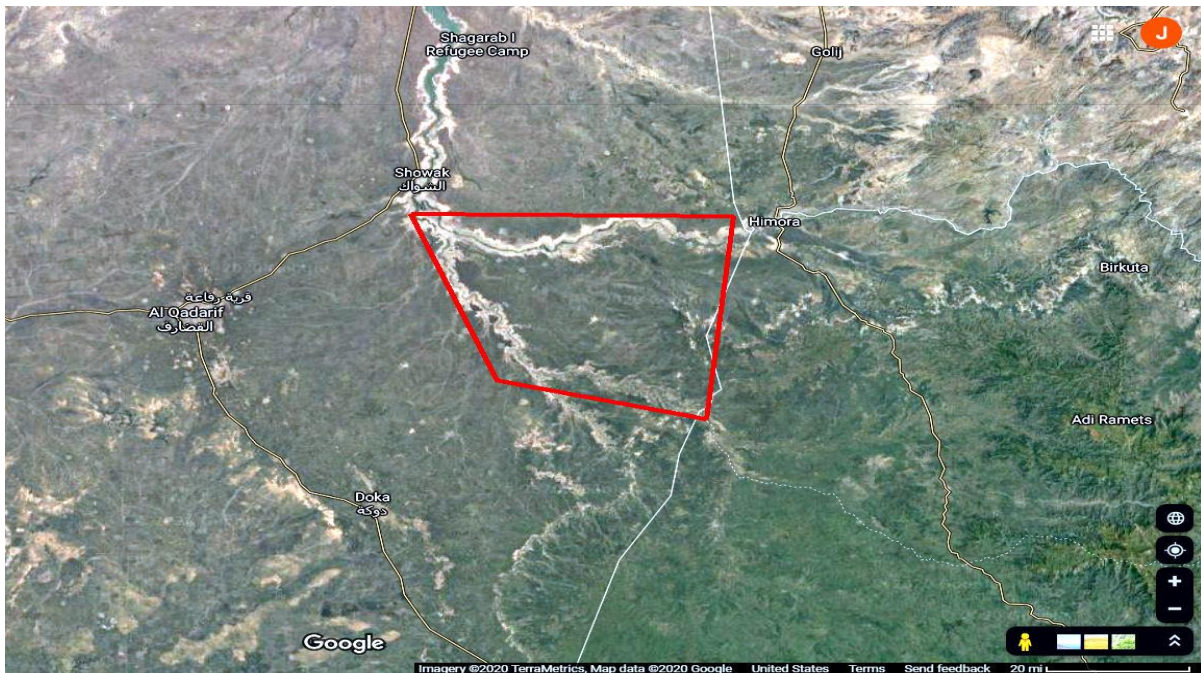
Variables		Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	19	86.4
	Female	3	13.6
	Total	22	100
Age	25-35	5	22.7
	36-50	11	50
	Above 50	6	27.3

Variables		Frequency	Percent
	Total	22	100
<b>Educational Background</b>	BA	2	9.1
	MA	16	72.7
	PhD and Above	4	18.2
	Total	22	100
<b>Working Organization/Institution</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of FDRE	14	63.7
	Member of Ethiopian side technical & legal Experts Committee of Ethiopia-Sudan Boundary	4	18.2
	Border Area Communities	3	13.6
	Other Business	1	4.5
	Total	22	100
	<b>Position</b>	Director General, Ambassador	5
Consultant		2	9.1
Diplomat & Expert		10	45.5
Other		5	22.7
Total		22	100

Table 4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (compiled by the Researcher)

## 4.2. Al Fashaqa: the gravity of border dispute

Figure 4.2. Map showing Al-Fashiqa Triangle



*Source: the Map is taken from Global Security Report, 2021*

Al Fashaqa is located on the Ethiopia–Sudan border, and is claimed by both Sudan and Ethiopia. Al-Fashaqa is a region bordering the common border between Sudan and Ethiopia, which borders the north by the Setit/Tekeze River and the east by the Atbara/Guang River. In terms of geographic coordinates; the area is lies between 36° N latitude and 14° E longitude, and it is obviously a fertile land surrounded by rivers. The border conflict between Sudan and Ethiopia started several decades ago over al-Fashaqa border area, where the northwest of the Ethiopian Amhara region meets in the state of el-Gadarif in Sudan. The name is a local word derived from the natural situation of the region. Fashaqah refers to lands that lie between natural (water) buffers, such as rivers, creeks, and sewers. It has an area of 251 km<sup>2</sup>, or about 600 square kilometers by other accounts (Global Security Report, 2021).

More specifically, the area is classified as upper Fashaqa and lower Fashaqa; upper Fashaqa is found between Setit /Tekeze River and Angereb River, whereas, the area which is found between Angereb River and Atbara/Guang River is called lower Fashaqa. The region stretches

over highly fertile agricultural land. Its land is flat clay, suitable for agriculture in its entirety. The area of Al-Fashqa is also distinguished by its agricultural fertility, by its dense production of sesame, corn, and short-staple cotton along with gum Arabic, vegetables and fruits on the banks of the three rivers Atbara, Setit, and Angereb. By these and other geo-strategically significances, Al-Fashiqa is become the center of attention not only between the two countries but also the area is attracting the attention of other countries from Arab Countries, some Western countries and other parts of the world.

According to the 2021 brief report of the Crisis Group; the beginnings of the al-Fashaga dispute go back to the 1902 Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty a colonial era document that sought to determine the frontier between Ethiopia and Sudan (then under British dominion). Ethiopian claims to al-Fashaga extend 40-50km west of a line delineating the border between Sudan and Ethiopia, defined only in general terms by the treaty and loosely demarcated by British. By contrast, according to Sudan's reading of the treaty's maps, al-Fashaga is part of its Gedaref state, one of Sudan's breadbaskets. In the decades that followed the 1902 treaty, demarcation and management remained bones of contention between Addis Ababa and Khartoum, primarily because of local jockeying for political power and control of the region's economic resources. Following a 1972 visit by Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie to Sudan as part of his mediation of Sudan's north-south conflict, the two countries sought to resolve the boundary dispute with an "exchange of notes" that would guide the demarcation. Ethiopia's 1974 revolution disrupted this effort, however, and it was another 33 years before the two neighbors arrived at a mutually acceptable arrangement for managing tensions over the area.

### **4.3. The causes of the ongoing border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan**

#### **4.3.1. Root causes**

The border dispute has long rooted reasons started from the colonial ambitions and practices of colonizers. The absences of clearly demarcated international borders have been a source of tension, contestation and competition in the border areas of various countries. The experience in Ethiopia- Sudan border depicts similar trends elsewhere. The lack of a clearly demarcated international border has been a source of conflict between the two countries. The border crisis attributed to the colonial legacy. The colonialists in the region installed divide and rule norm that divides and left the same peoples having similar language/culture, ethnic identity so on and

so forth in various countries. As a result Ethiopia faced strong challenge during the border negotiation, and in some aspect the colonizers were succeed in dividing similar culture, ways of life, clans/ethnic groups, that is among reasons for both countries border dispute.

One of my key informants elaborated the root causes as follows:

*Emperor Menelik II reached an agreement in 1902 on the delimitation of the border because of the pressure that comes from British. Emperor Menelik did not find the delimitation based on his circular dispatched in 1891, He was dissatisfied with the delimitation because historical and factual Ethiopian holdings were taken outside Ethiopia (Interview with KII<sup>2</sup>, 2022).*

This idea was also strengthened by other two key informants as they added; “the delimitation and demarcation work was not taking in to consideration realities on the ground including ethnic background, settlement arrangement of the population, cultural identity and natural features.” As one my key informant noted:

*“There was expertise gap during the delimitation and demarcation Emperor Menelik had with British representatives; at that time Ethiopia hadn’t well-educated and experienced experts to wisely conduct the negotiation while the colonizers were advanced in terms of experience and expertise.” (Interview with KII, 2022)*

Prof. Bahru Zewde(n.d<sup>3</sup>) in historical survey concluded that:

*“Emperor Menilek probably had no choice but to have the demarcation to a functionary of the other party underlines the woeful lack of expertise on the Ethiopian side. Nothing bring this out more dramatically than Menelik’s earnest letter of 1904 to the Russian tsar, a fellow Orthodox Christian, to come to his assistance by sending an expert to verify the boundary demarcation.”*

He added “this situation persisted throughout the first half of the twentieth century and came to be alleviated only in the second half.” The first instance of expert handling of the boundary on

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<sup>2</sup> Key Informant Interview

<sup>3</sup> No Date

the Ethiopian side was not evident until 1962. These conditions indicated that from Ethiopia's side; during the reign of Emperor Menilik, in which most of Ethiopia boundary treaties with colonizers was signed, there was no capable expert to handle negotiation, delimitation and demarcation work of international boundary issues.

Other key informant, explained in relation to the competition to the Nile water resource:

*The cause that history recalls those rival European colonialists particularly Great Britain and France were determined to include the source of the Blue Nile under their protectorates just to gain strategic leverage against their rival in the region. In this regard, all treaties signed between the colonial powers reveal their ambition of controlling the source of the Blue Nile. We can also recall the 1902 Ethiopia-Sudan boundary treaty that includes the issue of utilization of the waters of the Blue Nile.(Interview with KII, 2022).*

They assumed that the century old border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan has link with any type of development in the Blue Nile valley. To strengthen this argument Ferede, & Abebe, (2014) stated among other factors for the conflictual relations of Ethiopia with Sudan related with use of the Nile waters. In this regard, the agreement that Sudan signed with Egypt in 1959 that excluded Ethiopia from the use of the river is an example above worth mentioning. Ethiopia is the main source of the Nile, but it does not adequately utilize the river for hydro - electric power and irrigation like Sudan and Egypt.

Most of informants shared the root cause for border dispute as unilateral demarcation. One of the informant describe the problem as follow

*The root cause of the border dispute is the unilateral demarcation of the border by the British commissioner. The so-called unilateral demarcation was conflicting with the texts in the 1902 boundary treaty signed between Emperor Menelik II and British representative. Therefore, the unilateral demarcation made by the British side was never been accepted by the consecutive Ethiopian governments and the boundary issue between the two countries remain unresolved (interview with KII, 2022).*

To assure this argument, Leonardi and Santschi (2016) described that lack of a clearly demarcated international border between Ethiopia and Sudan has been a source of cross border

tension and conflict. The existing contested border was drawn up when Sudan was under British rule in the 1900s without the participation of Ethiopian representatives. In line with this, Teshome (2009) and Johnson (2010) state that Charles Gwynn, a British royal engineer single-handedly surveyed and demarcated the Ethiopia-Sudan border without the participation of the Ethiopian government. Up to present, the border is the cause of periodic tension between Sudan and Ethiopia borderland people.

The researcher of this study supports all the above-mentioned root causes, and added that the failure to take consideration the realities on the ground during delimitation and demarcation procedures as root causes for the two countries border dispute. This further reflected on the settlement and cultivation problems of the either nations around the disputed area.

Unlike others one of the key informants mentioned, “Agriculture and settlement (Ethiopian farmers and investors) are the root causes for the conflict. Sudanese are claiming illegal farming.” But in the view of the researcher, this argument is in contradiction the statements found in the 1972 Exchange of Notes were the two sides agreed; to set up “a special committee” that “shall study the problem resulting from settlements and cultivation by nationals of either nation in the territory of the other with a view to finding an amicable solution”. On the basis of that Ethiopia has agreed to work on the re- demarcation taking the Gwynn line as a basis and Sudan agreed to the re-demarcation as stipulated in the provisions of the Exchange of Notes, but still there is no amicable solution for re-demarcation work. Therefore, this indicate the problem results from settlements and cultivation is referred to nationals of either nation in the territory of the other not only Ethiopians.

#### **4.3.2. Proximate causes**

Proximate causes are events that are closest to, or immediately responsible for causing the ongoing Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute. Though the border dispute has been known issue since long time ago due to the root causes and historical factors, it is important to identify the proximate causes responsible for the current border dispute between the two countries. One of the key informants explained the proximate cause of the border dispute:

*The change of government in Sudan is believed to be the source of the current border dispute. The military junta that has come to power overthrowing president Al-Bashir*

*through coup is actively engaging to escalate the border dispute. The military leaders want to divert the Sudanese and the international community from the challenges facing as a result of its unconstitutional action. After the failure of Al Bashir regime in Sudan the military force came to power which has Egyptians orientation, even the background of their top general Al-Burhan showed that he studied and trained in Cairo. So, suspecting the two countries relation in regarding to the historical hostility of Egypt towards Ethiopia adding the issue of GERD (their common issue) would not be wrong. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, has been build his power aiming to dominate the transition government. He made visits to the Egypt, UAE and Saudi Arabia and got support to strengthen Sudanese Security forces, Rapid Support forces including Janjaweed militias which are directly led by himself and his deputy. Hence, Egyptians leader Al Sisi came to power in the same track helping the Sudan's military junta and imposing their agenda to give homework to pressurize Ethiopia is expected. Therefore, the regime change in Sudan is an immediate cause for the present boundary dispute (Interview with KII, 2022).*

As Crisis Group Africa Briefing described in 2021; Sudan's military leaders have used the row to burnish their nationalist credentials: they want Ethiopia not only to acknowledge Sudan's sovereignty over the area but also to accept immediate border demarcation and concurrent settlement of all major disputes between Addis Ababa and Khartoum, including over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). As NigusAdem in 2021 stated, the current confrontation between Addis Ababa and Khartoum is different from the past ones as this confrontation follows the Ethiopia-Egypt confrontation over the Nile River, which shifted from veiled animosity to overt hostility following the official beginning of the construction of the GERD over the Blue Nile in 2011.

Most of my key informants share this line of argument. I just quoted one my key informant view as follow:

*The proximate cause of current border dispute is related to the invasion of Sudanese National Army in early November 2020 following the redeployment of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces in the first week of November 2020 for law enforcement measures in the Tigray region. In doing so, Sudan has violated the bilateral boundary*

*agreements, which stipulate non-displacement of nationals of either nation from their farms jointly registered by the two Governments, the status quo of which shall be maintained until the disposition of the case by an agreement. There are different joint mechanisms that were formed to deal with the border but Sudan's invasion has jeopardized the works that has been done through these mechanisms (Interview with KII, 2022).*

To assure this statement; in his parliamentary appearance to give performance report of the Ministry, Demeke Mekonnen, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister, on May 2022 told lawmakers that “When we changed our face to the northern part of Ethiopia in relation to the war, Sudan, violating the *status quo* we respected and agreed to abide by until a sustainable solution is set, invaded Ethiopia.” He added, “This has largely enraged the people of Ethiopia, damaged the local residents, displaced many, damaged wealth and properties and is an invasion that resulted in a lot of pressures. Not only invading that particular area, various infrastructures have been ongoing to change the geography and demography. This is not acceptable and we have notified them of the matter”. The 2021 Crisis Group Report also confirmed this statement by mention the intention of Current Sudanese Military-led government “Khartoum perceives the Tigray conflict as an opportunity to pursue economic and strategic gains, including a favorable GERD agreement”.

Other key informant also elaborated the proximate cause:

*The third parties interest in addition to Egypt (which is usually trying to pressurize Ethiopia by any means to compromise the GERD negotiation) and the presence of highly Egypt affiliated government in the Sudan; Arab countries demand for Agricultural land acquisition or expansion, geopolitical interest of different countries in the region and super power competitions are proximate causes for the current boundary standoff between Ethiopia and Sudan. The current border conflict has both direct and indirect relations with the construction of GERD and current Tigray conflict: in which by creating pressure on the Ethiopian government, Sudan is trying to have an advantage on the border negotiation as well as on the dam. The very close relationship with the TPLF is also meant to create similar kind of pressure on the Ethiopian government. This is the same kind of game the two countries played when*

*Sudan was helping the Eritrean movement and Ethiopia was helping SPLA. It is clearly noted that Sudan has established a pattern of attacking Ethiopia whenever it feels that Ethiopia is preoccupied with its internal matters (Interview with KII, 2022)..*

These descriptions and explanations from informants exhibited that the current Ethiopia-Sudan boundary dispute is related with the construction of GERD and the conflicts happen in Tigray region in relation to law enforcement action. These factors are aggravating the border conflict by influencing the situation directly or indirectly.

#### **4.4. Major actors in Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute**

In the two countries border dispute, there are internal and external actors, state and non-state actors that are intensifying the dispute directly or indirectly. Ethiopia and Sudan as well as elements found within these countries are directly involved in the conflict. Whereas, external actors are countries or institutions from other parts of the world usually contributed to the dispute indirectly to achieve their national interest in the region. They may use propaganda, material support, diplomatic support and other means to the country they sided.

The response of the next key informants clearly illuminates the major actors on the border dispute between the two countries:

*The actors can be classified as external and internal actors involved in the Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute. Internal actors include Sudan and Ethiopia as well as some elements within these countries whereas there are external actor's including; Egypt, some Arab countries, and others that have geopolitical interests or geopolitical rivalry in the Horn of African region. Internal actors are directly the owner of the agenda meanwhile external actors are countries which fuels the issues indirectly to advance their respective national interest (Interview with KII, 2022).*

While another key informant explained the actors as state and non-state actors that are directly or indirectly involving in the Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute cases, “the state actors consist of the government of the two countries and other countries those who have historical attachment with the two countries. The non-State actors are inhabitants of Ethiopia and Sudan nationals residing in the disputed border area”.

Most of the key informants also agree that the border dispute has been propelled by the interest of various external actors. One of the key informant well explained the list of actors which are directly and indirectly have been involving in the conflict as follow

*Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt, some of West and Arab world as the major actors on the border conflict. In the case of the Western countries, particularly, Britain and the United States are among the major actors. The border communities, the border regional governments, the Sudan military wing particularly the governors of Gedarif and some of the Eastern province of Sudan, the Amhara regional government; the farmers in Gondar region, farmers in Sudan are the major players of the two countries border dispute. These players are many and each has its own interest to keep (Interview with KII, 2022).*

To support the fore-mentioned response, Joe and Guido (2021) stated as the Horn of Africa is a complex site of geopolitical and geostrategic importance linked key aspects of geography and history, and since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the regions waters provide a swift naval connection between the Euro-Mediterranean region, the Middle East, Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean. The economic, political and security considerations attract a large number of external players to actively engage in the Horn of Africa. These include countries with a longstanding historical presence in the region, such as United Arab Emirates, Qatar, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Turkey, US, Japan, and China (International Crisis Group, 2021). The involvement of these actors and their vested interests, alliances and agendas, underscore the pivotal role of geopolitics in shaping the security and economic trajectory of the region.

NSDS HUB (2019) also stated that those regional powers are also involved, either in collaboration with global powers or separately, to maintain their influence. Also, as the Horn of Africa is a network hub for religion-inspired violent extremist groups from the Middle East and Africa, it is of primary security interest for all international actors, including NATO, to closely monitor the global trade routes and regional security. A new security competition is underway in the Horn of Africa involving the Gulf States, Turkey, and Iran, as well as China, Russia and the United States.

While another key informant also generalized his explanation:

*The major actors in the two countries border dispute are governments and political elites of the two-country driven by political interest in their respective countries with vested political and global powers with economic, security and geostrategic interest in the region. There are different issue linkage situations, like linking the border issue and GERD issue. In these cases the above mentioned actors could work behind the curtain to achieve their objective (Interview with KII, 2022).*

#### **4.5. The role of external forces in aggravating the current Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute**

Every external force comes with its own agenda; this in turn complicates the ongoing border dispute. They might want to get involved as mediators or facilitators and burden the countries with their own interest. Their role could also depend on the internal situations of the countries and the leverage the two countries have in the region. The geographical situation of the Horn of Africa and precisely the cases of Ethiopia and Sudan could help in understanding the current political debate regarding the tensions between these two countries and how the international community plays a role. Since November/2020 the Sudanese military capture of Ethiopian territory by force, the hostilities stayed till now. One important question regards the diplomatic relations between both states and also with the international community. In other words, the Horn of Africa, through the tensions between Ethiopia and Sudan, is facing a situation where, there are different alliances (supporting on one side and opposing on the other). As a matter of fact, solving the border conflict wisely will be important for the two countries and the horn. The importance of having a stable region was the main raison as conflicts, which often are internal can quickly spread throughout a whole region especially on the African continent (Goulding, 1999).

One of my key informants' stated the role of external forces in aggravating the current Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute as follows:

*The current Military government in Sudan is heavily influenced by Egypt and that would contribute negatively in the effort of resolving the border dispute through peaceful means. Egypt has always had interest on the Nile basin, and the border area is within this domain. Therefore, Egypt would be closely watching the outcome of the*

*negotiation and the relationship between Ethiopia and Sudan and could strive to take any minor gaps and misunderstandings ostensibly to deflect Ethiopia's focus from GERD project progressive nature. Other governments from the West may be indirectly interested in the matter, but this is just to see how Ethiopia will come out of this crisis, or to see a weakened Ethiopia (Interview with KII, 2022).*

To strengthen this idea Al-Monitor in 2021 stated, Ethiopia claims third parties are fueling the border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan. This is a clear allusion to Egypt, with which Sudan has signed a military cooperation agreement that is said to include a common defense pact which was signed in 1950. Egypt's high officials reported that Egypt was waiting for Sudan's request for support and assistance in its legal position to regain and liberate its lands. Egypt also showed it's committed to the Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation, under the umbrella of the Arab League, which stipulates in Article 2.

While other key informant explained the role and the means of external forces:

*It is a way to destabilize Ethiopia, to obstruct the Renaissance Dam, to weaken Ethiopia, to plunge it into war, to impose sanctions. Egypt; for example, forming military alliances, military demonstrations, arming, training and mentoring, counseling to the Sudanese side. Western Countries are silent when Ethiopia face challenges but when Ethiopia does something right they will be quick to condemn it. Arab countries say let's negotiate, but their ideas are not good for Ethiopia. They are saying Nile water is the national security of the Arab world; they are supporting Sudan and Egypt and isolating Ethiopia(Interview with KII, 2022).*

Based on the researcher's observation, external forces have a significant role in aggravating the dispute; through influencing the Sudanese Current Transitional government by promising and supporting the government either materially, financially, diplomatically, morally or other means. For example, they may advice the government as this time is appropriate time to regain land by conquering Ethiopia which is currently found under the pressure of different issues exerted from both internal and external elements. They also, particularly, Egypt have played its role by advocating that as she is with Sudan with any difficulties they face in relation to Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute in addition to false narration/propaganda through their media's. Others also may use the border dispute top of their agenda through different mechanisms to

support the one side and in the other way to pressurize the other side, to advance their national interest in the region either by influencing the government entity or if possible to achieve regime change which enable them to do what they want whenever they need.

In relation to the fore-mentioned statement by the researcher, although Ethiopia and Sudan have benefitted from investment and loans from Gulf States, and as Ethiopia's long, tense relations with Eritrea have improved with assistance from Saudi and Emirati mediation, Gulf engagement has not been motivated by altruism, but is aimed at gaining political and military advantage and undermining competitors in the Middle East. Moreover, Saudi, Emirati, and Egyptian support for Sudan's generals during the country's recent uprising was geared towards halting the democratic tide, weakening the Muslim Brotherhood, and backing conservative authoritarian governments. Sudanese and Ethiopians are aware of the real interests of these countries, but their own countries are politically instable and face major economic crises, so despite a long history of defending their national sovereignty, it is very difficult for them to reject the advances of their powerful neighbors (Jhon, 2020).

One of my key informants also added:

*The actors, especially Egypt's interest is igniting war between Ethiopia and Sudan. Egypt, Arab Countries and Westerns are supporting Sudan. While China, Russia and India are supporting Ethiopia. This situation will create further escalation of the conflict due to the conflicting interest of the parties supporting Sudan in one side, Ethiopia in the other side (Interview with KII, 2022).*

#### **4.6. The Implications of the Ethiopia-Sudan border conflict in the Regional Geopolitics Rivalry and Stability of the region**

The Horn is a very unstable area. Any conflict in this area affects many governments in the region including Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, South Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya and perhaps Uganda. It also may have implications on regional organizations such as IGAD and AU. My key informant explained the implication of border conflict of Ethiopia and Sudan as follows:

*The horn of Africa is a volatile region; anything that affects the two states will impact the region. They accuse each other of supporting proxies to destabilize rivals, heightening fears of a wider conflict. And the allies of the countries could come to the*

*rescue to further complicate the dispute which will in turn impact the stability of the region. The region could become a fertile bed for the terrorism and extremism (Interview with KII, 2022).*

While another key informant further elaborates the implication:

*The border dispute will be instrumental in facilitating regional geopolitical rivalry. Because, among external forces, some may be in support of the Sudanese side where as others may be in the support of Ethiopia publicly or not. This is mainly due to the ideological differences of those external forces and at the same time the government they wishing to see in support of their ideology and policy matters to maintain their interest in the region. Therefore, these unhealthy competition among external forces in align with the disputed parties will lead the region to instability and insecurity (Interview with KII, 2022).*

On the other hand, some of my key informants also explained the implication in relation to the border conflict and the GERD agenda. One of them stated his view as follows

*Border conflict is not alone; there is also Renaissance Dam issue to be raised when we talk about Geopolitics. If Ethiopia successfully completes the Renaissance Dam, it will have an impact on the Horn of Africa. It will not perceive from the positive angle, particularly, by Egypt and the West. Therefore, to disrupt the Renaissance Dam, they are trying all they can to exacerbating the border conflict, plunging Ethiopia into war, and weakening its capacity. For example, the former US President Donald Trump were interested to divert water from Egypt to Israel for the purpose of handling Arab countries through Israel. In addition, Ethiopia is a big country which plays a big role to keep the balance of the geopolitics. Imagine Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia even Eritrea are not stable, with this if Ethiopia is not stable internally and pressurized by the border issue, it will be catastrophic for the wider region of Horn of Africa (Interview with KII, 2022).*

Most of the informants underlined their concern regarding the implication of great powers interest on the region. One of them noted this concern as follows

*Since the beginning of the current military incursion to the sovereign territory of Ethiopia; the issue has become one of the major attentions of great powers in the region. Some of the great powers are already assigned their special envoys in the Horn of Africa. The special envoys are assigned to deal the border dispute case with among other issues. The others are engaging themselves arrange proxy talk between experts from Ethiopia and Sudan. Territorial disputes are a major cause of wars and war-related unrests like terrorism. War has devastated socio-economic and political impact on the parties in particular and the region in general. Territorial disputes sometimes further aggravate disputes over natural resources such as rivers, fertile farmland, mineral or petroleum resources that would be threat the peace and security of the region. Concerning the dynamic of geopolitics, the conflict has a wider cause and impact (Interview with KII, 2022).*

To strengthen this statement, the region of the Horn of Africa, has always been prone to invasions, colonization but also interests by Great Powers. Accordingly, during the Cold War, the Horn was one of the centerpieces of interests by both the Soviet Union and the US, both battling to keep their hands on the region as “source of concern for decades” (Woodward 2006). In addition, it is important to keep in mind how, during the Cold War; the Horn of Africa was the base for military defense force of both Great Powers. Moreover, the European Parliament concerning the Horn of Africa stated in April 1984 that “noting the strategic importance of the Horn of Africa for both Western countries and the Eastern bloc, being adjacent to the Arabian Peninsula” (Firebrace& Holland, 1984).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. Conclusion

As the researcher stated in the first chapter, this paper set out to investigate external interventions on the current Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute.

The findings of this study have shown that the root causes of the ongoing border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan is lack of a clearly demarcated international border between the two countries. The border demarcation problem attributed to the colonialists divide and rule norm that divides and left the same peoples having similar language/culture, ethnic identity so on and so forth in various countries either in the delimitation or the demarcation works. The researcher has analyzed among other root factors for the conflictual relations of Ethiopia with Sudan related to the use of the Nile waters, the unilateral demarcation of the boundary by Charles Gwynn as well as Emperor Menelik II pressures from British and other colonialists during the process of 1902 agreement on the delimitation of the border are the cause for the border dispute. In addition, the expertise gap Ethiopia had during Emperor Menelik reign in his delimitation procedures with British representatives and issues arise from the settlement and cultivation problems of the either nations around the disputed area are root causes to Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute.

The thesis has identified and discussed the proximate cause of the border dispute as ; the change of government in Sudan/ the coming of military junta to power which is highly manipulated by Egyptians government, the Tigray conflict which is overexploited by Sudan and Egyptian to pursue their hydro-politics and strategic gains, including securing a favorable GERD agreement. The geopolitical rivalry by super ( America, EU , China and Russia) and regional power( Arab & Gulf states , Egypt, Turkey and Iran ) in the Horn of Africa also prompted Sudan to invade and occupy the disputed territory in and around the boundary. The GERD and the conflicts in Tigray region are, however, among the major proximate factors that are aggravating the border conflict between two countries.

This study identified that major actors behind the border dispute are; external actor's that have either geopolitical interests or geopolitical rivalry in the Horn of Africa region. The researcher has analyzed that economic, political and security considerations in the Horn of Africa have attracted a large number of external players to the region. These include countries with a longstanding historical presence in the region, such as Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Turkey, US, Japan, Iran, Russia and China. The involvement of all these actors and their vested interests, alliances and agendas, underscore the pivotal role of geopolitics in shaping the security and economic trajectory of the region.

The researcher has analyzed the role of external forces in aggravating the current Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute that every external force comes with its own agenda; this in turn complicates the ongoing border dispute. Some of them are getting involved in disguise as mediators or facilitators to promote their own interest. The current Military government in Sudan is heavily influenced by Egypt and that would contribute negatively the effort of resolving the border dispute through peaceful means, because, Egypt could strive to take any minor gaps and misunderstandings ostensibly to deflect Ethiopia's focus from GERD project progressive nature. The current military alliance formed between Egypt Sudanese Military Junta and the falsified narration/propaganda through their media's is an evidence for this. Arab countries are perusing collective interest as Nile water is the national security of the Arab world; they are supporting Sudan and Egypt and isolating Ethiopia which could further complicate the issue.

This study also further analyzed that external forces have a significant role in aggravating the dispute; through influencing the Sudanese Transitional government by promising and supporting the government either materially, financially, diplomatically, morally or other means. Others also may use the border dispute to lodge their agenda through different mechanisms to support the one side and in the other way to pressurize the other side, to advance their national interest in the region either by influencing the government entity or if possible to achieve regime change which enable them to do what they want whenever they need. This situation could cause further escalation of the conflict due to the conflicting interest of the parties supporting Sudan in one side, Ethiopia in the other side.

Finally, the study assessed the implications of the Ethiopia-Sudan border conflict in the regional geopolitics rivalry and stability of the region; the Horn of Africa has characterized by security complex. Any conflict in the region affects all governments including Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, South Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya and perhaps Uganda in one or another way; and may have implications on regional organizations such as IGAD and AU. Anything that affects the two states will definitely impact the region. They accuse each other of supporting proxies to destabilize rivals, heightening fears of a wider conflict. And the allies of the countries could come to the rescue to further complicate the dispute which will in turn impact the stability of the region. The region could become a fertile bed for proxy war, terrorism and in the worst case extremism. These unhealthy competitions and interventions by external forces in align with the disputed parties will lead the region to unprecedented level of instability and insecurity.

## **5.2. Recommendations**

International boundaries require discussion and negotiation. Resolving the border issue by force will not solve the problem in the long run. The country which looks weak today could rise tomorrow. The border issue is has no secret, activities in relation to the boundary jointly conducted by both sides documented and available. It will be better if the two countries joint committees sit together and review the documents and come up with the amicable solution. This will bring a long lasting solution for the border conflict. The intervention of the third party in the conflict further complicate the dispute since all third parties pursue their own interest and may not be interested to address the root cause of the problems. Based on the findings I recommend the following solution to address the border dispute:

### **i. Immediate Solution**

Sudan should withdraw from the occupied territory and both countries must seek a solution to address the problem through dialogue and negotiation. This effort should be conducted intensively by diplomatic means (using bilateral, multilateral and public diplomacy) until Sudan show good faith to evacuate from the disputed territory and respect the status quo for a fruitful discussion to be made on the dispute. Unless Sudan respects the status quo any attempt to solve the dispute could not be successful.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia should continuously make awareness for the international community regarding the violation of the 1972 Exchange of Notes agreement by Sudan which said “the status quo must be respected until the final disposition of the problem in relation to settlement and cultivation through amicable solution”. In this connection, the Ministry also should make awareness about the provocative action of the Military Government of Sudan.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should collect and organizing all necessary documents and evidences which could be helpful to the Ethiopian side negotiating team for possible negotiation. The Ministry should strengthen the Ethiopian side Joint Boundary Mechanisms including; Joint Boundary Commission, Joint Technical Boundary Committee and Joint Special Committee in consultation of the concerned stakeholders at national and regional levels.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs should conduct consultation with stakeholders from federal security institutions, communication affairs, media, experts, bordering regional governments and other concerned bodies to have a well-organized communication strategy and a common position on the matter. The current political environment in Ethiopia should be settled and to do so effort should be undertaken day and night.

## **ii. Taking the case to AU and global institutions**

If Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute continue to escalate, the situation can affect other neighboring countries and the region as a whole. Further, with the conflicting interest of external force in the region, both countries border conflict can be internationalized and becoming the security threat to region in particular, to the international community in general. Therefore, Ethiopian government should continuously appeal to the United Nations, Africa Union, and IGAD about the aggression by Sudan Military government on the sovereignty of Ethiopia and will expose its possible consequence to the peace and security of the region and the international community. This can be done either by taking the opportunity when the multilateral forms conducted or by sending letters, talking points and position papers through diplomatic channels (Ethiopian Missions) to the above-mentioned institutions in order to convince Sudan to come to the negotiation table by respecting the status quo.

### **iii. Technical and Political Solutions (for long term)**

In order to make the Ethiopia-Sudan border area slightly conflict free and the source of cooperation, the border dispute needs permanent solution. To do so, both technical and political activities should be conducted by using the existed boundary mechanisms ranging from high level political meeting to the joint special committee. Hence, based on the findings I recommend the following long term solution to address the border dispute from technical and political perspectives:

First there should be a political will from both countries at the highest level particularly from the Sudanese side. Once the political commitment is guaranteed the joint experts can suggest amicable solution for the sustainable resolutions of the long overdue border dispute between the two countries.

Second international community must be convinced to encourage the government of the Sudan to abide by 1972 Exchange of Notes and the joint mechanisms established by the provisions of the Exchange of Notes.

Third the most important thing is that both countries should strive to solve the border dispute sustainably through existing bilateral mechanisms and negotiation. To do so, they have to re-activate boundary mechanisms established according to the 1972 Exchange of Notes including; JBC, JTBC, JSC and enabling them to finalize the remaining task of finding an amicable solution.

Fourth the border area community particularly, Amhara Regional Government and Gedarif state should have play a significant role. From the Ethiopian side, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should conduct consultation with border area communities and governors to acquire helpful input and to create the sense of trust among the community towards the government efforts in the process of solving the dispute.

Fifth maintaining internal strength and unity is indispensable quality, because if all diplomatic efforts fail, military measure to protect the sovereignty of Ethiopia will not ignored to be a final solution, as they did while Ethiopia was under pressure due to its internal unrest.

**iv. From Socio-economic Perspective (long term)**

Both countries should strengthen their economic interaction and cooperation better than before which will ease their tension on boundary matters. They should accelerate; trade exchange, investment, infrastructural connectivity, joint border development programs. They should strengthen people to people relations through the means of public diplomacy.

**v. From public diplomacy point of view (long term)**

In modern era diplomacy, public perception and pressure have the significant power to modify or change the policy of the government. The government of Ethiopia should practice public diplomacy better than ever to influence the government of Sudan through its public by implementing the appropriate public diplomacy strategy. Therefore, I recommend the following public diplomacy strategy:

The government should find a way and create a channel that enable directly communicate with Sudanese key public figures, intellectuals, youth leaders and even politician. For these purpose the government should use, scientific engagement, student exchange, cultural exchange and other public diplomacy instruments. The government of Ethiopia should use the Ethiopian communities reside in Sudan to play key public diplomacy role. In Sudan there are greater numbers of Ethiopian communities, therefore by coordinating and mobilizing these Diasporas through Ethiopian Missions found in Khartoum and Gedarif state, the government can reach the Sudanese public.

Besides these, the government also can utilize sport activities, exhibitions and other symposiums which may enable to cement ties between the peoples of the two countries. In addition, these events should also be implemented along the border area communities of Ethiopian and Sudan.

Sudan is not independent from influences, particularly from external interventions. Therefore, to make the given recommendations feasible, reaching on the mass public through public diplomacy and digital diplomacy by using Arabic language is an instrumental. Because it will enable to address effectively the realities of external interventions on the government of Sudan to the public, that in turn could help to pressurize the government of Sudan to change its

foreign policy directions. Hence, reaching the Sudanese public through different mechanisms can make the provided recommendation feasible.

**vi. Further studies needed**

Ethiopia needs to have national research institutes which generate alternative negotiation strategies. In this connection future study better to be focused on developing possible negotiation strategy, this could be supportive for the Ethiopian side negotiating team. Also, we need to have technical and legal academic specializations in relation to international boundaries.

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## **Appendix I**

### **Interview open ended questions**

My name is Beyene Ejigu, a postgraduate student at Addis Ababa University in the College of Development Studies. I am conducting my MA Research entitled: **“EXTERNAL INTERVENTION IN THE CURRENT ETHIOPIA-SUDAN BORDER DISPUTE.”** The main objective of the study is to assess the role of external forces on the current Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute. Therefore, I am collecting data and relevant information that assist me to successfully undertake my study. Therefore, your expertise knowledge and relevant information that you would like to share is highly appreciated and valuable for the success of the study. I would like to assure you that confidentiality of any information collected will be respected. The information will be used only for this research purposes.

#### **I thank you for your time and cooperation!**

1. How do you explain the bilateral (political, economic, security and social) relation between Ethiopia and Sudan under successive regimes?
2. Could you please describe the historical background of the border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan?
3. Is there any accepted legal regime that governs the borders between Ethiopia and Sudan? If yes, what are they?
4. Was the boundary between Ethiopia and Sudan demarcated? If yes is it recognized by the two parties? Please elaborate?
5. What are the roots and proximate causes of the current border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan?
6. Is the ongoing border dispute has correlation with the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam construction and the current Tigray conflict? How?
7. Who are the major actors in the two countries border dispute?
8. How do you explain the role of external forces in aggravating the ongoing border dispute?
9. What is the implication of the border conflict in the regional geopolitical rivalry and stability of the region?
10. How the dispute between the two countries will be solved? What is your recommendation?

**Thank You in Advance!!!**