



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

**IMPLICATIONS OF THE WAR BETWEEN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
AND TPLF ON ETHIO-U.S. RELATIONS SINCE 2020**

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List of Abbreviations

ACELD	Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset
AGOA	African Growth Opportunity Act
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
DDTC	Directorate of Defense Trade Control
DOD	Department of Defense
EC	European Commission
EDF	Eritrean Defence Force
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defence Forces
EPRDF	Ethiopian people’s Revolutionary Democratic Front
EU	European Union
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
ICG	International Crisis Group
IPDC	Industrial Parks Development Corporation
ITAR	International Traffic in Arms Regulation
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoTIR	Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration
PP	Prosperity Party
UN	United Nations
UAU	Unmanned Aerial Vehicles
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
U.S.	United States
TPLF	Tigray People’s Liberation Front

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Abstract

The war between the Ethiopian federal government and TPLF which was conducted from November 2020 to October 2022 attracted the attention of external forces, international media, multilateral institutions, and researchers. This study examines the implications of the war on Ethio-U.S. relations from 2020 to the present. Qualitative research approach was employed for the study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants from Ethiopian government, U.S. institutions, senior diplomats, and researchers, among others. The study identified major factors that led to a deterioration of the Ethio-U.S bilateral relationship including alleged human rights violations by the U.S, Ethiopia's change in foreign policy orientation contrary to U.S. expectations in the post 2018, geopolitical competition, and relations between the U.S. and former TPLF officials which necessitated U.S. protection of the TPLF during the war. Diplomatic pressure and U.S.-imposed sanctions against Ethiopia have had two important implications on bilateral relations. First, it put strong international pressure on Ethiopia, and Secondly, this has caused Ethiopia to promptly align itself with the powers that rival the United States, China, and Russia. The findings also indicate that bilateral economic cooperation was severed during the war. The bilateral export trade showed decline in the part of the U.S in 2021, while Ethiopia earned better from export though non AGOA tariff-based export lines during the same year. The termination of AGOA denied Ethiopia substantial export earnings; while encouraging the country to seek for additional markets, notably from China, which helped it to withstand the U.S economic sanctions to some extent. Similarly, a shift in Ethiopia's geopolitical security cooperation has been observed as Ethio-U.S. strategic security cooperation declined over the war. The study suggests that the two countries have solid mutual interests that they cannot ignore, while they need to take clear positions on critical issues such as prioritizing human rights issues over other strategic bilateral and regional issues, how they engage in the increasing geopolitical competition in the Horn of Africa, and on GERD politics.

Key Words: Bilateral relations, human rights, sanctions, geopolitical competition, shifting alliance, war.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and the United States (U.S.) goes back to 1903, when a "Treaty of Friendship and Commerce" was signed between Emperor Menelik II and U.S. Consul Robert P. Skinner on December 27, 1903. The treaty not only regulated trade relations, but also initiated the beginning of historic diplomatic relations between the two countries. The first U.S. legation was established in Addis Ababa on July 6, 1909, when U.S. Consul General Hoffman Philip presented his credentials to the appropriate Ethiopian government authorities to promote better trade prospects with the country (Getachew, 2009). The bilateral relations were interrupted during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1938-1941), due to U.S. isolationism that aimed at not entering wartime alliances with other countries except for territorial self-defense during World War II). Relations were also severed during the Derg regime (1974-1991) because the regime formed an ideological alliance with communist Russia, which was an adversary of the U.S. at the time and called on the U.S. to reduce its presence in the country, which eventually led to the severance of decades of successful diplomatic relations (Nymeyer 2003). Relations were fully restored after the fall of the Derg regime and the takeover of power by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991 (Assefa, 2013).

Aside from the long-standing diplomatic relationship, Ethiopian and U.S. security interests in the Horn of Africa converge as Ethiopia wants to be protected from the security threat posed by the Al-Shabaab terrorist group in Somalia and the U.S. wants to protect its national interests in the region through counterterrorism measures (Negasa, 2021). The recent partnership between the two countries has also shown important developments. For example, the U.S. not only welcomed the political reforms that took place in Ethiopia in 2018, but also provided over \$4.2 billion in development assistance and humanitarian aid to the Ethiopian people over the period 2016-2020 (Feltman, 2021)¹. The instability that followed political reforms in Ethiopia after 2018 was also seen as a threat to U.S. interests in the Horn of Africa. For example, Estelle (2018), noted in her

¹ Department of State. (2021, November 01). Accessed on February 2, 2023. Retrieved from: [A Perspective on the Ethiopian-U.S. Relationship After a Year of Conflict - United States Department of State](#)

briefing to the Congress that any potential instability in Ethiopia would jeopardise U.S.-supported operations to combat Al-Shabaab terrorists in Somalia and the region. The author noted that such conflicts would also undermine Ethiopia's capacity for regional peacekeeping commitments. However, the war, which lasted from November 2020 to October 2022, has adverse implications on the two countries' long-standing bilateral and strategic relationship. This study therefore examines and explains the implications of the war on the two countries' political, economic, and security cooperation from November 2020 to the present.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The war between the federal government and the TPLF has affected longstanding Ethiopia and U.S. relations in several ways. The U.S. has repeatedly expressed its concern about alleged serious human rights violations by the warring parties and the Ethiopian government's blocking of humanitarian aid to Tigray during the war. The U.S. concluded that the warring parties committed “war crimes,” and consequently it imposed multiple sanctions against Ethiopia with intention of compelling to ending the war (Bilnken, 2021)². The Ethiopian federal government in turn, accused the U.S. of interfering in its internal affairs and supporting the TPLF during the war and contended that such actions of the U.S. have compromised the established bilateral relations (MoFA, 2021).

According to Blanchard (2020), who is specialist in African Affairs at the U.S Congressional Research Service, the war posed significant challenge to the established Ethio-U.S. bilateral contrary to the U.S hopes in the post 2018 political reform in Ethiopia. The author contended the war dashed the U.S. hope in the post 2018 that Ethiopia would remain stable and reliable partner of the U.S in the Horn of Africa. She further noted that the U.S worried about spill effect of the war in the conflict prone Horn of Africa and hence called up on the warring parties to end the war through negotiated peace deal and Ethiopian government to ensure unhindered access to humanitarian aid to Tigray region. Felbab-Brown (2021) a senior researcher at the Foreign Affairs, foreign policy focused magazine in U.S., also argued to the contrary of Abbink and contended that the U.S. sanction regimes imposed by the U.S. against Ethiopia over the war played a vital role in ending the war and its consequences in the country. She held that the international diplomatic

² Agence France-Presse.(2021, March 15). Accessed on March 5, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-9c2DzLbNs>

pressures imposed by the U.S against Ethiopia has been constructive in pursuit of human rights, peace and stability of Ethiopia and Horn of Africa. Abbink (2021) a professor at University of Leiden who wrote series of articles on the international dimensions of the war, on the other hand, argued that the war adversely affected Ethio-U.S. bilateral relations mainly due to a misguided policy direction that the U.S. pursued against Ethiopian federal government during the war. He also contended that the U.S. followed nonconstructive diplomatic directions which was not based on facts on the ground when it imposed multiple sanctions against Ethiopia over the war. He further claimed the U.S. was negative towards Ethiopian federal government and mild on TPLF during the war which led to significant change in the Ethio-U.S. bilateral relations.

Although the war between federal government and TPLF has multiple implications for bilateral relations between Ethiopia and the U.S., to my knowledge the literature misses important information. Accordingly, to my knowledge, no literature presents the issues and factors that have affected the Ethio-U.S. relations during the war. Similarly, the literature lacks concrete data on how the war affected bilateral economic relations, particularly regarding bilateral trade relations and investment. Literature also misses information on whether the deterioration of Ethio-U.S. relations since 2020 has led to a gap in joint counterterrorism efforts in the Horn of Africa, particularly in light to the surging Al-Shaabab operations in Somalia and the region, which led to an organized attack by the militant group on the Ethiopian border in July 2022. This study, therefore, aims to explain, explore, and consolidate the key implications of the war on Ethio-U.S. relations in diplomatic, economic and security dimensions.

1.3 Core Argument

This study argues that the war between the Ethiopian federal government and the TPLF led to significant changes in the bilateral relationship between Ethiopia and the U.S. which also resulted in shift in alliances.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to identify and examine the key implications of the war between Ethiopian federal government and TPLF on the Ethio-U.S. relations since 2020.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The study has three specific objectives, and these are discussed as follows:

- To explain the factors and issues related to the war that have led to the decline in the Ethiopia-U.S. relations since November 2020.
- To assess the implications of the war on political, economic and security partnership of the Ethiopia and the U.S.
- To explore the prospects for Ethio-U.S. bilateral relationship in the backdrop of the long-established strategic partnership between the two countries.

1.5 Research Questions

- What are the major factors and issues related to the war that affected the Ethio-U.S. bilateral relations since November 2020?
- What are the implications of the war on the Ethio-U.S. political, economic and security partnerships?
- What are the prospects and challenges for restrengthening Ethio-U.S. relationship in light to the long-established strategic bilateral relations and partnerships between the two countries?

1.6 Research Methodology

1.6.1 Research Approach

The study employed a qualitative research approach, which is believed to help to achieve the objective of the study. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), for instance, a qualitative approach is employed to answer research questions requiring an explanation of social phenomena regarding their specific contexts. Accordingly, the questions of 'what', 'how' and 'why' can be answered by using a qualitative approach. Moreover, a single case study was used to show the impact of the termination of Ethiopia from AGOA on the bilateral economic cooperation as well as companies that have been importing commodities to the U.S. According to Gerring (2004) a single case study is “an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units”. He also indicated that single case study provides a meticulous, evidence supported, holistic account of specific phenomena in qualitative research approach that intends to show casual relations of certain

variables. This study pursued single case study through carefully selecting an Ethiopian industry which was hosting most of the U.S companies that have been exporting to the U.S. through AGOA preferential opportunity.

1.6.2 Research Methods

1.6.2.1 Sources of Data

The study used both primary and secondary data as sources of data. The primary data was collected from various key informants from diversified institutions and professionals. Accordingly, key informants were selected from different bodies including but not limited to Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Federal Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, Industrial Parks Development Corporation, AGOA product exporters, relevant bodies of the United States of America government, independent researchers, foreign policy professionals, senior diplomats. Moreover, the study used different relevant secondary sources including books, journal articles, declarations, bilateral documents, diplomatic exchanges, press releases, conventional media sources and official websites and others to undertake thorough assessment.

1.6.2.2 Sampling Techniques and Size

Purposive sampling was used to select the key informants as this provides an effective strategy to get relevant data and evidence to address the specific objectives. Accordingly, 10 respondents (from the Ethiopian government, from U.S. institutions and related and diplomats and independent researchers) were purposely selected and interviewed.

1.6.2.3 Instrument of Data Collections

The data were collected using key informant interviews and reviewing archival materials in a manner that enables the researcher to address the research questions effectively. The key informant interviews were conducted both in person and via zoom online meeting. The responses are fully recorded in both cases. Moreover, interview guides and case study checklists were developed ahead and used during the interviews to ensure the effectiveness and relevance during primary data collections.

1.6.2.4 Data Analysis

The study used content analysis method to analyze the data obtained from the diversified primary sources. Accordingly, the interviews were first translated and transcribed into English. Then the data was summarized into brief and accurate statements and organized into different relevant thematic areas as per the specific objective of the study. The data obtained from key informants and secondary sources were also compared and presented in descriptive and explanatory ways to address the research questions.

1. 6.3 Ethical Considerations

The following ethical issues were considered during collection of data from the primary sources. Firstly, the researcher provided a clear explanation to the participants about the purpose of the study and how the data will be used. Moreover, participants' consents were sought for the interview and recording of the interviews in all sessions. Secondly, as matter of fact this study involved peoples from diversified backgrounds from Ethiopians and foreigners. Therefore, the researcher applied the use of different languages appropriate for the participants during interviews. Amharic was used for most of Ethiopians while English was used for foreigners as per their preferences and contexts. Similarly, the researcher carefully considered removal of any cultural barriers during the interview sessions. Thirdly, the researcher has also discussed anonymity or confidentiality issues with the participants. Most of the participants are willing to participate in the study openly and publicly. There is a case where an informant requested anonymity due to rigorous organizational communications protocol.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study dealt with the implications of the war on Ethio-U.S. relations from November 2020 to present. The study, therefore, is limited to assessing the implications of war in the political, security and economic dimensions in this specific timeframe. As such, the study didn't deal with the broad history of the bilateral relations both in terms of thematic areas and time. Thus, it didn't focus on historical, social, or cultural and other aspects of the bilateral relationship and yet it is bounded by a short period i.e from November 2020 to date.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study is significant on two accounts. Firstly, it has important additions to existing knowledge and literature and informs future studies as it examines the current trends of changes in the Ethio-U.S. bilateral relations in the context of war between the Ethiopian federal government and TPLF. Secondly, the study has important policy significance as it deals with prospects and challenges of the current bilateral relations which would inform the foreign policy of Ethiopia and the U.S.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The study has two major limitations which are discussed as follows.

- a) Limited access to data regarding some aspects of the topic under study is the first limitation. Specifically, there is a few data that details on the Ethio-U.S. security partnership. The study exerted maximum effort in obtaining data from the relevant official websites of the U.S. to address the limitations, although such data is not publicly available from Ethiopia's side.
- b) The second related to inherent limitation of single case study as method. Single case study suffers from limitation related limited methodological rigorousness, a relative lack of systematic procedures and subjectivity. To this end, this study employed a single case study to show implications during a given period and corroborated with findings gained through other methods.

1. 10 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into seven chapters as follows. The first chapter provides a brief background of the study. The second chapter presents a literature review including conceptual and theoretical framework specifically regarding inter-state relations pertinent to Ethio-U.S. relations as well as empirical review of relevant literature. The third chapter provides information on the war between Ethiopian federal government and its allies on one side and TPLF on other with aim giving clear context about the war and its dimensions. Chapter four provides recent history of Ethio-U.S. and explains the issues that have led to deterioration in the Ethio-U.S. relations over the war. The fifth chapter deals with the major implications of the war in the political, economic and security dimensions, while the sixth chapter provides prospects and challenges of Ethio-U.S. relations. The final and the seventh chapter draw conclusions based on the findings.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual and Theoretical perspectives

This chapter will briefly deal with the major concepts and theories related to the research topic. A review of major relevant literature will follow, after discussing the relevant concepts and theories.

2.1.1 Conceptual Perspectives

A) Bilateral Relations

Bilateral diplomacy is regarded as one of the oldest types of diplomacy that goes back to ancient times when monarchies negotiated with one another on terms of trade and security. Such kind of relations existed in Europe, Middle East and in ancient civilizations in China, India, and Africa. Bilateral relations are a type of relations between two countries which are usually conducted through diplomatic engagement at state levels. It is considered as one of the key building blocks in the international relations (Rana, 2020).

According to Pannier (2020), the primary objective of bilateral relations is promoting national interest. It also helps states in forming alliances or coalitions at regional and international levels. International negotiations can also be facilitated through bilateral engagements. Bilateral relations can be conducted through foreign affairs ministries, embassies, and consulates, and others. Rana (2020) identifies four major pillars of bilateral relations and diplomacy. These are 1) political, which usually serves as basis for relations between states 2) economic relations through which bilateral trade, investment and other economic activities are performed 3) public diplomacy include cultural promotion; educational exchange; media and diaspora mobilization and finally consular diplomacy which includes visa issuance, international travel and migration and others. Globalization and advancement in information and communications technology have shaped the contemporary practices of bilateral diplomacy. However, its primary purposes remain unchanged (ibid).

B) Conception of State Sovereignty

State sovereignty is one of the core principles in international relations. Sovereignty in its traditional notion refers to the absolute authority of a state within its territory and independence

from any interference of external forces (Glanville, 2013). The Britannica Dictionary provides definitions of sovereignty as “unlimited power over a country and a country's independent authority and the right to govern itself.” The concept of state sovereignty traditionally originated from the Treaty of Westphalia, which was signed in 1648, and ended the thirty years of war in Europe by establishing the principle of territorial integrity and the sovereignty of individual states. The principle of state sovereignty is also well recognized by international treaties and organizations such as the United Nations Charter. Accordingly, the UN Charter Article 2(1) “The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members.” The traditional conception of “absolute and supreme authority of state” is becoming contentious and changing in contemporary international relations. This is due to trends in the global political system such as international cooperation between states in which states surrender part of their sovereignty to such international organizations and humanitarian intervention (Philpott, 1995).

C) Cooperation and Conflict in International Relations

Cooperation and conflict are among important concepts in the study of international relations. They are the real manifestation of how states and other non-state actors engage with each other on the global stage (Henderson, 1998). According to Clackson (2011) cooperation in international relations occurs when states and nonstate actors reshape their behaviour to the actual or anticipated choices of others through a process involving policy coordination. Cooperation can happen between two or more state actors.

Clackson (2011:2) noted:

Cooperation basically should lead to rewards for all states, not necessarily equal rewards, but everyone should benefit. Competition or conflict on the other hand is “goal-seeking behavior that strives to reduce the gains available to others or to impede their want-satisfaction.

Milner (1992) explained that Cooperation can happen between state actors’ diplomatic negotiations, economic partnerships, signing treaties, forming alliances and others. Milner further stated that cooperation can also take place in various aspects. It can be negotiated cooperation- in which a clear process is followed to reach mutually beneficial policies between cooperating states. Cooperation can also be imposed- where the stronger state party usually influences the terms of cooperation towards its interests. In the contemporary global system, there are multiple areas where

states cooperate including but not limited to global security, climate change, fighting terrorism and piracy, promoting economic stability, and alleviating poverty with the intention of garnering collective effort and responsibilities. States can also engage in conflict due to numerous factors. Rummel (2020) discussed multiple factors that cause conflicts in interstate relations. These include divergent interests and ideologies, profound change in the balance of power, leaders' perceptions, and expectations, fight over scarce resources and historical disputes. The interstate conflict can take the forms of diplomatic disputes, economic competition, territorial dispute, and military confrontations. Nonetheless, conflicts can cause several evils which include human and economic destruction, political instability, and the worst war (ibid).

D) Concept of Sanctions

The Britannica Dictionary³ defines sanction as “an action that is taken or an order that is given to force a country to obey international laws by limiting or stopping trade with that country, by not allowing economic aid for that country”. According to Davis and Engerman (2003) Sanctions can be imposed unilaterally by single country or multilaterally through collective actions against a state that is considered as violator of international law. Sanctions in their essence fall between diplomatic pressure and war in extreme cases. They can take the form of diplomatic pressure, economic, trade, aid, and military assistance restrictions.

Haas (1998:2), explains sanctions considering U.S. foreign policy as follows:

Sanctions—defined as mostly economic but also political and military penalties introduced to alter political and/or military behavior—are employed by the United States to discourage the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, bolster human rights, end terrorism, thwart drug trafficking, discourage armed aggression, promote market access, protect the environment, and replace governments.

The Council of European Union⁴ has got its own explanation of sanctions. According to the council sanctions are the type of punishments that enable the EU to promptly respond to political threats that counter the union's objectives and values. It further identifies types of threats including

³ Britannica Dictionary. Accessed on April 24, 2023. Retrieved from: [Sanction Definition & Meaning | Britannica Dictionary](#)

⁴ The Council of European Union. Accessed on April 24, 2023. Retrieved from: [Different types of sanctions - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](#)

“terrorism; nuclear proliferation activities; human rights violations; annexation of foreign territory; deliberate destabilization of a sovereign country and cyber-attacks”.

2.1.2 Theoretical Perspectives

Theories of international relations which are relevant to the research topics will be briefly discussed under this chapter focusing on the major debates in the discipline. Specifically, neo realism-neo liberalism debate as well as constructivism theories will be discussed to lay ground for further discussions.

A) Neo-Neo Debate

A debate between neo realism and neo liberalism on the conflict and cooperation prospects of global political system is relevant to this study. Waltz (1979: 107), a neo realism theorist, stated that “in an organized realm each unit’s incentive is to put itself in a position to be able to take care of itself since no one else can be counted on to do so”. Waltz also provides scenarios for peace and war in the anarchic international system in which he argued that the amount of war or peace depends on the structure of distribution power, as unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar. “The closer the overall distribution of power approaches unipolarity; the greater likelihood of peace” (Waltz, 1979 as cited in Mingst and Arreguin-Toft, 2017)

Moreover, neo realists contend that, in an anarchic international system, powerful states can override any legal and moral norms and take whatever actions they want, and yet they could go without any consequences. Even in the case when states tend to comply with certain moral objectives and legal norms, such as promoting human rights and democracy, neorealists argue that it is not because of morality but due to such compliance would promote their own interests. Neorealists also severely criticized international institutions such as the UN and other multilateral institutions as dependent on powerful states and lacking adequate power for shaping the behavior of states to overcome war and conflict (Donnelly, 2013).

Neoliberalism, also known as neoliberal institutionalism, on the other hand, gives primacy to institutions in the international political system to achieve global peace and order. They argue that although global political order is preoccupied with anarchy, institutions can effectively facilitate cooperation between states to maintain global peace and order. Institutions not only encourage

cooperation, according to neoliberalists, but they also can monitor the behaviour of states and impose sanctions on the violators (Burchill, 2013). In doing so they argue against neorealists' conceptions that contend that institutions cannot operate independently from the influence of powerful states and hence they cannot impose binding sanctions on the violators of law and norms. Neoliberal institutionalists also give focus on the maintenance of global security through cooperation between states. They hold that cooperation has two important significances in this regard. First, cooperation between states in one area would have spill-over to other areas. For insurance, trade cooperation may be expanded to security cooperation and vis versa. Second, institutional cooperation can even transcend their purposes and exist beyond areas of the establishment. For example, although NATO was established to contain the expansion of communism in Europe it does exist after the end of communism and undertook military intervention in recent international events such as in Libya in 2011, Mingst and Arreguin-Toft (2017).

McGlinchey, Walters, and Scheinflug (2017:24) described this position of neo liberalists as follows: "The liberal international order is international norms. Liberal norms favour international cooperation, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. When a state takes actions contrary to these norms, they are subject to several types of costs." Jervis (1999: 45) summarized neorealists and neoliberal institutionalist perspectives on conflict and cooperation as follows:

For neorealists world politics is a continuing if not an unrelenting struggle for survival, advantage, and often dominance. Neoliberals do not deny the existence of cases of extreme conflict, but they do not see them as the entire or even a representative picture of world politics. In many cases and in many areas, states are able to work together to mitigate the effects of anarchy, produce mutual gains, and avoid shared harm.

In conclusion, the neo-neo debate on international cooperation and conflict remains relevant and active in the study of interstate relations. Neorealists contend that international cooperation if at all exists, is possible only under hegemonic international order only. They assert that this is possible because a hegemonic power may impose and enforce international rules that compel state actors to sustain cooperation. While Neoliberalists such as Robert Keohane argued that the magnitude of interstate cooperation goes with the level of interdependence between the states. For instance, when interdependence is high, such as in the case of WWII, interstate cooperation is also

high; and in a similar fashion international cooperation is low when interdependence between states is minimal (Burchill, 2013).

B) Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory that came into the realm of international relations mainly at the end of the cold war. It emerged as a bridging perspective between the traditional rational IR theories, Realism and Liberalism, as they failed to predict and explain the end of cold war the end of 1980s Theys (2017). According to Constructivism the nature of interstate relations depends on the shared ideas, identities, interests, and values created by such states. It focuses on normative relations in contrast to the material capabilities and institutions embarked on by rational theories: realism and liberalism Erbas (2022).

Mingst and Arreguin-Toft (2017) explained Constructivists' turn in terms of filling the gaps in the two dominant traditional theories. As explained in the preceding section, neorealists assert that the state should have a behavior of self-interest and maximize its power to ensure its security, while liberals argue that states must act in a more cooperative manner to maintain global order. However, Constructivists contend that norms, ideas, and values play vital roles in the interstate relations in shaping global politics. To this end, constructivists hold that the tendency of cooperation and conflict depends on the idea or norms constructed by state actors, whether to cooperate or not. Theys (2017) provide major tenets of constructivism including their assertion that international relations and structures are created by state actors. In this case the scholar provides the famous assertion of Alexander Wendt, strong proponent of the school of thought, in which he asserted “500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the U.S. than five North Korean nuclear weapons”. This clearly explains that the idea or image that the U.S. created about the nuclear weapon possession by different states (British as friendly county and North Korea as rivalry) irrespective of their material capabilities. The other important tenant elaborated by Theys is the constructivists conception of identity and interest creation by states. Accordingly, identities of states arguably create their corresponding interests. For instance, smaller states may be more concerned about their survival while bigger states are concerned about assuming a dominant position in the international order. Moreover, constructivism believes that international structure can shape the nature of relations between states. This is what Wendt asserted as “anarchy is what states made”, not a given structure in international system (Mingst and Arreguin-Toft, 2017)

2.1.3 Operationalization of Theories

Ethiopia-U.S. relations in historical perspective show that there have been both conflicts and cooperation in the relations under different regimes. The relations are due to continuity, despite the communist turn during the Derg regime. The relations between the two countries during the period this thesis examines—from 2020 to the present—can be explained using the neo-neo debate on interstate relations. For example, the U.S. government repeatedly denounced the alleged serious human rights violations in the Tigray region committed by the parties to the conflict, primarily the Ethiopian government and the Eritrean armed forces. In doing so, the U.S. appears to be promoting the neoliberal perspective that views human rights, freedom, and liberty as important elements in interstate relations. The U.S., which recognizes Ethiopia as a strong ally in the Horn of Africa, also believes that the war would weaken Ethiopia's ability to provide security in the Horn of Africa. Based on this understanding, the United States has suggested that the war could be resolved through a negotiated peace agreement rather than resorting to a devastating war. They claimed that efforts to resolve the conflict peacefully could be mediated by international organizations such as the AU. This proposal is clearly based on the neoliberal concept of the role of international organization, democracy, tolerance, and peaceful conflict resolution.

On the other hand, Ethiopia has also repeatedly expressed strong concern that the U.S. is interfering in the country's internal affairs under the pretext of human rights and unimpeded humanitarian access to Tigray in a manner that violates Ethiopia's sovereignty. Ethiopia also accused the U.S. of siding with the TPLF during the war. In this case, Ethiopia invoked the neorealist perspective, which states that powerful states can violate international norms [such as the inviolability of state sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of a state] in the name of human rights and democracy to further their own interests. Moreover, national, and international campaigns by the Ethiopian government, the Ethiopian diaspora community, and allies such as the global #NoMore movement has portrayed U.S. policy toward Ethiopia - since 2020 - as a war against Ethiopia in which the U.S. is allegedly using its global power and large economy to bring about regime change in Ethiopia. These and similar arguments are clearly part of the neorealist perspective on interstate relations, which assumes that powerful states can use their power to suppress weaker states in an anarchic international system.

The theory of constructivism is still relevant to this study because Ethiopia and the U.S. created a kind of common interests and values. These shared interests have created the image of a strong strategic alliance between Ethiopia and the U.S. in the Horn of Africa, especially in the fight against terrorism after September 11. In the post 2018 U.S gave profound support to Abiy Ahmed government with interest that Ethiopia would remain a strong pro-U.S regional anchor in the geopolitical competition in the Horn of Africa. However, the current Ethiopian government has adopted a more diversified foreign policy that involves several global powers such as China and other middle powers in the post 2018 to the contrary of U.S expectation. The deterioration of Ethiopia-U.S. relations in the context of the war since 2020 can be partly explained by the change in Ethiopia's foreign policy orientation in the period leading up to the war. In the words of the constructivist Wendt, "Anarchy is what states made". The U.S and TPLF, the former dominant party of EPRDF, had established common interest in which the latter served as obedient partner of the former in the Horn of Africa. This common interest has arguably necessitated the protection of TPLF by U.S. officials during the war. This still can be explained by the constructivist view of interest and value creation.

2.2 Review of Related Literature

2.2.1 Perspectives on Effect of the War on Ethio-U.S. Relations

Scholars and international media reports present the implications of the war between federal government and TPLF on the Ethio-U.S. relations from different perspectives which are discussed as follows. Blanchard (2020), for instance, stated in her CRS report, that the conflict in Ethiopia compromised the U.S. interests in the Horn of Africa, the region viewed as strategically important to the U.S. According to this researcher the U.S. interests including regional stability, Ethiopia's sustained commitment to counterterrorism and stabilization in Somalia as well as a continued development partnership to tackle the development and humanitarian challenges in the country have been compromised due to the war.

Meservey (2020), in his article about the effect of the war also explained the implications of the war in terms of challenging Ethiopia's capacity in countering terrorism in Somalia. The author contended that the war has compromised Ethiopia's contribution to the U.S. supported battle against terrorism in Somalia, as Ethiopia had withdrawn about 3,000 of its troops from Somalia in November 2020 when the fighting began in Tigray region. Felbab-Brown (2021) a senior

researcher at the Foreign Affairs, U.S. foreign policy focused magazine, contended that the U.S. sanction regimes imposed by the U.S. on Ethiopia over the war had played a vital role in ending the war and its consequences in the country. According to this author, the sanctions and restrictions are designed in a way that could serve as exemplary in promoting U.S. constructive engagement amidst an intensifying war and devastating humanitarian situation.

On the other hand, Abbink (2021), who wrote several articles on the international dimensions of the war and external forces engagement argued that the U.S. foreign policy on Ethiopia during the war between federal government and TPLF has been misguided and driven by sentimentalist approach by ignoring facts on the ground. The researcher further argued that the sanctions and diplomatic pressures imposed by the U.S. against Ethiopia has had significantly affected constructive bilateral diplomatic engagement between the two countries. He further contends that the U.S. has been negative towards the Federal government of Ethiopia while it was mild on TPLF over the war. He also stated that the U.S. actions against Ethiopia over the war has threatened the sovereignty of Ethiopia as an independent nation. Worku (2021) also concurred with Abbink and argued that the Biden Administration supported TPLF during the war which has threatened Ethiopian territorial integrity and stability. The author further contended that the U.S. supported TPLF to bring about a regime change in Ethiopia with the aim of imposing a political system that would be obedient to its orders to maximize its own national interest.

The U.S. government also imposed multiple sanctions against Ethiopia including visa restrictions in May 2021; President Biden's Executive Order in September 2021 and termination of Ethiopia's trade privileges in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), in November 2021 (took effect as of January 2022). The sanctions were imposed over the alleged gross human rights violations in connection to the war (the White House, 2022).

There are competing international media reports regarding the implications of these sanctions on the bilateral relations as well as on the Ethiopian overall political and economic developments. For instance, BBC Amharic report (2021) revealed⁵ that Ethiopia lost more than 150 million USD annually due to termination of AGOA preferential opportunities. Other reports indicated that

⁵ BBC Amharic reporting with a headline reading "the implications of AGOA suspension on Ethiopia's job opportunity and foreign currency. Accessed on 30 November 2022. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/amharic/news-59151040>

Ethiopia has used AGOA suspension as an opportunity to seek an alternative market to withstand the ban and thereby enhance its economy. For instance, Fana Broadcasting Corporate (FBC) in November 2021 reported⁶ that the Ethiopian Industrial Development Corporation has extensively been exploring new export markets with the intention of overcoming the impacts of AGOA revocation. Reports again reveal that Ethiopia was able to gain military assistance from other countries that significantly contributed to its victory over TPLF in the war, despite the security assistance cut from the U.S. The *New York Times*, for instance, reported⁷ that Ethiopia received armed unmanned drones from Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Iran. The report claimed that these foreign countries helped through provision of the armed drone with the intention of boosting their positions in the geopolitical competitions in the Horn of Africa and enhancing economic gains amidst of Ethio-U.S. relation crisis.

Ethiopia's government reactions to the U.S. sanctions and restrictions imposed by the U.S. over the war have been bold. For example, in May and December 2021 the Ethiopian government boldly accused the Biden Administration of meddling in the internal affairs of the country as the U.S. announced some economic and security aid restrictions (Reuters, 2021; Al Jazeera 2021).⁸ Ethiopian communities from local and diaspora have also staged multiple protests on the alleged U.S. interference in Ethiopia's domestic affairs which have gotten the attention of international media (BBC, 2021).⁹ The local and international campaigns praised China and Russia for assisting Ethiopia during hard times, while blaming the U.S for meddling in the internal affairs of the country. The digital media campaign known as “#NoMore”, specifically on Twitter, was also able to garner international voices to challenge the alleged U.S. and its allies' interventions in Ethiopia's internal affairs.

⁶ FBC English reporting with a headline “Ethiopia Seeks Alternative markets to Ease AGOA Revocation”. Accessed on 21 December 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.fanabc.com/english/ethiopia-seeks-alternative-markets-to-ease-agoa-revocation/>

⁷ The New York Times Reported “Foreign Drones Tip the Balance in Ethiopia's Civil War”. Accessed on 21 December 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/20/world/africa/drones-ethiopia-war-turkey-emirates.html>

⁸ Reuters reporting: “Ethiopia Accuses United States of Meddling Over Tigray”. Accessed 30 November 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/us-imposes-restrictions-ethiopia-assistance-over-tigray-2021-05-23/>

⁹ BBC reporting “Ethiopia's The war: Tens of thousands attend anti-US rally”. Accessed 30 November 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57298019>

2.2.2 International Human Rights and State Sovereignty

The line between international human rights and sovereignty is contested in contemporary international law and international relations. International human rights law is becoming increasingly restrictive in how governments treat citizens within their territories, while states always tend to claim absolute rights within their territories (Cassel, 2001). The United Nations (UN) provides a functional definition of International Human Rights as "International human rights law lays down the obligations of Governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups." According to Henkin (1994), the regulation of human rights significantly changed following the adoption of the UN Charter in 1945 and subsequent adoption of bills of rights¹⁰, as states begin to enter into international agreements and corporations in the human rights aspects which consequently have restrictive implications on their sovereignty. He thus commended that human rights in the contemporary world are regulated by both domestic state laws and international laws. Sunday and David (2015) also stated that the concept of sovereignty is one of the most contested in political philosophy and international relations. The authors identified competing concepts of sovereignty from three schools of thought, including the realists, who advocate absolute sovereignty and argue that it is an inviolable domain of nation-states, while liberals advocate popular sovereignty, which holds that the people, not the sovereign, are the legitimate sovereign. Constructivists, on the other hand, argue that sovereignty is a social construction and a dynamic concept that is significantly influenced by norms, values, and practices.

Moreover, in today's world, sovereignty may be limited for a variety of reasons. For example, Sunday and David (2015) stated that while sovereignty is associated with absoluteness, indivisibility, inalienability, recognition, and exclusivity, there are several cases in which a state's sovereignty may be limited. One of these cases, according to the author, is when states become members of international organizations through their consent, which implies the surrender of their sovereignty for the purpose of regulating international law. The author further argued that powerful

¹⁰ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) as well as International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both adopted in 1966, all together forms the bills of rights. This has been considered as one of the major successes of the UN since its foundation. Detail about the rights are available on official page of the UN: <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights#:~:text=Human%20rights%20are%20rights%20inherent.and%20education%2C%20and%20many%20more.>

states such as the USA, Russia, France, Britain, and China- permanent members of the United Nations Security Council can also limit the sovereignty of smaller states by imposing pressure due to their economic welfare, political dominance and military might. Similarly, he contended that foreign aid also pressurizes aid recipient countries in which case poor nations accept economic, military, and technical assistance in a way that limits their sovereignty. Sunday and David (2015: 23) stated: “The more the state is dependent upon foreign aid the more likely it is to alter its policy and decisions to comfort the donor state’s expectations.”

2.2.3 Human Rights as Foreign Policy Objective

The conception of human rights as foreign policy objective is another debatable issue, related to this thesis. This is discussed in brief as follows: According to Baher and Hollama (2004), setting human rights priorities as a foreign policy decision seems difficult for at least two reasons. First, human rights policy conflicts with friendly relations with foreign governments, especially when the government has a high record of human rights violations. Second, foreign human rights policy tends to deal with issues that governments accept as exclusive internal affairs based on their understanding of sovereignty, as also stated in Article 2 (7) of the Charter of UN. Therefore, many countries refrain from making human rights a priority issue in their foreign policy to advance their national interests without confrontation with foreign countries.

Cohen (2008) noted that the United States of America has been a champion of human rights as a foreign policy priority at least since World War II. He emphasised that the U.S. foreign human rights policy is primarily based on its founding principles, which was based on fundamental rights, especially civil liberties, and individual rights. He stated that U.S. President Jimmy Carter started promoting human rights through U.S. foreign policy with the aim of advancing American values internationally to achieve the country’s national interest in 1970s. The author identifies three other tools that the U.S. uses in promoting human rights through its foreign policy. These are: I) vigorous private diplomacy, in which the United States discusses human rights issues privately with respective foreign governments II) public statements-a mechanism by which the U.S. exert influences and encourages domestic human rights advocates in a given country III) letters from the U.S. president to human rights advocates, such as President Bush's award of a Congressional Gold Medal to the Dalai Lama in 2007 as a gesture to target China for human rights issues.

On the other hand, Donnelly (1982) argued that the relationship between U.S. national interest and its human rights policy is not noticeably clear or easy to understand. He argued that the short-term and long-term national interests of the U.S. are in conflict when it comes to considering human rights as a foreign policy objective. In the author's view, it can be advantageous for Washington to sometimes ignore human rights abuses by friendly governments. Such a double standard can lead to countervailing efforts overall, including the rise of radical revolutions that could be sparked in part by Washington's disregard for such human rights violations. Donnelly also noted that inconsistencies have been one of the reasons for human rights policy. He argued that economic interests, historical relationships, strategic locations, and ideological issues have in many cases taken precedence in shaping a particular U.S. human rights policy, and that such a policy would lead to great cynicism worldwide.

2.2.4 Sanctions as Foreign Policy Tool

According to Kessler (2022), the term "sanction" refers to actions taken by governments to prevent other states and/or individuals from trading, purchasing arms, gaining access to foreign finance and funds, or traveling to other countries to put pressure on the target states and individuals to comply with measures set by the sanctioning state. Weiss (1999) also noted that sanctions can be imposed at the international, regional, or unilateral state levels. Economic sanctions have been used since the end of the Cold War, primarily by the United Nations Security Council to maintain peace and security. For example, the UN Security Council used them against former Yugoslavia, Iran, and Haiti.

The sanction and its application in contemporary international relations undoubtedly pose a challenge. Kessler (2022), for example, identifies three drawbacks attributed to sanctions. The first is that the term sanction encompasses everything between diplomatic efforts and war, while the level and extent of sanctions imposed differ in practical terms. For example, the sanctions imposed on Iran in 2015 over the nuclear crisis are far worse than the sanctions imposed on Ethiopia in 2021 over alleged human rights abuses during the war in the Tigray region. The former are more approaches to war, while the latter are more like diplomatic pressure. The second drawback is that in most cases sanctions alone cannot achieve their intended purpose, while a combination of foreign policy tools can contribute to their effectiveness. The final and most pressing challenge is that

sanctions cause significant harm to innocent civilians in targeted states, although sanctions are not costless to the sanctioning state either.

Weiss (1999) argues that the importance of sanctions has diminished due to several factors. First, there is the problem of effectiveness and equity—that sanctions have different effects depending on the economic, geographic, and political conditions of the target countries. Second, sanctions are unlikely to achieve their objectives in target countries because of the factors discussed above. Third, sanctions imposed by multilateral organizations such as the UN Security Council raise questions of equity and fairness because the UN Security Council has a limited number of representatives and the five veto powers, the United States, China, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom, can unanimously impose sanctions. Finally, and most importantly, sanctions are less acceptable because they cause significant harm to innocent civilians in targeted countries. In contrast, the findings of a study by a U.S. think tank group, the Atlantic Council (2017), on the importance of U.S. sanctions as a foreign policy tool contrast with the above authors. The study claims that the popularity of sanctions as a foreign policy tool is based on three reasons. First, they are easy to design and implement; second, their use against errant international actors is easy to justify; and third, they can respond to the smallest and largest international incidents.

The European Commission rarely uses sanctions as a foreign policy tool. The EU Commission's Diplomatic Paper (2014/3) clearly states that sanctions as a foreign policy tool are only used as a last resort in certain cases when other diplomatic tools fail. Moreover, Article 3 of the EU Council's Basic Principles on the Use of Restrictive Sanctions (2004) states as follows: "Where necessary, the Council shall impose autonomous EU sanctions in support of efforts to combat terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and as a restrictive measure to uphold human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance." Bapt and Kwon (2015) argue that the sanctioning state may also bear costs in this process. This is the case, for example, when the affected country can substitute its business with alternative trade sources or countries other than the sanctioning country. In such cases, sanctions lose their enforcement power. At the same time, the companies of the sanctioning country are put at a competitive disadvantage, as other countries are given the opportunity to replace their companies in the affected country.

CHAPTER THREE

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF WAR BETWEEN ETHIOPIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND TPLF

The war between the federal government of Ethiopia and Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) broke out on November 4, 2020, after the latter attacked Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) Northern Command camp on November 3, 2020. The war had attracted the attention of external forces, international media, multilateral institutions, and others. In this section, the major phases and dimensions of the war will be briefly explained to lay ground for discussion of the major issues that affected the Ethio-U.S. relations over the war.

3.1 Origin of the War

Although TPLF's attack on (ENDF) northern command was an immediate cause for the commencement of the war in November 2020, researchers and media reports present several factors that could be considered as origin of the war. A study conducted by Berihu (2021), for instance, shows that conflict and violence have been deepening and prevalent in Ethiopia in the post 2018 political reform to the extent of becoming beyond control of the government. The study identified major causes of the conflict which include contenting historical narration; power struggle; land ownership, political interest, and political entrepreneurs as well as weak institutions. Tofa, Alagaw and Kinkoh (2022) also identify four factors that could be regarded as sources of the 2020-2022 war between the federal government and TPLF. The first factor related to deep disagreement over history, nature, and future of Ethiopia observed in Ethiopian politics for a longer time. The authors contended that Ethiopian nation-state formation has been contentious between two political groups. The first group understands Ethiopian history of state building as tragic oppression of different ethnic groups and hence advocated for maximum autonomy to nation and nationalities. To the contrary the second political group considers the same history as an effort to build a strong nation-state, but the effort has not been fully achieved due to lack of democratic progress.

Merera (2007) also argues that contending interpretation of Ethiopian history remains the major challenge in contemporary Ethiopian politics. He maintained that the failures of the Ethiopian political elites who subscribe to the major ethnic groups Oromo, Amhara, and Tigray to reach into

consensus on Ethiopian history and moreover their choices of contending bases of political mobilizations in Ethiopian political organizations have adversely affected the country's progress in the democratic state building. Berihu (2021:21) also described the contending political views held by the elites from the three ethnic groups as “the political issue of Ethiopia is twisted by the Tigray, Amhara, and Oromo elites. Unfortunately, these elites do not have common historical ground, political ideology, and social structure”.

International Crisis Group (2021) also presented the dispute over Ethiopian state between Ethno nationalist and pan Ethiopian visions. It further remarked that the differences between the two groups have deepened in the post 2018 Ethiopian political reform due to the escalated rift between TPLF leaders and Abiy as prime minister. TPLF rejected the new Prosperity Party (PP)¹¹ which was created by rebranding the former ruling EPRDF in November 2019 with a claimed aspiration of toning down ethnic politics which arguably challenged the stability of the country. Consequently, TPLF resisted joining the new Prosperity Party, blaming the move as a plan for centralizing power by the prime minister through creating a unitary political system and thereby weakening the federal system (Tofa, Alagaw and Kinkoh 2022). Tezera (2021) also remarked that TPLF tried to assemble what they termed as “federalist block” by defying the PP as an illegitimate move to a unitary political arrangement.

The second factor, according to the authors, is a power struggle within the former ruling party EPRDF, where TPLF was also a member. TPLF officials became more hostile and felt threatened in the EPRDF after new leadership took over as most of the members of the coalition in the EPRDF would like to see former officials accountable for corruption and human rights abuses they allegedly committed. Gavin (2021) also noted that TPLF considered the new Prosperity Party government leaders as well as its policy choices as a threat and declined to join the party.

Tofa, Alagaw and Kinkoh (2022:9) noted that:

Since the EPRDF, as a collective body, admitted the human rights violations and corruption, legal measures were taken against allegedly corrupt and abusive former TPLF

¹¹ In November 2019 Ethiopian prime minister rebranded the former ruling coalition of ethnic parties, EPRDF and created a Prosperity Party. The intention of rebranding the ruling party was claimed to tone down ethnic divisions and promoting unity in diversity in the country. The story was covered by the BBC, retrieved on March 20, 2023. Available at : <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-50515636>

officials. Nevertheless, these were interpreted as a “witch-hunt” against Tigrayans. Some observers attributed this to the disproportionate Tigrayan presence in key state institutions. The TPLF also framed government measures that would undermine its privileges as a threat to Tigrayans.

The third factor is the rising ethno-nationalism in the country in the post 2018. The authors argued that the most notable rise of ethno nationalism in the post-2018 has been observed from Amhara ethnic group which also included the movement to restore the contested lands in the borders of Amhara-Tigray region. A study conducted by Tezera (2021) also revealed that the rise of Amhara nationalism has been largely evidenced in the post-2018 Ethiopian politics. The researcher explained that Amhara nationalism showed a reverse discourse- which he defined as a “once despised category of identity instigated a claim for authenticity and recognition”. In this case, he argued that Amhara identity has been redefined in a way “Amhara presented as constituting a separate nation” and this is contrary of the pan-Ethiopianist vision held by Amhara political elites in the past. A similar study conducted by Bantanyehu and Ishiyama (2021) confirms the massive rise of Amhara nationalism in the past five years and noted that the ethnic violence and displacement against Amhara ethnic group in different part of the country might have also contributed to the rise of Amhara nationalism in Ethiopia in the post 2018. He further explained that the ethnonational mobilization includes a claim that Amhara lost its historical territories, such as in Tigray and Metekel, due to the current constitution and federal political arrangements. Tofa, Alagaw and Kinkoh (2022) thus noted that the rise of such territorial claim triggered concern among TPLF too and become one of the sources of the war.

The final issue is the Eritrean question to which TPLF became hostile after the Ethiopian prime minister accepted the Algiers peace agreement¹² and signed a new peace deal with Eritrea in September 2019, ending the two decades border dispute International Crisis Group (2021:9) noted on the Ethio-Eritrean rapprochement and TPLF reaction as:

Abiy’s 2018 rapprochement with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, for which Ethiopia’s leader received the Nobel Peace Prize the following year, also became a source of anger for Tigray’s leaders. They came to see the rapprochement between Addis Ababa and Asmara as

¹² Ethiopia and Eritrea fought one of the bloodiest wars in 1998-2000 in which over 100,000 killed and more than a million people displaced, according to the reports (Murphy, 2016). Algiers peace agreement was signed between the two countries in December 2000, ending the conflict and establishing a border commission. But the relations of the two counties remained “no peace no war” for two decades.

primarily an alliance against the TPLF, largely based on Isaias' history of hostility toward them.

Blanchard (2020) also explained that the postponement of the Ethiopian general election in March 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic up on approval of the parliament was one of the major sources of conflict between Federal government and TPLF. TPLF outrightly labelled the decision as unconstitutional and conducted regional councils' election in Tigray in September 2020 by defying the decision. Although TPLF won 98% of the regional council seats as expected, the incident however, led to a major standoff between the Federal government and TPLF as the former rejected the Tigray regional election as unlawful and consequently decided to cut the federal budget to the region. TPLF on its part withheld its defiance and contended that the constitutional power of the federal government would end in October 2020 and the budget cut was unconstitutional (International Crisis Group, 2021).

3.2 Major Phases of The War

Tofa, Alagaw and Kinkoh (2022) systematically categorize the war between federal government and TPLF into four phases until February 2022. But the entire war period can be presented into five phases. Although the nature of the attack and counter offensive was not clear initially, TPLF officials were later admitted that they first conducted the attack as a pre-emptive action against what they claimed a massive preparation by the Federal government, Amhara regional state and Eritrean forces to destroy Tigray since Abiy Ahmed came to power. For instance, in a televised interview with Dimits Weyane (DW) TV¹³ the late Sekutore Getachew, senior official of TPLF, admitted that TPLF took pre-emptive action against the northern command to abort a plan to crash Tigray from all directions by Ethiopian government and Isais Afewerki. The federal government in many instances, however, claimed that the attack was unprovoked and aimed at dismantling the legally elected government through seizing weapons from the north command. During the first phase Amhara regional security forces and Eritrean forces fought along with ENDF. International media reports show that the war causes severe humanitarian crises and growth human rights violations allegedly committed by both sides of warring parties. For instance, Amnesty

¹³ The audio-visual interview of Sekutore Getachew with Dimits Woyane conducted on November 14, 2020 is available online on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2d4WAtbhBc>, accessed on March 21, 2023.

international confirmed the Massacre of Amhara civilians¹⁴ allegedly committed by Tigray forces in Mai Kadira on November 9, 2020, and massacre of Tigray civilians in Aksum allegedly committed by Eritrean forces on November 28-29, 2020 (Amnesty International, 2020). Human Rights Watch also similarly confirmed the above massacres of civilians¹⁵ The first phase of the war ended in December 2020 as the allied forces of the Federal government captured Mekelle, capital of Tigray region, while TPLF fighters were driven out of major cities and started guerrilla fighting in the mountains and lowlands of the region.

The second phase of the war, according to Tofa, Alagaw and Kinkoh (2022), began as the Federal government installed an interim government in Mekelle, while TPLF fighters continued guerrilla fighting. The fighting was shortly led to either killing and or capturing of senior TPLF leaders in the next months. However, according to reports, the Federal government's effort to convince the Tigray population to rally behind the interim administration against TPLF was not successful. In May 2021 Ethiopian House of People's Representatives (HPRs), designated¹⁶ TPLF as a terrorist organization (Al Jazeera, 2021) and furthered military operations against the Tigray forces. However, TPLF had reorganized itself using guerrilla war tactic and conducted a successful fighting against the allied federal forces and managed to regain major places of Tigray including the capital Mekelle. On June 28, 2021, the federal government declared an immediate unilateral ceasefire, with a purpose they described "to enable farmers to till their land, aid groups to operate without any military movement around and engage with remnants who seek peace," (Associated Press, 2021).¹⁷ According to Tofa, Alagaw and Kinkoh (2022) Ethiopia government forces' full withdrawal from Tigray in late June 2021 might have been influenced by multiple factors including reversal of military successes and international pressure as well as growing concern over the devastating humanitarian crises. The humanitarian situation in the region had attracted the

¹⁴ Amnesty International. (2021, November 12). Accessed on March 21, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/ethiopia-investigation-reveals-evidence-that-scores-of-civilians-were-killed-in-massacre-in-tigray-state/>

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch. (2021, March 05). Accessed on March 21, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/05/ethiopia-eritrean-forces-massacre-tigray-civilians>

¹⁶ However, according to VOA English report, HPRs lifted the TPLF's terrorist designation on March 22, 2023. The move described as a step for smooth implementation of the Pretoria peace agreement concluded between Ethiopian government and TPLF. The decision was however faced fierce debate in the parliament in which out of 472 members, 61 voted against the decision and five abstained. Accessed on March 22, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.voanews.com/a/ethiopian-authorities-remove-terrorist-label-from-tigrayan-party/7016589.html>

¹⁷ Associated Press. (2021, June 29). Accessed on March 22, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://apnews.com/article/ethiopia-tigray-cease-fire-2745f0941cafcfa8fbc4c9f945f0925d>

attention of the international community; notably the UN, the U.S. and EU had repeatedly issued statements calling to unfettered access to humanitarian assistance, ceasefire and negotiated peace deals (UN, 2021¹⁸; Department of State 2021).

The third phase started as TPLF rejected the government's unilateral ceasefire and requested full withdrawal Federal, Amhara and Eritrean forces from Tigray. By early July 2021 TPLF expanded the war to neighboring Amhara and Afar regions, according to Tofa, Alagaw and Kinkoh (2022). The Federal forces in alliance with Amhara and Afar security forces initially managed to redress TPLF advancement to neighboring regions. However, according to international media reports Tigray forces had captured the strategic towns of Dessie and Kombolcha in Amhara regional state in October and November 2021 (Al Jazeera, 2021¹⁹; France 24, 2021²⁰). Later in October TPLF forces were able to eventually move up to Debre Sina, about 190 KM from Addis Ababa. The advancement of TPLF towards Addis Ababa led to the declaration of six months of nationwide State of Emergency (SoE) by the Federal government on November 2, 2021. The SoE was "aimed to protect civilians from atrocities being committed by the terrorist TPLF group in several parts of the country," according to international media reports (Reuters, 2021)²¹. Amnesty International report revealed that TPLF forces had committed human rights violations against civilians in different towns of Amhara regional state, specifically in Kobo and Chenna, during their occupations (Amnesty International, 2022)²².

The fourth phase of the war started on November 24, 2021, when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced that he decided to lead the army from battlefield in person starting from the next day. "Those who want to be among the Ethiopian children, who will be hailed by history, rise up for your country today. Let's meet at the front," the prime minister was quoted in a BBC report, (BBC,

¹⁸ UN. (2021, July 2). Accessed March 22, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://europeansting.com/2021/06/11/eu-u-s-joint-statement-on-the-humanitarian-emergency-in-tigray/>

¹⁹ Al Jazeera. (2021, October 30). Accessed on March 22, 2023. Retrieved from:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/30/ethiopias-tigray-rebels-say-captured-strategic-town-of-dessie>

²⁰ France 24. (2021, November 01). Accessed on March 22, 2023. Retrieved from:

<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20211101-ethiopian-forces-battle-tigrayan-rebels-for-control-of-key-town>

²¹ Reuters (2021, November 2). Accessed on March 23, 2023. Retrieved from:

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/addis-ababa-government-urges-residents-register-arms-media-2021-11-02/>

²² Amnesty International (2022, February 16). Accessed on March 23, 2023. Retrieved from:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/ethiopia-tigrayan-forces-murder-rape-and-pillage-in-attacks-on-civilians-in-amhara-towns/>

2021)²³. A Few days after the prime minister reportedly went to the battlefield, TPLF forces were defeated in Afar, and Amhara battlefield and retreated to Tigray region. The major factor that brought a shift in military victory in favor of the government during this time was reportedly the use of unmanned armed drones by the federal government. Al Jazeera report (2021) for instance reveal that the Federal government might have used unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or armed drones made of Iran, China and Turkey which helped in destroying TPLF weapons, strategic locations and forces and effectively reversed their advancement to Addis Ababa (Al Jazeera, 2021). In October 2022, the U.S. also accused Iran of sending armed drones to Ethiopia in 2021 in violation of the UN security council's resolution (Anadolu, 2022)²⁴.

The fifth and the final phase of the war thus started in August 2022 where the Ethiopian government, during this time, conducted heavy attacks accompanied by multiple aircraft strikes in different strategic places in Tigray including capital Mekelle. According to media reports the final round of military attack by Ethiopian government forces had effectively weakened TPLF military capabilities. This phase lasted for more than three months (August-October 2022) and finally ended with a negotiated peace deal in Pretoria.

3.3 The Pretoria Peace Agreement

On November 2, 2022, Ethiopian government and TPLF signed a peace deal in Pretoria, South Africa. The African Union (AU) led the peace deal. The peace agreement was warmly welcomed by international actors including the UN and U.S.- who were strongly concerned about the war and its consequences and participated in the capacity of observers in the peace deal process. The success of the peace deal has been praised as an important demonstration for the African Union's peace diplomacy. Notably, it was entirely led by the African Union through its special envoy Olusegun Obasanjo and managed to achieve peace agreement as an African solution to one of the recent bloody wars in the continent (Wilson Center, 2023)²⁵. The mediation process involved multiple actors. Olusegun Obasanjo, the AU High Representative for Horn of Africa played a key role in

²³ BBC (2021, November 230). Accessed on March 23, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59386181>

²⁴ Anadolu. (2022, October 16). Accessed on March 23, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/us-iran-sent-ethiopia-military-drones-in-2021-in-violation-of-un-resolution-/2714908>

²⁵ Wilson Center. (2023, February 15). Accessed on March 21, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://africaupclose.wilsoncenter.org/ethiopias-tigray-conflict-peace-deal-african-union/>

facilitating the mediation by making diplomatic shuttles between Mekelle and Addis Ababa. South Africa had also provided good office, accommodation, and security for the peace deal; while the U.S helped through logistics in transporting the TPLF negotiating team to and from Pretoria and participated as observer on the deal.

Other scholars see the peace deal as an important event that had saved the TPLF from imminent death as organization. Abbink (Interview, January 05, 2023) for instance argued that TPLF surrendered to the peace agreement only after they unequivocally proved that the Federal government would eliminate them during the effective military offensive carried out in September-October 2022. Moreover, the Pretoria peace agreement also triggered discussions and reflections from researchers and diplomats. The former U.S. special envoy to Horn of Africa, Jeffery Feltman (2022), for instance, argued in his article published on Foreign Affairs online magazine that the AU led peace negotiation although achieved unexpected successes, it has major hurdles which would hamper its implementations. One of such limitations is ignoring the Eritrean issue, an important party in the conflict, in the peace deal.

Feltman stated (2022:2)²⁶

Even more troubling, they all but ignore the largest potential spoiler. Eritrea, which has been fighting alongside the Ethiopian government in Tigray, is neither a party to the agreement nor mentioned by name in the text. Although Asmara has been aligned with Addis Ababa throughout the conflict, it views the TPLF as an existential threat and may not be content with a peace deal that leaves the organization intact and its leaders alive.

Others argue that Eritrea is mistakenly considered as a problem in the Ethiopia government-TPLF peace process. Abbink (Interview, January 05, 2023), for example commented that considering Eritrea as a major problem in the peace process was totally mistaken as it would mean Eritrean has power to influence Ethiopian government decisions. Eritrea has been the major foreign forces allied with the Ethiopian government in fighting against the TPLF. Obasanjo, the lead AU mediator, confirmed to international media that Eritrean forces have left Tigray and camped in border areas (Financial Times, 2023)²⁷. The implementation of the peace agreement has been

²⁶ Foreign Affairs. (2022, December 26). Accessed on March 20, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ethiopia/ethiopias-hard-road-peace>

²⁷ Financial Times. (2023, January 15, 2023). Accessed on March 21, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.ft.com/content/2f385e95-0899-403a-9e3b-ed8c24adf4e7>

progressing with some issues, such how to hold accountable those responsible for the grave human rights violations during the war, remaining unanswered during the preparation of this thesis. In January 2023 local and international media reported that TPLF surrendered heavy weapons to the federal government as per the peace agreement and African Union monitoring team confirmed the handover as a crucial step towards full implementation of the peace process (BBC, 2022)²⁸. Consequently, the Ethiopian House of People’s Representatives (HPRs) delisted TPLF from the terrorist designation in March 2023. The decision, however, met with fierce debate and opposition in the HPRs where sixty-one members of the parliament voted against while five abstained (Addis Standard, 2023).²⁹

²⁸ BBC. (2023, January 11). Accessed on March 21, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64229074>

²⁹ Addis Standard. (2023, March 22). Accessed on March 30, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://addisstandard.com/newsalert-ethiopian-parliament-de-lists-tplf-from-terrorist-designation/>

CHAPTER FOUR

ISSUES AND TRENDS IN RECENT ETHIO-U.S. RELATIONS

This chapter begins with discussing the most recent relationship and trends in the Ethio-U.S. relations. It will also provide concise information on the various phases of the war during the two years – November 2020 to October 2022– to lay ground for the succeeding sections. Finally, the key issues and factors that have impacted the relationships between the two countries over the war will be discussed to address a specific objective of the study.

4.1 Overview of Recent Bilateral Relations

Ethiopia and U.S. enjoyed over a century-old diplomatic relations. The bilateral relations officially began in 1903 when a “Treaty of Amity and Commerce” was concluded between Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II and the U.S. consul, Robert P Skinner on 27 December 1903. The treaty which ushered in the beginning of the long historical bilateral relations was initially focused on trade relations between the two countries. The first U.S. Legation was established in Addis Ababa on 6 July 1909 when the U.S. Consul General Hoffman Philip presented his credentials to the corresponding Ethiopian government authorities to promote better trade prospects with the country (Getachew, 2009).

According to Shinn, the former U.S. ambassador to Ethiopia, (2018), Ethio-U.S. relations entered a significant phase only after WWII. In the 1950s, the Ethio-U.S. relationship was largely dominated by the U.S. security assistance to Emperor Haile Selassie, whilst strengthening trade ties following the treaty of amity and economic relations signed in 1951. Emperor Haile Selassie also sent its special forces, Imperial guards, named Kagnew Battalion to South Korea who fought against North Korea alongside the U.S. army in 1952/53. Kagnew Battalion is Ethiopian Royal Guards of Emperor Haile Selassie who fought along 32nd Regiment of the 7th U.S. Infantry Division as a response to the U.S. led UN forces assisting South Korea against invasion by communist North Korea and ally China from 1951-1953. The Battalion was awarded³⁰ a prestigious citation from South Korean government for its outstanding performance. Kagnew station, the U.S.

³⁰ South Korean Ministry of Patriots and Veteran Affairs. Accessed on March 20, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.mpva.go.kr/english/contents.do?key=1332>.

communications facility established outside Asmara in Eritrea was also considered as one of the major components of the Ethio-U.S. relations in the post WWII.

Getachew (2009:38) noted:

Emperor Haile Selassie, like Emperor Menelik, wanted to cultivate a close relationship with the US because he believed that the US, unlike most European countries, had no colonial aspirations. This may have seemed to be the case before World War II, when the US talked about isolationism and dismissed Africa as a European sphere of influence. That policy soon changed.

However, the relationship was severed during the military *Derg* regime (1974-1991) in Ethiopia, mainly due to the USSR's influence in Ethiopia as *Derg* regime became ally to communist USSR at the expense of losing the U.S. (Shinn, 2018), explained that *Derg* expected more security assistance from the U.S. to crash internal oppositions and external enemies, whilst the U.S. wasn't in the position to deliver as requested. *Derg* then demanded the U.S. to shut down of *Kagnew* facility and withdrew from the country as it turned its face to the east which gave the communist USSR and its East Europe allies to jump-in and establish an influential relationship with Ethiopia. However, the disintegration of the USSR in 1989 and the defeat of *Derg* by the EPRDF in 1991 gave the U.S. the opportunity to return to Ethiopia. Shinn (2018: 62) described the post 1991 as important milestone in the Ethio-U.S. relations as follows:

It is essential to an understanding of relations with Ethiopia that the US policy rarely considers Ethiopia in isolation. Ethiopia has been regarded as the key player in the Horn of Africa, as result, accorded special importance because of the role (positive or negative) that it can play in neighbouring Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, and Somali Land. This is especially important for the US policy dealing with regional counterterrorism efforts, peacekeeping, and regional stability.

In the post 1991, the Ethio-U.S. bilateral relations have evolved into more important strategic level. The major focuses of the U.S., in the post 1991 in Ethiopia has been democratic governance, political liberalization and enhanced human rights and economic reforms in Ethiopia (Shinn, 2018). However, Seife (2018) contends that the U.S. foreign policy that aims to promote human rights in Ethiopia has faced tough challenges in the post 1991. He argued that the challenges have emanated from the definitions accorded to human rights by the U.S. foreign policy establishment- which sometimes failed to apply to the Ethiopian context as a new transition to democracy. He also argued

that complicated interests of the U.S., due to policy unclarity on strategic interests and long-term partnership also poses significant drawbacks in the relations in the post 1991.

It has been evident that human rights issues remain bone of contention in the Ethio-U.S. in the post 1991 relations. The U.S. has been frequently publishing human rights practices in Ethiopia annually for quite a longer period. However, in most of the cases Ethiopian government has officially rejected the reports. For instance, in March 2023 the U.S. established³¹ that Ethiopia National Defense Force, Eritrean Forces and TPLF forces committed war crimes during the conflict in northern Ethiopia. However, the Ethiopian government outrightly officially³² rejected the statement as inflammatory and harmful to the peace process as well as restoration of strategic relations between Ethiopia and the U.S. Shinn (2018) also noted that although there have always been differences on human rights and democratic rights progress in Ethiopia, there has been a wide range of cooperation between Ethiopia and the U.S. on regional issues. This is clearly observed in the U.S. support to Ethiopia in its counter terrorism and peacekeeping operations to address the crisis in Somalia; sending its peacekeeping forces to Rwanda; working to influence Islamist Sudan to change its policies.

The September 11, 2001, major terrorist attack carried out by Al Qaeda against the U.S. has transformed Ethio-U.S. relations to a more strategic level. According to Negassa (2020), in the post 9/11 attack the U.S. considered international security as a major priority to safeguard its national interest. Ethiopia became the major ally of the War on Terror in the Horn of Africa in the same year and along with Kenya and benefited from the 100 million USD initial fund from the U.S. program for capacity building for counterterrorism in the East and Horn of Africa. According to Negassa (2020) the divergence of security interest of Ethiopia and the U.S. in the Horn of Africa facilitated the strategic partnership as Ethiopian wanted to be safe from terrorist threat from Al Shabaab in Somalia and the U.S. also aimed to end an Al Shabaab, Al Qaeda affiliate, operatives in Somalia. The U.S. assisted Ethiopia through finance, logistics and techniques in the fight against Al Shabaab. Others also argue common regional security interest was not the only explanation for the strategic alliance. Yonas (2016), for instance argued that Ethiopia's active role in the fight

³¹ State Department. (March 20, 2023). Accessed on March 23, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/war-crimes-crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-in-ethiopia/>

³² Reuters. (2021, March 12). Accessed on March 23, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopia-calls-us-accusations-war-crimes-inflammatory-2023-03-21/>

against terrorism in the Horn Africa attributed to its domestic concerns rather than regional security challenges. The author contended the Ethiopian government had used counter terrorism campaigns in the post 2005 election to suppress local genuine dissents. For example, Ethiopian government military intervention in Somalia in 2006 to oust Islamic Courts Union, although originally attained its purposes in Somalia, it also utilized it as an instrument by the regime to delegitimize internal oppositions in the name of fighting against terrorism in the post 2005 controversial general elections.

Verhoeven and Woldemariam (2022:669) also noted:

The importance of Ethiopia to U.S. security and regional stability objectives have meant that its human rights record, its overbearing attitude vis-à-vis neighbors and its reluctance to adopt neoliberal reforms have been frequently overlooked, as long as governments in Addis were willing to lead in confronting socialist and Islamist enemies and help safeguard Western regional interests.

The political reform that occurred in Ethiopia in 2018 has also made more positive progress on the established bilateral and strategic Ethio-U.S. relations. Feltman (2021)³³, the former U.S. special envoy in the Horn of Africa, noted that the U.S. warmly welcomed the diversified reforms initiated by the government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in Ethiopia, in the post 2018, which was accompanied by unprecedented increase in bilateral partnership and cooperation during the initial periods of the reform process. He acclaimed that the two countries reached consensus to promote democracy and economic reforms as important steps to realize the intended sets of reforms in Ethiopia. He commended that the U.S. gave more than 4.2 billion USD to Ethiopia from 2016-2020 alone with the aim of supporting the reform process.

Blanchard (2020:10) stated the significance of the Ethiopian 2018 reform to furthering bilateral relations and strategic partnership between the two countries as follows:

Prime Minister Abiy's election and the political transition in Ethiopia presented an opportunity for the United States to improve and deepen its relationship with the country, make inroads for U.S. investment and trade, and advance several U.S. foreign policy objectives, including in a context of rising competition in the region with other global powers. U.S. officials welcomed Abiy's efforts to promote reforms in the country and peace in the region

³³ Department of State (2021, November 01). Accessed on March 20, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/a-perspective-on-the-ethiopian-u-s-relationship-after-a-year-of-conflict/>

and promised support for several of his initiatives. His replacement of the long-serving heads of the military, intelligence service, and police in 2018 presented an opportunity to improve the U.S.-Ethiopia security relationship, which has been affected by human rights concerns and other tensions.

The researcher also argued that the 2018 unprecedented reform in Ethiopia has shown major setbacks in the following years which posed significant concerns at local, regional, and international levels, which also adversely affected furthering bilateral relations.

4.2 Trends in the Relations in the Prelude to the War

Data obtained from diversified sources show that Ethio-U.S. bilateral and strategic relations show a decline in terms of its scope in the prelude to the war. One of the major issues that contributed to the decline in bilateral relations was the controversy over Ethiopian the management and operation of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)³⁴ during President Trump’s regime (January 2017-January 2021). According to Kassa (2021), for instance, the issue posed a major flaw in the Ethio-U.S. relations pre-Ethiopian the war. The author argued that President Trump’s administration took a clear side³⁵ with the Egyptian government and put significant diplomatic warfare on Ethiopia to sign a tripartite treaty on regulation of the GERD. He also remarked that Trump’s speech in which he stated “Egypt will blow-up the dam” if Ethiopia doesn’t succumb to American pressure was like a bombshell against the established Ethio-U.S. relations (Kassa, 2021:2).

Similarly, Verhoeven and Woldemariam (2022: 638) noted “From the beginning, the effort was compromised by Washington’s pro-Egyptian bias, driven in large measure by the understanding that Egypt was essential to the Trump administration’s ambitious plans to redraw regional geopolitics”. Nigusu and Subasi (2021) also referred to the speech as “Trump’s Securitization

³⁴ Ethiopia is constructing a mega hydroelectric project known as Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on Blue Nile River in Benishangul Gumuz region since 2011. The dam will be Africa’s largest hydroelectric power with capacity generating over 6000 Mega Watt. Operation and management of the GERD has raised dispute between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan which led to deadlocks, although different multilateral and bilateral efforts made to facilitate negotiations between the three parties. The U.S initiative also supported by World Bank, known as Washington round negotiation, held between 2019-2020 but it ended without agreement as Ethiopia withdrew claiming the U.S proposed agreement would harm the national interest of the country. German Institute for Global and Area Studies. (2021, November 4). Accessed on March 20, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/the-political-deadlock-on-the-grand-ethiopian-renaissance-dam>

³⁵ Egypt is also a top recipient of U.S assistance in the world due to its strategic significance to the U.S in the politics of middle east and regional security. Data compiled by the U.S Congressional Research Service (CRS) in 2022, for instance reveals, Egypt as the second top recipient of U.S assistance in the world next to Israel. CRS. (2022, January 10). Accessed on March 20, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R40213>

Speech Act on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)". They argued that although the U.S. participation to end deadlock between Ethiopia and Egypt over GERD operations and management was taken as good diplomatic intervention, Trump's speech that claimed, "Egypt would blow-up Ethiopia's dam", was not only adversely affected the Ethio-U.S. relations but was also complicated the water diplomacy over Nile. They argued that President Trump's unfriendly position had fully eroded the U.S. proposal on GERD negotiation.

Information obtained from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) of Ethiopia also confirmed a similar flaw in the bilateral relations during the Trump administration prelude to the war. Tesfaye (interview January 20, 2023) stated:

The Ethio-U.S. relations was very good during successive regimes and Ethiopia has been recognised by the U.S. as a stabilizing force in the Horn of Africa. However, the relations faced severe challenges during the Trump administration when the administration took a position that would cause significant harm to Ethiopia's national interest over the GERD. The U.S. initially wanted to serve as a good office for a proposed tripartite negotiation on management of GERD in 2019. Later, they facilitated a draft agreement without consent of Ethiopia and attempted to pressurize Ethiopia to sign it. But Ethiopia consequently withdrew from the Washington round negotiation by declining the imposed agreement which would harm its national interest.

Tesfaye also confirmed that the Trump administration took a clear side with Egypt during the Washington round of negotiation. He noted that the relations became tougher when the Trump administration withheld millions of dollars³⁶ in aid to Ethiopia after the country declined to sign the imposed agreement. Senior researchers from the U.S. think-tank institutions also concur with the Tesfaye's explanation about the decline in the Ethio-U.S. strategic partnership in the before the war. Estelle³⁷ (2020), for instance, argued the bilateral strategic partnership has been diminishing unrealistically although Ethiopia would remain an especially important partner to the U.S. in the new global power competition in the Horn of Africa. She advised that the U.S. should recognize the rapidly changing domestic and regional dynamics in Ethiopia and the strategically important Horn of Africa and protect its national interests in a bid with other powers notable China, Russia,

³⁶ Trump Administration's aid cut to Ethiopia over the GERD to the amount of \$272 million was also reported by international news agencies such as Associated Press in February 2021. The report was retrieved in March 2023 and available at <https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-egypt-humanitarian-assistance-ethiopia-kenya-e3f47fc14084da52daea64fe078deaa6>

³⁷ Emily Estelle is a senior analyst at the American Enterprise Institute and the Africa Team Lead.

UAE, Turkey, Qatar, and others. Similarly, Gabriel³⁸ (2022) contended that the contemporary U.S. policy in the strategic Horn of Africa region lacks coherence and clarity. He further argued the U.S. opted to respond to individual events rather than formulating comprehensive policy for the region and such limitations, for instance, made the U.S. response to Ethiopian conflict poorly prepared and difficult to comprehend. He also advised that the U.S. should formulate more inclusive, value-driven, and long term oriented foreign policy for the region as to foster reliable regional cooperation in the emerging middle class and growing economies in the region.

Verhoeven and Woldemariam (2022) in their study entitled “Who Lost Ethiopia” concluded that, Ethiopia, one of the prominent regional allies engulfed in the state of instability due to the erroneous foreign policy direction the U.S. exhibited from 2018-2020 by assisting Abiy government in the consolidation power with the intention of recalibrating the dysfunctional Ethio-U.S. relations during EPRF regime; winning the geopolitical competition with China and reconfiguring the Middle Eastern politics.

Verhoeven and Woldemariam (2022: 644) remarked:

As we demonstrated, Ethiopia as an imagined or real battleground in great power competition with China was one crucial aspect of Washington's strategic calculus, as was the belief that the Abiy's rise would strengthen the redrawing of regional order in the Middle East. Yet this move came with a hefty price tag: U.S. support was taken as a de facto carte blanche by the PM and his allies, inducing problems of moral hazard that undermined the stability of one of America's most prominent African anchors.

The U.S. remains the major humanitarian and development donor to Ethiopia despite major diplomatic tensions over the war. According to the official data released by the Department of State (2022), the U.S. has provided an estimated USD 3.16 billion in humanitarian aid to Ethiopia in response to the war and recurrent drought since 2020. The Department of State (2022: 1), explained³⁹ assistance provided to Ethiopia during the Fiscal Year 2022 as follows:

The United States spent approximately \$1.93 billion in FY 2022. Most of this funding went towards humanitarian aid, with USAID and the State Department providing \$1.55 billion. Drought-related assistance supports agriculture; food assistance; nutrition; water, sanitation,

³⁸ Gabriel Nigatu is a senior research fellow at the U.S Think-tank, the Atlantic Council.

³⁹ Department of State (2022, November 2) accessed March April 1, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-and-ethiopia-a-long-term-partnership/>

and hygiene (WASH); protection of vulnerable populations; and health activities. The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration provided more than \$140 million in protection and multi-sectoral assistance for refugees, IDPs, and conflict victims.

The Department of State (2022) also announced the major focus areas of the U.S. government in Ethiopia in the post-conflict. These include humanitarian and development assistance, health assistance, human rights assistance and climate and food security.

4.3 Issues Affected Ethio-U.S. Relations over the War

According to information obtained from MoFA, there are two major issues that has affected the Ethio-U.S. relations over the war. The first issue was an alleged human rights violations established by the U.S. government against Ethiopian federal government during the war. The U.S. claims about Ethiopian government blockage of humanitarian access to Tigray and calls for “unfettered humanitarian access to Tigray” was also connected to this. The U.S. Secretary General, Antony Blinken, (2023)⁴⁰ concluded through official press statement: “After careful review of the law and the facts, I have determined that members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF), Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) forces, and Amhara forces committed war crimes during the conflict in northern Ethiopia”. Some of the scholars interviewed for this study argue that the U.S. human rights policy on Ethiopia over the war and subsequent actions taken by the U.S. didn’t consider the reality on the ground. For instance, Abbink (interview, January 20, 2023) argues that the alleged U.S. human rights concern did not consider the right of the country to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity given the tragic attack on the national defense force by TPLF. He further argued that the U.S. did not make a good turn in its human rights policy on Ethiopia over the war as it has adversely affected the long-established strategic relations between the two countries.

Gabriel (interview, January 28, 2023) also explained the human rights and humanitarian concern of the U.S. over the war as less noble but has some reasonable grounds.

The Biden administration was very determined to ensure that no million Ethiopians; from Tigray, Amhara and Afar are dying, on their watch. There was this obsessive concern about

⁴⁰ Department of State. (2023, March 20). Accessed on March 21, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/war-crimes-crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-in-ethiopia/>

getting food aid as quickly as possible to conflict affected peoples and ensure that millions will not die and there will not be humanitarian catastrophe in the conflict.

The former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Herman Cohen (2023), on the other hand, argued that the U.S. concern during the war should be justified on the points that Ethiopia has been a major ally of the U.S. in the Horn of Africa and the dispute could have been resolved peacefully. He contended that the U.S. was primarily interested in war to stop immediately meanwhile the U.S. also recognized the concern of the government in Addis Ababa to ensure full control over all territory of the country including Tigray region (Cohen, 2023).

The second, and a major issue according to Tesfaye (interview January 05, 2023), was a global power competition in the Horn of Africa. He explained that although human rights violations were brought as concern by the U.S. government starting from the initial period of the war, the major issue that brought about tough relations between the two countries was global power competition in the Horn of Africa. The U.S. has asserted that Ethiopia would remain its sole ally in the strategic Horn of Africa region in the post 2018 political reform based on perceived ideological alignment. They even agitating to cancel some of projects given to China in Ethiopia. But Ethiopia eventually demonstrated that the country would not follow an ideological driven foreign policy and consequently pursued a foreign policy that promotes the country's national interest, irrespective of ideological alignment.

Tesfaye (interview January 20, 2023) further remarked:

In the post 2018 political reform Ethiopia established strong cooperation with all foreign states to safeguard her national interest. But the U.S. held a position that Ethiopia would serve as a strategic ally of the U.S. and may not have similar relations with others such as China. But Ethiopia opted to continue strong relations with countries such as China, Russia, and others. The driving force has been promoting Ethiopia's national interest. Thus, the war happened during this controversy and hence served as a pretext for the decline in the Ethio-U.S. relations, while the real cause was global power competition in the Horn of Africa.

Gabriel (interview, January 28, 2023) further describes the issue in relations to the strategic interests of the U.S. and its allies in the Horn of Africa. He argued that the strategic interest of the U.S. in Horn of Africa overrides the U.S. interest in the war. The U.S. worried that if Ethiopia with a population over 120 million peoples trapped by a broader war, it would have a significant spillover effect to the rest of the region and eventually fully destabilize the Horn of Africa, which

is known as the conflict spot region. The strategic interest has to do with the U.S. and its allies' interest in the geopolitics of the region; access to the Red Sea; Djibouti- where the U.S. has naval command⁴¹ for the Horn of Africa region and more importantly the passage at the Bab-el-Mandeb⁴² with significant military and commercial interest to the U.S. as well as the west. Thus, the U.S. worried that the war in Ethiopia had the potential to disrupt all these strategic interests (ibid).

According to Remnek (1990), the strategic significance of the Horn of Africa and Bab-el-Mandeb is attached to their geographic locations, although meagre resources in the region would also play a role. They connect the two major international waterways namely Red Sea and Indian Ocean while also serving as a connection across the strait from the Arabian Peninsula to Suez Canal. The proximity of the region to strategic places such as Persian Gulf, and Sea lanes make it even more important in the transportation of oil and other commercial activities. On the other hand, there are diplomats who observe the global power competition in the Horn of Africa as nonviable in the current context. For instance, Cohen (interview, January 24, 2023) argues that he does not see any competition between superpowers in the region, rather viable opportunities for collaboration based on interests of different actors. He further contended that the region could offer rooms for collaboration between diversified powers and states on trade, development, security, and others as per their need without entering competitions.

Another issue raised by Gabriel in relation to the declining Ethio-U.S. relations over the war is the TPLF leaders established loyalty to the successive U.S. administrations. He argued that TPLF had a lot of friends in the U.S. administration; bought a lot of loyalties in the due course and even spent a lot of money on lobbying for support during its 30 years of reign in Ethiopia.

Gabriel (interview, January 28, 2023) remarked:

TPLF acted as messenger of the U.S. during the entire Meles Zenawi's regime. For instance, they [U.S.] instructed him to send the Ethiopian military to Somalia, South Sudan, or others, Meles did without blinking his eyes. Meles made Ethiopia the security lynchpin

⁴¹ Since 2001 the U.S established special naval command base in Djibouti named "Camp Lemonnier", which serves as the primary base of operations for U.S. Africa Command in the Horn of Africa. The base comprises about 4,000 U.S; joint and allied forces military and civilian personnel and U.S. Department of Defense contractors. Accessed on March 22, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://cnreurafcen.navy.mil/Installations/Camp-Lemonnier-Djibouti/>

⁴² Bab-el-Mandeb is a passage that connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and separates Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula, and Djibouti and Eritrea in the Horn of Africa.

for the Horn of Africa. The U.S. could count on Ethiopia to restore and maintain peace and stability in the region.

He further argued there are many previous TPLF friends in the Biden administration and they might have influenced the U.S. policy and misinformed the world on what had been happening on the ground to preserve TPLF during the war. Abbink (2021) also strongly argued in his article that the U.S. had been strongly condemning Ethiopian government and Eritrean forces for alleged human right violations in Tigray but did not speak strongly about atrocities committed by TPLF when they expanded the war to Amhara and Afar regions in 2021. However, the Biden Administration dismissed the claim that the U.S. administration had been supporting TPLF during the war. Asked directly why the U.S. supports TPLF the U.S. Department of State Spokesperson, Price (2022)⁴³, responded:

We support the cause of peace. We support stability and security for the people of Ethiopia. Our message has been a simple one. We have called on the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray regional authorities to immediately halt their military offensives and to pursue a negotiated settlement through peace talks under the auspices of the African Union. We have worked very closely with the African Union, with other partners on the continent to engage in that process of diplomacy.

Gabriel maintained that unlike the Meles regime, Abiy administration in Ethiopia has been equally friendly to the west such as the U.S. as much as it was with the east such as China, Russia, Middle East, and others. He asserted unlike the TPLF administration Abiy regime in Ethiopia not been loyal to the U.S., which might have influenced the U.S. policy on Ethiopia overtime before and during the war. In conclusion as per the information obtained from multiple sources, at least three major issues have affected the Ethio-U.S. relations over the war between federal government and TPLF. First is alleged human rights violations and blockage of access to humanitarian aid held by the U.S.; second global power competition in the Horn of Africa as well as U.S. and its allies' strategic interest in the region and finally is a controversial TPLF loyalty to the U.S. during its nearly 30 years rule in Ethiopia and an alleged U.S. support to preserve TPLF during the war.

⁴³ U.S Department of State. (2022, September 26). Accessed on 23 March 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/departments-press-briefing-september-26-2022/#post-381358-ETHIOPIA>

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS OF THE WAR ON ETHIO-U.S. DIPLOMATIC, ECONOMIC, AND SECURITY PARTNERSHIPS

The war has had a variety of effects on long-established Ethio-U.S. relations. This chapter briefly looks at the implications of the war on diplomatic, economic, and security relations and cooperation between the two countries based on primary and secondary data obtained from a variety of sources.

5.1 Implications on Bilateral Diplomatic Relations

5.1.1 Strained relations and “hybrid war” narrative

The war between federal government and TPLF resulted in the strained bilateral diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and the U.S. Consequently, the U.S. used its influence and allies to exert strong diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia. Tesfaye explains this as the diplomatic pressure that the U.S. and its allies exerted to advance the Ethiopian conflict agenda, with the intention of imposing sanctions on the Ethiopian government.

Tesfaye (interview January 20, 2023) remarked:

The U.S., as the most influential world power, rallied its allies to bring the Ethiopian issue to the table thirteen times in one short year at the UN Security Council. However, thanks to the cooperation of friendly permanent member states of the UN Security Council, Ethiopia managed to drop the agendas before they were formally addressed in the Council meetings. Had the agendas been adopted by the UNSC, Ethiopia would have suffered significant damage. However, U.S. diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia has weakened existing bilateral relations between the two countries.

The former special envoy to the Horn of Africa Jeffery Feltman (2021), in his article published by the State Department, also noted that the war had quickly and negatively affected the established diplomatic and strategic relationship between the two countries. He claimed that the war and its effects have significantly compromised the U.S. hopes for reviving and strengthening bilateral relations since Ethiopia's reform in 2018. Feltman stated that the war has caused great concern to the U.S. Government because of human rights abuses committed by the warring parties, the Ethiopian Government's denial of humanitarian access to the conflict-affected population in the Tigray region, and its refusal to respond to the Biden Administration's call for a cessation of hostilities and a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Feltman noted (2021: 2)

The United States and others cannot continue "business as usual" relations with the Government of Ethiopia. The extraordinary partnership we have enjoyed is not sustainable while the military conflict continues to expand, threatening the stability and unity of one of Africa's most influential countries and the fundamental well-being of its people.

Scholars also argue that the U.S. imposed aggressive diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia during the war, some of which they described as "hybrid warfare" consisting of a combination of diplomatic and foreign policy coercion designed to bring about regime change in Ethiopia. For example, Sewale (2021) argued in his article that the UN Security Council's interference in Ethiopia's internal affairs was orchestrated by the U.S. and European allies with the intent of regime change in Ethiopia. "The elected government of Ethiopia was to be replaced by the TPLF leaders" who had demonstrated their obedience to U.S. orders in the Horn of Africa region. Worku (2021) agrees with Sewale regarding the Biden administration's alleged intention for regime change in Ethiopia during the war. He concluded that the U.S. was hostile to the Abiy government in Ethiopia due to three factors: first, the historical alliance between the U.S. and the TPLF, with the latter serving as an obedient partner in carrying out the former's foreign policy in the Horn of Africa; second, the Biden administration's desire to continue to portray the U.S. as a "beacon of hope" throughout the world; and third, the Abiy government's refusal to fully comply with U.S. orders.

In a paper he wrote on the policy of the U.S and west towards Ethiopian during the war Abbink (2021) also critically argued that U.S. diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia was not based on constructive diplomacy. He went on to say that U.S. diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia suffers from two limitations. First, he said, diplomatic pressure threatened the country's sovereignty and independence because the government was responding to an imminent attack that threatened the country's unity. Second, the diplomatic pressure was unbalanced; it was harsh on the Ethiopian government but mild on the TPLF.

In contrast, Felbab-Brown (2021), a senior researcher at the U.S. think tank Brookings, argued in her article that U.S. sanctions were essential to protecting human rights and even the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity considering the involvement of external forces such as Eritrean armed forces in the war. She advised the U.S. government to be tougher on its former ally to manage the escalating crisis before it engulfs the entire country. Cohen (2023) also strongly

disagrees with the assertion that the U.S. intended to bring about regime change in Ethiopia during the war.

Cohen (interview, January 24, 2023) commented:

I do not think the U.S. Government was interested in regime change in Ethiopia during the war. There was no such interest at all. The U.S. wanted Ethiopia completely at peace, without internal wars. Ethiopia should continue to contribute to the peaceful development of the East African region. Ethiopia should focus on its economic development in partnership with the U.S. and other countries.

5.1.2 Diplomatic Discourse and Changing Alliances

The study of Verhoeven and Woldemariam (2022) stated that the Ethiopia-China partnership has been a problem for the United States since the EPRDF regime. Especially after the disputed Ethiopian parliamentary elections in 2005, when the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia officially began to implement the Ethiopian developmental state, which was adopted from the Chinese Communist Party, that basically violates the characteristics of liberal democracy. The authors noted that the EPRDF's commitment to the Chinese development model caused significant concern to U.S. officials because the model explicitly challenged the Washington Consensus, which promotes free market policies such as trade liberalization, privatization, and financial liberalization based on IMF and WB policies. Munday (2021) noted that U.S. diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia is forcing it to strengthen its relations with other world powers.

Munday stated (2021:1)

Growing US pressure has resulted in a diplomatic shift in the position of the Ethiopian government. Rather than cave to US pressure, Abiy's regime has instead further developed its relations with China, Russia, and other authoritarian states such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Turkey. Such engagement demonstrates the limits to which the Biden administration – and other external actors – can meaningfully influence the Ethiopian leadership.

The author further argued that the diplomatic position shift observed during the War further aggravated the diplomatic discourse between democracies and authoritarian states. He argues that the support that the Abiy government received from non-democratic world powers, particularly China and Russia, helped it to advance the war in its favor.



Picture: 2 Screenshot showing rally against the U.S and western policies during the war, took place in Addis Ababa in May 2021. Source: Africa News.

In reciprocity the Ethiopian government publicly praised China and Russian governments and further mobilized Ethiopian public from domestic and diaspora in support of these countries. In the public rally⁴⁴ conducted in Addis Ababa, attended by tens of thousands of demonstrators in April 2021, for example, the governments of China and Russia were publicly praised as friendly countries, while the Biden administration was portrayed as imperialist with neo-colonial aspirations. Information from the MoFA also confirms that Ethiopia has managed to obtain crucial support from world powers such as China and Russia to counter diplomatic pressure and punitive measures from the United States and its allies from European countries. The officials pointed out that the two countries proved their friendship when Ethiopia really needed their help, which raised the bilateral relations to a new level. Otherwise, Ethiopia would have suffered from the unbearable sanctions, the officials praised.

Blanchard's (2021) U.S. Congressional Research Service report also reflected the shifting alliances surrounding the war in Ethiopia. She noted that Russia and China repeatedly blocked efforts to put Ethiopia on the formal U.N. Security Council's agenda to end the devastating humanitarian crises in northern Ethiopia. Among senior U.S. lawmakers, Senator James Inhofe, who opposed U.S. diplomatic pressure and sanctions, had expressed his concern before the Senate on May 26, 2021,

⁴⁴ African Report. April 30, 2021. Accessed on April 15, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.africanews.com/2021/05/30/ethiopia-holds-anti-us-rally-over-tigray-supports-china-and-russia/>

that the U.S. is losing its long-term strategic partner in the Horn of Africa because of the Biden administration's misguided policies. He noted that China and Russia seized the opportunity to replace the U.S. in the Horn of Africa amid bilateral diplomatic challenges between Ethiopia and the U.S. Inhofe (2021)⁴⁵ noted “we know that China and Russia are encroaching into Africa. They want to create division between United States and Ethiopia and countries across the continent.”

Although Ethiopia has used great power competition as an advantage to resist strong diplomatic pressure from the U.S. and its allies during the war, other scholars argue that the country desperately needs U.S. support because it is highly dependent on aid and assistance from U.S.-allied international financial institutions. Schmidt (2023:2), for example, argues that "Addis Ababa needs U.S. and European money. It seeks support from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, where Washington has an inordinate influence." Information obtained from MoFA also indicates that the ministry engaged with several U.S. special envoys to the Horn of Africa and other influential U.S. officials during the war to create a clear picture of the war and the Ethiopian government's position in ensuring law and order in the country. The officials claim the discussions were helpful in easing diplomatic tensions between Ethiopia and the United States over the war to some extent. The U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa also made a strong effort to increase understanding and clarity about local realities with the U.S. Government and to revive friendly relations between the two countries as part of efforts to re-establish ties. The Embassy also confirmed a series of talks with the Ethiopian government on the war to avoid an escalation of the diplomatic conflict.

5.1.3 U.S. Sanctions and Draft Legislations and Ethiopia’s Response

The U.S. has imposed multiple sanctions on Ethiopia over the war with a claimed aim of ending the war and pressing warring parties to engage into peaceful mechanisms of resolving the conflict. Moreover, punitive human right legislations were also introduced at the U.S. congress for adoption against the Ethiopia and allies over the war. The list of sanctions and legislations will be briefly discussed under this subsection. Then their implications of the overall bilateral relations of the two

⁴⁵ Senator Jim Inhofe. Official YouTube channel. December 16, 2021. Accessed on April 16, 2023. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ5uBJxa_fg

countries have had further complicated the diplomatic relations between the two countries will be assessed based on the data obtained from different sources.

A) Visa Restrictions

In May 2021, the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced a sanction⁴⁶ entitled “Actions to Press for the Resolution of the Crisis in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia”. The major component of this sanction was visa restriction policy under Section 212(a)(3)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act on the issuance of visa. The sanction-imposed visa restrictions against former and current Ethiopian and Eritrean officials and military personnel and other individuals. The sanction also targeted “Amhara regional and irregular forces and members of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF)”. According to the sanction statement the targeted bodies were responsible for the growth human rights violations and undermined resolution of crises in Tigray region.

The sanction statement (2021) further explained the targets as:

This includes those who have conducted wrongful violence or other abuses against people in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, as well as those who have hindered access of humanitarian assistance to those in the region. Immediate family members of such persons may also be subject to these restrictions. Should those responsible for undermining a resolution of the crisis in Tigray fail to reverse course, they should anticipate further actions from the United States and the international community.

The objective of the sanction is stated as finding durable political solutions to the conflict through dialogue and reconciliation, rather than war. The sanction explicitly stated that the U.S. humanitarian assistance to the needy people would continue uninterrupted. However, the U.S. government didn’t designate Ethiopian government officials who are targeted by the visa restrictions. According to the information obtained from MoFA the visa restriction played a nominal role in comparison to the other set of sanctions.

Tesfaye (interview January 20, 2023) explained:

The visa restriction seemed nominal from the beginning. The U.S. didn't specify the targets of the visa restrictions on the part of the Ethiopian government. They said they would not name the officials, but they would deny visas upon request. However, virtually no Ethiopian government official has been denied a U.S. visa since the war began. Delegates from the

⁴⁶ Department of States. May 23, 2021. Accessed on April 20, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/united-states-actions-to-press-for-the-resolution-of-the-crisis-in-the-tigray-region-of-ethiopia/>

Foreign Minister and others attended the General Assembly UN and other meetings in the US. In December 2022, a delegation led by the Ethiopian Prime Minister also attended the U.S.-Africa Summit and other events. No visa denials were reported for Ethiopian government officials.

According to the international media reports⁴⁷ the U.S. visa restrictions on the Ethiopian officials in May 2021 was considered as U.S.'s policy shift in Ethiopia over the war. It was also regarded as a potential turning point in the Ethio-U.S. relations which also showed deterioration of relations observed since the beginning of the war in November 2020. Ethiopian government has strongly opposed the visa restrictions as inappropriate and completely unacceptable move to interfere into the internal affairs of the country. The press statement⁴⁸ issued by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021) in reaction to the visa restriction further warned that the government of Ethiopia would be forced to reassess its ties with the U.S. if the U.S. continued the meddle in the internal affairs of the country. The visa restriction had showed the trends in the decline of the Ethio-U.S. bilateral relations in a more official and clear ways.

B) Executive Order 14046

In September 2021, the U.S. President Joe Biden issued Executive Order 14046⁴⁹ which authorizes sanctions against Ethiopian and Eritreans those regraded as entities and individuals responsible for “widespread violence, atrocities, and serious human rights abuse” in Ethiopia. The sanction statement issued by the President Joe Biden stated that the war in the northern Ethiopia had significantly compromised the peace, security, and stability of Ethiopia and the greater Horn of Africa. It also explained the war caused continued violence, atrocities, and grave human rights violations such as ethnic-based violence, rape, and headrace of humanitarian operations. Moreover, the statement claimed that the war poses an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States in the region.

⁴⁷ For instance, Foreign Policy (2021) published a report that the visa restriction that entails a major shift in the U.S policy over Ethiopia which would affect the bilateral relations. Foreign Policy. May 21, 2021. Accessed on April 17, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/21/biden-visa-restrictions-ethiopia-tigray-conflict-eritrea-war-crimes-humanitarian-crisis/>

⁴⁸ Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. May 24, 2021. Accessed on April 17, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/MFAEthiopia/posts/pfbid032KUvZvkya1pnXiJHsHZZE3nkjG2hHynsBDVEypwpcnxtM5RVvMNYUrTf49Udovcm1>

⁴⁹ The White House. September 17, 2021. Accessed on April 16, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/09/17/executive-order-on-imposing-sanctions-on-certain-persons-with-respect-to-the-humanitarian-and-human-rights-crisis-in-ethiopia/>

The executive order authorizes the Secretary of Department of Treasury in consultation with Secretary of State as well as in collaboration with directors of relevant departments of the U.S. to impose wide ranges of sanctions which appeared to be broad and if materialized would have very high consequences on Ethiopian overall development and bilateral relations. The sanctions stated under section 2-4 include different types including bilateral trade, foreign direct investment, asset freezing and bocking in the U.S., suspension of U.S. licenses; suspension of grants; denial of visas; provision of goods and services from the U.S. and suspension of immigration to the U.S. The Presidential Executive Order consequently resulted in a few but significant policy actions while contributing broadly to the U.S. international diplomatic pressure against Ethiopia over the war. It also led to a tougher bilateral relation between the two countries.

C) AGOA Termination

In November 2021, the U.S. President Joe Biden had issued another sanction against Ethiopia and another two Africa countries. The sanction⁵⁰ statement was entitled “Termination of the Designation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (Ethiopia), the Republic of Guinea (Guinea), and the Republic of Mali (Mali) as beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is a U.S. Trade Act, which was enacted by the Congress in May 2000. It was renewed until 2025. AGOA provides preferential and significant opportunity to market access to the U.S. for Sub-Saharan African countries that qualify for the opportunity. Qualification for AGOA depends on a set of conditions contained in the AGOA legislation. To qualify and remain eligible for the preferential opportunity each country should working to improve its rule of law, human rights, and respect for core labor standards as set out in the legislation (AGOA, 2023)⁵¹. It was stated on the AGOA termination statement that Ethiopia for failing to uphold the required AGOA eligibility criteria, particularly respect of human rights.

⁵⁰ The White House. November 02, 2021. Accessed on April 16, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/11/02/a-message-to-the-congress-on-the-termination-of-the-designation-of-the-federal-democratic-republic-of-ethiopia-ethiopia-the-republic-of-guinea-guinea-and-the-republic-of-mali-mali-as-beneficia/>

⁵¹ AGOA. Accessed on April 16, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://agoa.info/about-agoa.html>

President Joe Biden noted on the termination statement (2021) “I am taking this step as Ethiopia, Guinea, and Mali are not in compliance with the eligibility requirements of section 104 of the AGOA — in Ethiopia, for gross violations of internationally recognized human rights”. According to the information obtained from Ethiopian ministry of trade Ethiopia had been securing about 200 million USD per year by using non-tariff AGOA preferential opportunity since the country became eligible for the opportunity in 2001 (Gebretsadik, 2023). The implications of AGOA termination on the bilateral trade and Ethiopian economy will be assessed in detail under section 6.2 of this study.

5.1.4 Draft Sanction Legislations

Two major human rights legislations were introduced by the U.S. government 117th Congress with aim of imposing further sanctions on Ethiopia, in addition to the above sanctions. According to the U.S. Congressional Service Report (2021) the legislations have had intended to strongly compel Ethiopian government and its allies to ceasefire and accountable for alleged growth human rights violations committed during the war. The legislation is briefly discussed as follows.

A) H.R.6600 - Ethiopia Stabilization, Peace, and Democracy Act

H.R 6600 entitled “Ethiopia Stabilization, Peace, and Democracy Act” introduced to the U.S. Congress by Congressman Tom Malinowski and other representatives on February 04, 2022. The review of the policy statement of the draft legislation shows the legislation has four specific targets.

H.R 6600 Section 2⁵² states:

It is the policy of the United States—

(1) support efforts to end the war and other conflicts in Ethiopia and gross violations of internationally recognized human rights, war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and other atrocities in Ethiopia.

(2) to use all diplomatic, development, and legal tools to stabilize and end violence in Ethiopia;

(3) to support efforts to hold accountable those who committed gross violations of internationally recognized human rights, war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and other atrocities in Ethiopia; and

(4) to promote an inclusive national dialogue in order to bring about a peaceful, democratic, and unified Ethiopia.

⁵² The 117th Congress. February 04, 2022. Accessed on April 16, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6600/text>



Picture 2: Screenshot of the website of the Congress showing the status of H.R.6600.

The draft bill comprises of different sanctions against Ethiopia to be imposed once the legislation enacted. The actions that would be taken are discussed under various sections of the legislation. Under section 4 bilateral actions that would be imposed by the U.S. president are discussed. These include blocking property, denial of visa and revocation of the current visas of designated officials. Under section 5 the draft bill deals with suspension of all sorts of security assistance to Ethiopia. Actions to limit Ethiopia’s access to international financial institutions such as IMF and WB were also discussed under section 6 of the bill. In this regard the draft bill set “to use the voice and vote of the United States in the respective institution to oppose any loan or extension of financial or technical assistance to the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea”. The draft bill imposes limitations on the support by the U.S. International development Finance Cooperation funds- which include development cooperation; expect humanitarian assistance.

According to the data obtained from the Congress’s official website⁵³ the house had referred the draft legislation to the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the date it was introduced. The data also show the Congress engaged with the draft legislation nine times. These include initial deliberations

⁵³ The 117th Congress. 2022. Access on April 18, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6600/all-actions>

by the house as well as sessions held by Committee Foreign Affairs after the bill was since it was referred to it. The last date that the discussion on the draft was November 01, 2022. The status of the draft bill at Congress shows the legislation is still on the level of introduction and did not advance for further discussions and approval by the house representatives.

B) S.3199- Ethiopia Peace and Stabilization Act of 2022

Senator Robert Menendez introduced the draft legislation first to the U.S. Senate as legislation to “to promote peace and democracy in Ethiopia, and for other purposes” on November 4, 2021. Later it was renamed as “Ethiopia Peace and Stabilization Act of 2022” on April 06, 2022. The S.3199 draft bill also has four policy targets- most of which are like the H.R 6600 but differing in a few policy directions. Section 4 of the statement of the policy set:

- (1) using all diplomatic, development, and legal tools to support a sustainable peace agreement.*
- (2) supporting a credible, inclusive political process to unify the country that is convened by a mutually agreed upon party, individual, or group and that—*
 - (A) acknowledges the political nature of conflict;*
 - (B) seeks a political solution to support the resolution of grievances; and*
 - (C) charts a democratic and peaceful path forward for the country;*
- (3) advancing the human, civil, and political rights of all Ethiopians regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, or geographic area of origin; and*
- (4) countering malign foreign influence and disinformation exacerbating the civil conflict and intercommunal violence.*

Unique to this draft legislation is its plan to tackle disinformation⁵⁴ related to the war that worsen the conflict and ethnic violence in Ethiopia. The sanction actions included in the draft bill include demanding the Department of State to develop and implement strategies to support democracy, rule of law, and human rights in Ethiopia. It also requires the President must impose property blocking and visa denials on foreign individuals and entities that allegedly involved in conflict in Ethiopia in undermining efforts to end the conflict or deter the transition to democracy. Moreover, the draft bill also restricts the economic development projects and supports provided to Ethiopia

⁵⁴ Disinformation according to the University of Washington is “deliberately misleading or biased information; manipulated narrative or facts; propaganda.” It was evident that such information disorder had significantly contributed to aggravating the magnitude of conflict in the country during the war in the northern Ethiopia. According to report by Council of Foreign Relations (2022) for instance the disinformation/ misinformation campaigns and political smears which were widely circulated on social media, especially on Facebook had significant role in escalating the conflict and civil war. Council on Foreign Relations. April 19, 2022. Accessed on April 18, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.cfr.org/blog/facebooks-content-moderation-failures-ethiopia>

through the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation; and suspends any U.S. security assistance to the Ethiopian government; and again, oppose the loans and financial assistances from international financial institutions to the governments of Ethiopia. The data obtained from the Congress official website shows the house held four sessions in relation to the draft bill. Nonetheless, this draft legislation is still in the stage of introduction and the latest date of session that the Congress was April 06, 2022. According to Blanchard (2022), both draft legislations have faced support and opposition in the U.S. congress. Some of the influential senators such as Senator Robert Menendez who was chairman of the Senate in 2021-2022 and introduced draft legislation S.3199 called for further actions against Ethiopian government to end the war.

On the other hand, others such as Senator James Inhofe strongly opposed the legislation introduced against Ethiopian government indicating it would further complicate the situation in Ethiopia while adversely affecting the established Ethio-U.S. relations. The implications of the draft legislation on the Ethio-U.S. bilateral relations have been immense. According to the information obtained from MoFA for instance, Ethiopian government understood that the legislation, if enacted, would cause significant harm to the bilateral relations and Ethiopia's national interest. Consequently, MoFA had formulated lobby and advocacy strategies with the aim of stopping the enactment of the draft legislations.

Tesfaye (interview January 20, 2023) also explained that Ethiopian government and its supporter in the U.S. had launched multiple lobby and advocacy using multiple strategies. The strategies include engaging with congressmen and Senators who have had working to get sanctions imposed on Ethiopia in a way to cool down their position against Ethiopia. It also includes engagement with pro Ethiopian U.S. officials in both U.S. executive and legislature as to get more support to change the U.S. course of actions against Ethiopia, including the draft legislations. The sanctions imposed by the U.S. has triggered debate on its relevance, adequacy, and effectiveness by different scholars. Among the researchers interviewed for this study there are those who strongly argue that the sanctions haven't been relevant and achieved their purposes.

Gabriel (2023), noted:

Sanctions are something that should be emplaced when all diplomatic options are failing. But the U.S. jumped and very quickly and the first foreign policy tool they pooled out were

sanctions. But we know that sanctions haven't worked elsewhere. We have seen it in South Africa, in Iran, in Venezuela. There are 30-40 countries under sanctions with the U.S. There was also rush in imposing sanctions as foreign policy tool against Ethiopia which wasn't adequate and didn't work.

Felbab-Brown (2021), on the other hand, argued to the contrary in her article published in the Brookings, the U.S think-tank organization's website. She noted that the U.S. sanctions are well designed and has been an exemplary in its kind. She contended that the sanctions are exemplary in that they were imposed after expending extensive time on bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to convince the warring parties to end the war and its consequences- severe humanitarian crises.

Felbab-Brown (2021:2)

U.S. officials have also engaged extensively with European partners; Gulf countries including the United Arab Emirates, which has a close relationship with Abiy; Turkey; and various African leaders, including the African Union's special envoy, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo. Yet despite the exemplary diplomacy, all the signs through August were that both the emboldened TPLF and Abiy remained entrenched in their belligerent, uncompromising, and human-rights-violating policies.

Henok (interview, May 02, 2023) also supported commented that the U.S. sanctions have collectively played vital role reducing the consequences of the war in terms of human sufferings and eventually ending the war through a negotiated peace deal. He contended that the local constituencies of the U.S might have significantly influenced the U.S law makers in the drafting of the legislation which also imposed profound pressure on the Ethiopian government and its allies during the war.

5.1.5 The Role Ethiopian Diaspora in the U.S During the War

The multiple sanctions and legislations discussed above have not only immensely contributed to the decline in the Ethio-U.S. relations but also influenced the Ethiopian diaspora politics in contending ways. Most importantly Ethiopian diaspora communities in the U.S. had responded to the U.S. policy in Ethiopia during the war through adopting competing campaigns, advocacy, and lobby activities. According to Henok (interview, May 02, 2023), who is a senior lawyer in the U.S, the diaspora communities were divided mainly into two groups during the war. The first group had a popular campaign named “#NoMore” and strongly opposed to the U.S. and its allies alleged heavy interventions in the Ethiopian internal affairs. The other group who articulated their

advocacy as “No War” had advocated for more strong punitive sanctions against Ethiopia in support of the alleged grave human rights violations during the war. The first group, according to Henok, are those who rally behind the #NoMore movement, while the second group, organized by the Tigran diaspora community, rallied behind an objective farmed as "No War." He further noted that Tigrayans in the diaspora were able to mobilize resources and lobbied the U.S communities at the grassroot level and law makers in various states to end what they referred as "Tigray genocide" in Ethiopia. He further noted that the contending mobilization of the Ethiopian diaspora was motivated by ideological orientation and ethno-national politics-both as a reflection of domestic politics.

A) Role of #NoMore Movement

#NoMore was a pro Ethiopian government movement during the war. The movement has been supported and started by a coalition of Ethiopian and Eritrean activists led by former Al Jazeera and CBS journalist Hermela Aregawi. Although there were rallies in the U.S and Europe attributed to the movement, #NoMore has been mainly conducted via social media (Ethiopian Press Agency, 2021). According to the media reports, the purposes of the movement include but not limited to resisting the Western media's ongoing disinformation campaign about Ethiopia and the rest of the world, Western economic warfare, diplomatic propaganda, and military interventions in Africa in general and the “Horn of Africa” in particular (ibid).

Hermela (interview, April 30, 2023), who was founder and leader of the #NoMore movement explained that the #NoMore movement aimed to tackle U.S. and its allies one sided intervention during the war as well as false media narratives about the war promoted on most of the conventional media outlets. She explained that the movement was started a year after the war started in Tigray and there was deep frustration among Ethiopians and Eritreans during the time. Hermela said *“False narratives about the war were very powerful and far reaching in the most notable news outlets and most importantly the U.S. and U.N were very one sided in their actions favoring the TPLF. #NoMore Movement aimed to reverse this”*.

The movement managed to garner Ethiopians, Eritreans and to some extent Somalis across the world to challenge false war propaganda, false media narratives and external powers' heavy

interventions in Ethiopia's internal affairs. She further claimed that the movement had created influence on the U.S. and allies regarding their position during the war.

The movement had enough impact on the U.S. policy choices and course of actions. There were outspoken persons in the U.S. who challenged the U.S. and western from policy standpoint. I think the movement has effectively shown the U.S. and western countries that there are many people who are against punishing Ethiopia for responding to a war to maintain its sovereignty.

According to Hermela, the movement did well in terms of showing the policy makers, peoples in the U.S., Europe and elsewhere that there are large populations of Ethiopians, Eritrean and others from the greater Horn of Africa region that have a different perspective that weren't highlighted by the major media outlets. She claimed they were assertive in advocating that such genuine voices need the attention of the policy makers and the U.S. and allies to stop their bias. Others argued the #NoMore movement failed to condemn the external powers who have supported the Ethiopian government to confidently continue the war through provision of military and technical support. Gavin (2021), a research fellow at the U.S think-tank organization, for instance commented the #NoMore movement itself has taken double standard in terms resisting all sorts of foreign powers involvement in the war which might have had fueled the conflict.

Gavin (2021:2), commented:

External forces have certainly played a significant role in the conflict, but not the ones targeted by "no more" activists: military assistance in the form of drones from Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran have been a lifeline for once-beleaguered federal forces. These competing narratives confuse the policy landscape and distract from the human suffering and real geopolitical stakes of an Ethiopian implosion.

Henok (interview, May 02, 2023) also commented that #NoMore movement although had picked noble and well-established narratives such as Pan African movement, the movement practically showed sympathy to continuation of the war through resisting international diplomatic pressures to end the crises and supporting the government of prime minister Abiy Ahmed. Hermela (interview, April 30, 2023) also explained that important lessons were drawn from the #NoMore movement even beyond the objectives set at the onset of the movement. She commended that the #NoMore movement has shown to Ethiopians, Eritreans and some Somalis and people of the Horn of Africa what was possible when they got together. They had spoke against major powers such

as the U.S. that were standing against the people in several ways. She also said the movement showed the communities their own power and created a lot of vocal people within communities.

B) No War Campaigns

According to Henok (interview May 02, 2023), this group has close ties to U.S. lobbyists and influential legislators, as well as Ethiopians of various ethnic groups, including the Oromo community, who also called for the release of prominent political opposition leaders who were imprisoned in Ethiopia at the time. This group had the slogan "No War in Tigray" and, according to Henok, played a key role in influencing U.S. action against Ethiopia.

In conclusion, the war has negatively affected bilateral diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and the U.S. according to information obtained from MoFA two important actions taken by the Ethiopian government to ease the diplomatic tensions. First, the Ethiopian government formulated a policy of diplomatic rapprochement in 2022, and the U.S. was one of the main focal points in the rapprochement. In this context, influential U.S. officials in executive and legislative bodies, such as U.S. congresspeople and senators, who have either positive or negative influence on Ethiopian affairs were engaged. Second, Ethiopian government have worked to revitalize its relationship with the U.S. Department of State African Affairs, and to try to convince them to strengthen our relationship for mutual understanding and interest. Influential figures working in U.S. think tank institutions and others were also engaged. There were also several discussions with the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa. He noted that there were U.S. Congressmen and Senators who took a tough stance on the situation in the Tigray region and continued to push for bills and sanctions. He noted that this could be because there are lobbyists on the TPLF side. The U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa also sought to cool diplomatic tensions, but also expressed concern about alleged human rights abuses and limited humanitarian access in northern Ethiopia.

5.2 Implications on Bilateral Economic Cooperation

According to the information obtained from Ministry Trade and Regional Integration (MoTRI) the implications of the war on Ethiopian economy in general can be explained in two ways. Firstly, the hard currencies which could be used for encouraging export initiatives had been utilized for war-related costs. This has effectively challenged the priorities set by Ethiopian government to promote export initiatives. Although empirical studies are yet to be conducted, according to MoTRI, it has

been clear that the war caused significant harm to the country’s export capacity. Secondly, the AGOA termination by the U.S. government has affected Ethiopian economy directly and indirectly. Ethiopia and U.S. have had a well-established economic relation as part of the century old successful partnership between the two countries. The war has, however, negatively affected such relations. The implications of the war on bilateral trade relations as well as the impacts of AGOA termination on the economic relations of the two countries are explained under this subsection.

5.2.1 Bilateral Trade Relations

Information obtained from MoTRI indicated that the Ethio-U.S. trade relations has shown increment during the past five years. For instance, trade data of Ethiopia and the U.S. show that the average trade exchange from 2016 to 2020 is about 1.65 billion. Ethiopia’s export shares in this trade exchange represents USD 251.9 million only while to the remaining USD 1.4 billion of trade is imported from the US. This indicated high export trade deficit in the part of Ethiopia. The major export commodities to the U.S. during 2016-2020 are: Coffee, not roasted or decaffeinated, footwears, oilseeds and oleaginous fruits, men's and boys' cotton shirts, men's and boys' trousers, cotton breeches. The information also indicated most export products fell under the AGOA list. On the other hand, the major import items from the US in 2015-2020 include aircrafts, aircraft spark ignition piston engines, other parts of airplanes or helicopters.

Table 1: Trends in Ethio-U.S. bilateral trade from 2016.

Average Ethio-U.S. trade exchange 2016-2020	1.5 billion USD
Ethiopia's average share in the bilateral trade exchange 2016-2020	251.9 million USD
% of Ethiopia's share in the bilateral trade exchange 2016-2020	16
Ethiopia's export to U.S. in 2020	230.8 million USD
Ethiopia's export to U.S. in 2021	367.8 million USD
% of Ethiopia's export increase in 2021 in compared to 2020	59.4

Source: MoTRI, compiled by the researcher.

Data obtained from MoTRI shows Ethiopia’s average export to the U.S. in 2015-2020 was USD 230.8 million. There is an increase for 2021. In 2021, Ethiopian exports to the U.S. averaged USD 367.8 million. This amount exceeds the average exports of the previous period by USD 137 million

or 59.4%. Gebretsadik (interview, January 17, 2023) points to two crucial factors for the increase in Ethiopian exports to the United States in 2021. First, Ethiopia used bilateral trade mechanism other than AGOA. He noted that AGOA is an additional preferential trade opportunity while there are other such as United States Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) which has about five thousand tariff lines. He commended that Ethiopian exporters have many dependable customers in the U.S., especially from Ethiopian communities in all U.S. states. The Ethiopian and U.S. business communities have shown to have close ties. This has ensured bilateral trade despite the impact of the war on the other dimensions and tensions in the relations in Ethio-U.S. relations during same period. Second, Ethiopian products have become more competitive in international markets in terms of quality. Ethiopian coffee and sesame products have become especially important in the international market. They can win competitions even if there are no preference opportunities - such as AGOA.

Gebretsadik (interview, January 17, 2023) further noted that the increase in Ethiopian exports in 2021 doesn't mean that the war didn't affect Ethiopia's export performance. Rather, it means that Ethiopia's export performance would have been much better had it not been for the war, which slowed down the production phases of export goods. The data obtained from MoTRI showed a decrease in the import from the U.S. during the year 2021 in comparison to the previous years. During the period 2015-2019 was USD 1.4 billion on average. In the year 2021, however, Ethiopia's import from the U.S. was USD 1.2 billion. It shows a slight decrease in the amount of USD 2 million or 14.2 per cent. Gebretsadik also noted that import decrease is usually encouraged and accepted as healthy economic performance to enhance import substitutions. The trend observed in 2021, however, is to some extent related to decline in the local capacity of importing goods and to some extent connected to new government policy that reduced import commodities to prioritize other pressing issues. The revised regulation foreign currency management regulation in which exporters are allowed to import goods using 30 percent of their export earnings, while returning 70 percent to government banks. He remarked that "A decline in bilateral trade relations between Ethiopia and the U.S. may affect both countries. In the case of 2021 import-export trade, for example, the decline in imports from the U.S. could also affect the U.S. economy, although it is insignificant given the size of the U.S. economy".

5.2.2 Implication of AGOA Termination

As indicated under section 4.1.3 (c), the U.S. government had terminated Ethiopia's access to AGOA non-traffic preferential trade opportunity, effective from January 2022. Gebretsadik (interview 17, 2023) remarked:

The U.S. termination of AGOA has caused practical harm to Ethiopian economy. The action had led to closure of some U.S. affiliated companies which were producing different commodities and had established clients in the American market. Consequently, Ethiopia has lost some 200 million dollars that would have been gained through AGOA commodities export. Other companies have reduced their employees which has its own impact on increasing unemployment rate and thereby affecting Ethiopian economy.

Other researchers also agree that AGOA termination has shown more practical implications on Ethiopia than other set of sanctions explained under the preceding section. Gabriel (2023), for instance argued that the AGOA termination would be significant for Ethiopia, it specifically and unfairly punished low-income earning section of the young public who work in different AGOA export producing industries. He further argued that AGOA hasn't been smart kind of sanction. Smart sanctions are those that target narrow group of peoples, not just everybody in the targeted country. AGOA all together targeted farmers, laborers, exporters, traders, and workers. He commented "The AGOA sanction wasn't thoroughly thought out. They would have specifically identified who is behind the problem and gone after them for sanctions", Gabriel (2023).

Data obtained Industrial Parks Development Cooperation (IDPC) also shows there are a total of 24 industrial parks in Ethiopia. 13 of them are directly administered by IDPC, while four of them are managed by regional states. The remaining 7 are owned and run by private investors. AGOA market export has been related to the 13 industrial parks administered by the government in general. Hawassa industrial zone in particular hosts most of the U.S. and other foreign companies that are specifically export their products to the U.S. market via AGOA opportunities.

Table 4.2 : Ethiopia Export earnings from AGOA in 11 industrial zones administrated by IDPC in December 2021

No	Name of industrial park	Number of employees	Export income	Import substitution
1	Hawassa	33,783.00	8,897,633.43	32,127.00
2	Bole Lami	21,738.00	4,596,709.00	2,391,632.97
3	Kombolcha	3,684.00	99,688.00	
4	Adama	8,414.00	1,366,650.77	190,597.00
5	Dire Dawa	2,288.00	309,637.00	424,598.00
6	Jima	1,455.00	514,100.00	
7	Bahir Dar	360.00		
8	Debre Birhan	2,198.00	101,088.00	1,756,291.00
9	Kilinto	561.00		
10	Addis	1,243.00	140,420.00	820,681.00
11	Semera	356.00		
	Total	76,080	16,025,926.20	5,615,927

Source: Ministry of Trade and Economic Integration

Table 4.3: Ethiopia's Industrial zones export performances after termination AGOA, month of October 2022.

	Name of industrial park	Number of employees	Export income	Import substitution
1	Hawasa	26,511	4,248,209.50	242,239.10
2	Bole Lami	24,348	8,839,317.16	7,232,516.70
3	Kombolcha	2,255	162,419.66	475,540.16
4	Adama	7,634	1,186,516.11	475,540.16
5	Dire Dawa	2,094	553,836.97	260,293.00
6	Jima	282	188,760.00	
7	Bahir Dar	448	85574.57	

8	Debre Birhan	3,328	304,219.50	5,667,205
9	Kilinto	626		31,297.58
10	Addis	2,142	164,297.42	104,076.34
11	Semera	704		
	Total	70,372	15,544,390.89	14,488,708.04

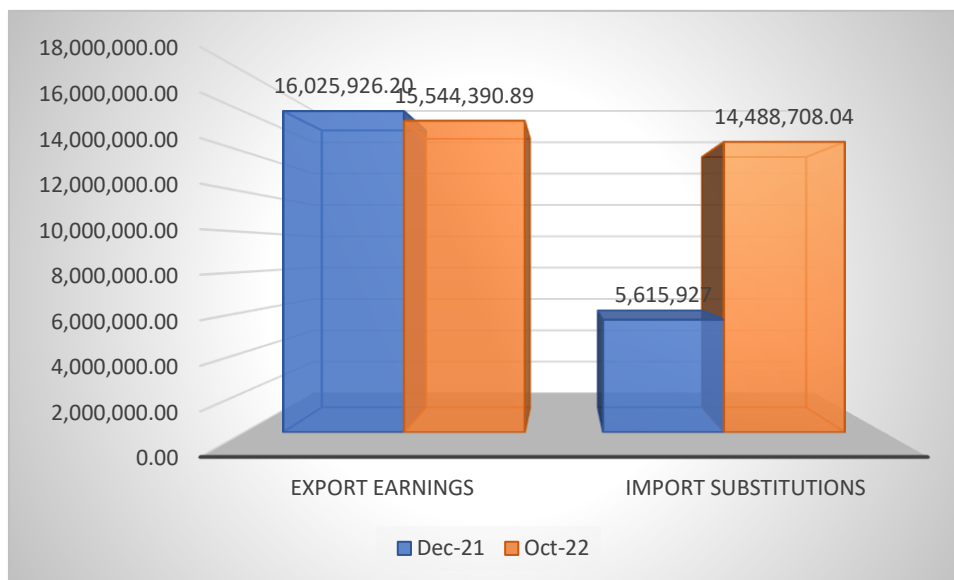
Source: Ministry of Trade and Economic Integration, report 2022.

Although these sample data may not represent the full picture of the impact of AGOA termination on the bilateral trade relations; it helps to understand the implications of the sanction. The comparison of the two-sample data is shown by the following table and graph.

Table 4.4: Comparison of performances in export earnings and import substitutes in for the sample months of December 2021 (during AGOA) and October 2022 (after AGOA termination)

Items	Dec-21	Oct-22	Variation	%
Export earning	16,025,926.20	15,544,390.89	-481,535.31	-3.1
Import substitution	5,615,927	14,488,708.04	8,872,781.04	61.2
Number employees	76,080	70,372	-5,708	-8.1

Graph 4.1: Brief comparison of AGOA related export earnings and import substitutions in December 2021 and October 2022. Compiled by researcher.



Case study: implications of AGOA termination on Hawassa Industrial Park



Picture 3: shows Hawassa Industrial Park. Source: IPDC.

Hawassa Industrial Park is a government funded manufacturing industry located in Sidama Region in the Southern Ethiopia, started operations in 2016. The industrial zone lies on 130-hectare land. The major products of the industrial zone include garment, apparel, and textile (IPDC, 2023).

The data obtained from MoTRI reveals that export earnings from the Hawassa Industrial Park, which was home to U.S. and other foreign companies, decreased from USD 8,897,633.43 in December 2021 to USD 4,248,209.50 in October 2022. This represents a decrease of USD 4,649,423.93 or 52.2%. Similarly, the number of employees in the same industrial zone decreased from 33,783.00 in December 2021 to 26,511 in October 2022, a decrease of 7,272.00 or 33.5%. Officials interviewed for this study confirmed that the impact of the termination of the AGOA in the Hawassa Industrial Zone was not only felt in terms of production stoppages and employee layoffs, but that politics also played a role. The first foreign company to cease operations and leave the country was an American company. This was in the initial stages of the AGOA termination coming into effect in January 2022. Such incidents have implication on Ethiopian economy and bilateral trade in two ways. First, it sent bad message about Ethiopian to foreign investors. Second it discouraged Ethio-U.S. bilateral trade relations and investment.

Hawassa Industrial Park experienced visible decline in terms of export earnings and number of employees in 2022. On other hand, other industrial zones in Ethiopia show increment in both parameters. For instance, according to data obtained from the IPDC Bole Lemi Industrial Park, located in the south of Addis Ababa city has shown increment in export earnings from USD 4,596,709.00 in December 2021 to USD 8,839,317.16 in October 2022. This represents an increment of USD 4,242,608.16 or 49.9%. Similarly, the number of employees in the same industrial zone increased from 21,738.00 in December 2021 to 24,348 in October 2022, an increase of 2,610 or 10.7%. An expert in this industrial zone confirmed that there have been companies owned by diversified foreign investor notable Chinese companies which have constantly producing textile and garment as well as leather and leather products by withstanding challenges during Covid-19 as well as war in the northern Ethiopia.

In conclusion Hawassa industrial park faced significant decrease in export earnings and employee lay-off as home to most of the U.S companies which were influenced by the decline in the Ethio-U.S. ties and opted to stop operations. This shows the implications of the war on the Ethio-U.S. economic relations.

Yibeltal (interview January 16, 2023) explained that IPDC has taken some measures to address the negative impacts of the termination of AGOA. The official mentioned two important measures in this regard. The first is to seek new market linkage opportunities in other countries and connect them with companies that have lost the U.S. market. The second is reducing fees and extending terms of payment for the companies severely affected by the sanction. With regards to creation of alternative market linkages for the companies he mentioned that IPDC and other Ethiopian ministries have worked extensively with Ethiopian diplomats to find new market opportunities and strengthen bilateral trade. Companies that import specifically to the U.S. under AGOA opportunities have been given priority. This has helped many companies withstand the pressure. Alternative market opportunities have been developed in Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Yibeltal (interview, January 16, 2023) noted:

The Chinese alternative market has provided immense alternative opportunities for foreign and domestic companies after the termination of the AGOA. It has also significantly helped Ethiopia cope with the impact of sanctions. The sanctions would have caused greater damage to businesses and the Ethiopian economy had businesses not been linked to the Chinese market. The European and African markets have also helped to some extent to cope with the impact of the termination of the AGOA.

Moreover, there are companies that have continued to import to America using tariff-based imports through discussions with their clients in America. Information obtained from both MoTRI and

IPDC confirmed that the termination of the AGOA, while immediately exerting some pressure, has induced the Ethiopian government to focus on finding and obtaining alternative foreign markets outside the United States. Some U.S. officials were also concerned that ending the AGOA would further exacerbate the shift in political alignment and thus harm U.S. interests in Ethiopia and the entire Horn of Africa region. U.S. Senator James Inhofe had commented on the negative impact of terminating AGOA on U.S. trade interests in Ethiopia and bilateral relations.

Inhofe noted (2021)⁵⁵

Just as the Biden administration announced to punish Ethiopia, the Chinese government announced their own plan to purchase 300 billion dollars' worth of goods from Africa in the next two years and to invest nearly 10 billion dollars. The Chinese foreign minister visited principals in Addis Ababa to support prime minister Abiy Ahmed. We know China and Russia are encroaching into Africa. They want to create divisions between the United States and Ethiopia and countries across the continent. The Biden Administration should return AGOA benefits to Ethiopia.

Secondly, the IDPC also provided incentives to some companies that were severely affected by the sanctions and the war. For example, companies in Kombolcha Industrial Zone were forced to stop production during the war, and they lost machinery due to the war. IPDC gave them various incentives, such as minimizing the cost of production shades, extending payment terms, and restoring some services.

5.3 Implications on Bilateral Security Cooperation

As explained under chapter 4 of this study, the bilateral security partnership has evolved into more strategic regional cooperation in the post September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the U.S. Both states have benefited from such cooperations in different aspects. The war has also negative affected the bilateral strategic security partnership between the two countries. Some of the implications will be briefly examined under this sub section.

5.3.1 Suspension of the U.S. Security Assistance to Ethiopia

The U.S. uses security assistance as foreign policy objective attaining instrument. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, foreign aid has increasingly been associated with national security

⁵⁵ Senator Jim Inhofe. Official YouTube channel. December 16, 2021. Accessed on April 16, 2023. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ5uBJxa_fg

policy, Congressional Research Service Report (2020). The report also noted that such aid is always conditional on such things as a good human rights record and good governance. The United States has provided security assistance to Ethiopia in several areas, including counterterrorism; military equipment, training, and capacity building; and regional security and peacekeeping operations. According to Security Assistance Monitor (2021)⁵⁶, Ethiopia received at least USD 152.7 million in security sector assistance (SSA) from the United States between fiscal years 2000 and 2020 through various U.S. government programs and funding agencies. The U.S. Department of Defence (2019)⁵⁷ also confirmed that security cooperation between Ethiopia and the United States has increased significantly following political reform in Ethiopia in 2018 based on shared goals and security interests in the Horn of Africa. The DOD report also shows that Ethiopia was the largest recipient of military education and training funding in 2018/2019, involving more than 300 military officers from the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF).

According to MoFA, the U.S. has suspended all security assistance to Ethiopia following the sanctions imposed in 2021. All U.S. military and intelligence support has been suspended because of the war. This includes hardware support, technical assistance, and intelligence sharing that Ethiopia has received from the U.S. However, Ethiopia hasn't given up its sovereignty and national interests because of such a sanction. Mcmillan and Alexandre (2021) also noted that two months after President Joe Biden authorized Executive Order on Ethiopia, the U.S. Department of State's Directorate of Defense Trade Controls (DDTC) issued a final rule against Ethiopia and Eritrea with regards to International Traffic in Arms Regulation (ITAR). The official data obtained from the U.S. Federal Register (2021)⁵⁸ shows Ethiopia was added to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) act which denies licenses and other approvals for exports of security equipment and defense services from the U.S. as of November 01, 2021. The policy action stated under Part 126- General Policies and Provision 126.1 (n) states "Ethiopia. It is the policy of the United States to deny licenses or other approvals for exports of defense articles or defense services

⁵⁶ Security Assistance Monitor. (2021, December 27). Accessed on April 25, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.interaction.org/blog/u-s-security-partnership-and-the-protection-of-civilians-in-ethiopia/>

⁵⁷ Department of Defense (2019, December 5). Accessed on April 25, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2033033/us-ethiopian-defense-officials-meet-at-pentagon/>

⁵⁸ U.S Federal Register. (2021, November 01). Accessed on April 25, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/11/01/2021-23450/international-traffic-in-arms-regulations-addition-of-ethiopia-and-amendment-to-eritrea-country>

destined to or for the armed forces, police, intelligence, or other internal security forces of Ethiopia”. Gabiel (interview January 24, 2023) argued that such sanctions by the U.S. government has pushed Ethiopia to find alternative geopolitical alignment, which consequently has adversely affected the long-established Ethio-U.S. relations.

5.3.2 Shift in Ethiopia’s Geopolitical Security Cooperation

The decline in strategic cooperation between Ethiopia and the U.S. have fostered a shift in geopolitical security alliances between Ethiopia and other major powers, which are seen as U.S. strategic rivalries in Africa and the Horn of Africa (Munday, 2021). According to Abel (2021)⁵⁹, a senior fellow at Chatham House, Ethiopia's strategic location and regional influences have proven to be an advantage despite the strains caused by war, making the country an important ally for Russia, China, and the United States. He pointed out that Russia's relations with Ethiopia and other African countries focus largely on military ties, while China focuses on economic and infrastructure initiatives.

In July 2021, for example, Ethiopia and Russia concluded a new military cooperation agreement (Anadolu, 2021)⁶⁰ after three days of consultations in Addis Ababa during Ethiopia's war. This cooperation, concluded during the war, was described as an important agreement that would "transform Ethiopia's national defense force capabilities in the areas of knowledge, skills, and technology." Similarly, Ethiopia and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to safeguard the security of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Ethiopia and East Africa. Under the agreement, the Chinese government will support Ethiopian security forces with both technology and security materials to help them provide timely security for Chinese projects in Ethiopia and the region (Xinhua, 2021)⁶¹ Moreover, Ethiopia and Turkey also concluded a similar bilateral military

⁵⁹ Wilson Centre. (2021, February 11). Accessed on April 26, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/global-perspectives-ethiopia-russia-relations>

⁶⁰ Anadolu. (2021, August 12). Accessed on April 26, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/russia-ethiopia-ink-military-cooperation-agreement/2302337#>

⁶¹ Xinhua. (2021, March 7). Accessed on April 26, 2023. Retrieved from: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-03/07/c_139792150.htm

financial agreement in August 2021, during Ethiopian prime minister Abiy Ahmed visit to Turkey amidst the war (Fana, 2021)⁶².

International media reports also show the deal has led to Ethiopia's access to armed military drones that were used during the war and had effectively weakened the military and technical capability of TPLF (Reuters, 2021).⁶³ According to Gabriel (2022), the above-mentioned powers differ from the U.S. in their agreements on military cooperation with African countries primarily by their reservations about actions that interfere in internal affairs. He believed that their approach would continue to influence the new security partnership in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa and will affect the U.S. position in the region.

Gabriel commented (2022: 6)

These new partners offer African countries financial and technical assistance, defense agreements, and access to their markets. But most important—and perhaps a key differentiator from the United States—is their policy of “non-interference” in their partners’ internal affairs. While these partners are not even a distant second to the United States in terms of foreign aid and technical, financial, and military superiority, they provide sufficient support to cause African countries to believe they have a choice of credible alternative partners.

Information obtained from MoFA also confirms growing cooperation between Ethiopia and those powers, China and Russia, and others decisive assistance during the war. MoFA authorities preferred to speak of a "balanced and principled partnership" between these powers rather than a growing shift in geopolitical alignment. According to Munday (2021), the above security cooperation during the war clearly show that Ethiopia's political alignment has shifted from the United States and its Western allies to the China and Russia and their partners. This shift is not only geopolitically significant, but also has ideological implications, as it would influence Ethiopia to adopt nondemocratic political practices as the case in China.

⁶² Fana. (2021, August 18). Accessed on April 26, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.fanabc.com/english/ethiopia-turkey-sign-water-military-financial-cooperation-agreement/>

⁶³ Reuters. (2021, October 14). Accessed on April 26, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-expands-armed-drone-sales-ethiopia-morocco-sources-2021-10-14/>

5.3.3 Surging Al Shabaab Attacks in the Somalia and the Region

This study will also examine whether the deterioration of the Ethiopia-U.S. strategic relationship in the Horn of Africa has contributed to the rise of Al Shabaab's cross-border operations in the region and within Somalia. According to scholars and international media reports, Al Shabaab operations in Somalia and across borders, including Kenya and Ethiopia, have increased recently. For example, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)⁶⁴ (2023), the number of Al Shabaab attacks in 2022 was the highest since 2018, killing more than 6,500 people. Al Shabaab carried out a deadly attack on the Ethiopian border in July 2022 while Ethiopia was in war. According to international media reports, the attack near the Ethiopian border was a rare attack in recent years and killed 17 people, including Ethiopian police officers (Reuters, 2022)⁶⁵.

According to MoFA, Ethiopia has moved its military from the Somali border to northern Ethiopia because of the war in November 2020. Al Shabaab fighters took advantage of this opportunity and attacked the Ethiopian border. They also stated that the fighters' operation across the border was effectively and quickly reversed. Zeuthen (2022)⁶⁶ also noted that the increasing intensity and frequency of Al Shabaab attacks in numerous areas within Somalia and across borders may well spill over into the region, including Ethiopia and Kenya. MoFA authorities, however, maintained that the deterioration of bilateral security relations and the Ethiopia-U.S. counterterrorism partnership didn't contribute to the rise in al Shabaab attacks.

Tesfaye noted (interview January 20, 2023)

The strengthening of the terrorist element on the Ethiopian border and in Somalia has nothing to do with the weakening of Ethiopian American security cooperation in the Horn of Africa. The main factor was that Al Shabaab used the Ethiopian conflict as an opportunity to launch attacks on the Ethiopian border after Ethiopia demobilized its troops from the Somali border to northern Ethiopia. Ethiopia, however, took immediate military action and suspended its operations in the border areas.

⁶⁴ ACLED. (2023, March 13). Accessed on April 26, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://acleddata.com/2023/03/03/context-assessment-heightened-political-violence-in-somalia/>

⁶⁵ Reuters. (2022, July 22). Accessed April 26, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/somalias-al-shabaab-group-rare-attack-near-ethiopia-border-2022-07-21/>

⁶⁶ International Centre for counterterrorism. (2022, September 21). Accessed on April 26, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.icct.nl/publication/new-phase-fight-against-al-shabaab-horn-africa>

U.S. Congressional Research Service Report (2023) also reported the attack carried out by Al Shabaab on the Ethiopian border as the largest cross-border operation and noted the group remains a security concern for Ethiopia. CRS Report (2023: 2) reported “Al Shabaab’s July 2022 incursion into Ethiopia is its largest operation outside Somalia to date, reportedly involving some 2,000 Al Shabaab fighters. UN experts estimate that as many as 1,000 fighters remain in Ethiopia, giving it a foothold, despite Ethiopian claims of routing the group”. The congressional report also notes that more international cooperation is needed to address the immediate threat posed by the militant group in the Horn of Africa. According to the U.S. Africa Command (2023)⁶⁷, the command, in cooperation with the Somali National Army, conducted a joint military operation in self-defense against Al Shabaab fighters in Somalia and killed 30 Al Shabaab fighters in January 2023. The command noted that al Shabaab operations have become complex, extended, and intense. In addition, in 2022, Africa Command called the group "the largest, most prosperous, and deadliest al Qaeda affiliate in the world today" and noted that Al Shabaab poses the worst threat to U.S. citizens and interests in East Africa and is a threat to the United States (CRS Report, 2022).

⁶⁷ United States Africa Command. (2023, January 20). Accessed on April 26, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.africom.mil/pressrelease/35119/somali-us-forces-engage-insurgents-in-support-of-the-federal-government-of-somalia>

CHAPTER SIX: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR ETHIO-US RELATIONS

This section provides brief notes on the prospects and challenges for future Ethiopia-U.S. relations considering recent important gestures toward normalization of relations on both sides. The points are drawn from discussions with various bodies on both sides.

6.1 Prospects

6.1.1 Re-engagement and Normalization

According to information from MoFA, Ethiopia sought to re-establish relations with the United States and normalize relations between the two countries. Initially, the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry formulated a strategy for resuming diplomatic relations in 2022. The United States was a major focus of the reintegration priorities. In this regard, MoFA identified and held discussions with influential U.S. officials in the executive and legislative branches, such as U.S. congressmen and senators. The official visit of U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken to Addis Ababa in March 2023 was seen as an important step toward reviving relations between Ethiopia and the United States after two years of diplomatic friction (Al Jazeera, 2023)⁶⁸. Hudson and Houreld (2023) noted in their article that Blinken's visit was a sign that the United States was seeking a balance between a foreign policy focused on human rights and a rejuvenation of security and economic ties with Ethiopia as a key ally in competition with China. The authors noted that investigating atrocities committed during the war remains the U.S. concern.

Gabriel (interview January 24, 2023) commented that the Ethiopian government should be more effective in convincing the U.S. and the rest of the world of what it is trying to do and what it is doing, whether it is GERD or foreign policy directions. He commended “Ethiopia remains by far the best partner in the Horn of Africa. Kenya, for all practical purposes, is aligned with the UK, not the US. It is Ethiopia that has passed the test of time, and the bilateral relationship has passed the test of time”.

⁶⁸ Al Jazeera. (2023, March 15). Accessed on April 26, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/15/refile-blinken-to-meet-ethiopian-government-leaders-to-repair-ties>

6.1.2 Trade and Investment

Most of the officials and scholars interviewed for this study strongly proposed that trade and investment offer both Ethiopia and the United States important opportunities to revitalize their relationship. Information from the MoTRI indicates that the ministry has also engaged with U.S. counterparts to improve relations and to end Ethiopia's exclusion from AGOA trade opportunities. The business community in the U.S. is also engaged in economic diplomacy to restore solid trade relations between the two countries. Gebretsadik (2023) also noted removing political obstacles related to foreign trade and exports and removing obstacles on the Ethiopian side could also create inviting situations for bilateral relations. Ensuring peace and security as important preconditions for investment is also essential.

Abbink (interview January 05, 2023) noted that the U.S. should take advantage of factors such as Ethiopia being the second most popular country in Africa, AU headquarters, growing economy and opportunities that would provide good opportunities for both countries and build long-term strategic cooperation. Gabriel (interview January 24, 2023) hopes that the U.S. will push the IMF and WB to restore loans and grants to Ethiopia to rejuvenate the country's economy and address local problems. U.S. investors have also been advised to return to Ethiopia and invest. Ethiopia can serve as a manufacturing base for many U.S. companies. Cohen (interview, January 28, 2023) also agrees with Gabriel, noting that Ethiopia offers real investment opportunities to U.S. investors. U.S. businesses can invest in Ethiopia's agriculture and manufacturing sectors, which have solid potential, Cohen remarked.

6.1.3 Security Partnership

According to Abbink (interview January 05, 2023), Ethiopia and the United States can restrengthen their effective security partnership in the Horn of Africa and combat security threats such as those posed by the Al Shabaab militants in Somalia. He noted that the two countries will reinforce the established security partnership sooner or later for their mutual benefit. Gabriel and Cohen (2023) also concur with Abbink and asserted that it is in the mutual interest of the two countries to reinforce their bilateral security cooperation and advance them to contribute to national and regional peace and security.

6.2 Challenges

6.2.1 Transitional Justice Mechanisms

One of the challenges in restoring bilateral and strategic relations between Ethiopia and the United States is how to hold accountable those responsible for human rights abuses during the war. U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken had strongly advocated for the implementation of transitional justice after his visit to Addis Ababa in March 2023. Although Ethiopia considers transitional justice as sole domestic issue, it appears that the U.S. is seeking respect for human rights as a precondition for restoring good relations with the Ethiopian government. Blinken strongly stressed on “the importance of accountability for the atrocities perpetrated by all parties” in the war as a starting point for the reinstatement of bilateral diplomatic and economic cooperation. He also announced a new USD 331 million in U.S. humanitarian aid to support the process (Department of State, 2023). Stigant (2023), director of African Affairs at the U.S. Institute of Peace, also remarked on her article that the U.S. and international actors face difficult choices in setting priorities and connecting important goals in relations to putting pressure on all sides to restore comprehensive trade and economic aid to help Ethiopia meet the needs of its people, and to promote justice and reconciliation to address the atrocities and suffering committed during the war.

According to information obtained from MoFA one of the sticking points was the report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHRE). The Ethiopian government found that the experts' report was politically motivated, unbalanced, and inaccurate, and therefore rejected it. Ethiopia also opposed further investigations to be conducted by the same biased experts of the commission. For its part, the U.S. insists that the same team of experts be deployed to northern Ethiopia and conduct further investigations into alleged human rights abuses related to the war. Although both Ethiopia and the U.S. believe that those perpetrators of human rights during the war to be hold accountable, irrespective who they are, there is a deadlock on the mechanisms to do so.

6.2.2 Draft Sanction Bills and Restoring AGOA

The two countries have shown a good gesture to restore all diplomatic and economic ties, and the next step is expected to be stopping or cancelling draft sanction bills against Ethiopia and restoring Ethiopia's access to AGOA preferential trade. According to Henok (interview, May 02, 2023),

bills in the U.S. Congress can be revoked in two ways. First, the bills themselves become obsolete and are no longer relevant to advance; second, Congress itself can drop such bills because the material facts that necessitated such bills have changed. He believes that the U.S. Congress can act to reinstate AGOA as soon as possible. However, the U.S. Congress may prefer to use the bills to strengthen peace and stability in Ethiopia considering the war in the Oromia region and the flare-up of conflict in the Amhara region and other regions. Stigant (2023) also noted that setting priorities in restoring bilateral and economic ties including restoration of AGOA will be a difficult challenge for the U.S. international policy makers. Stigant (2023: 2) commented:

A particular conundrum for U.S. and international policymakers is how to time, sequence and calibrate the restoration of economic assistance, including an Ethiopian return to the AGOA trade opportunity, in tandem with the absolutely critical need to end and address human rights violations. Obviously, that problem becomes more acute when the atrocities have been so pronounced and widespread — and tragically, this has been the case in this war. There is no simple answer here; there is a need for justice based on documentation, investigation, and fair processes.

Nonetheless, discussions are being held between Ethiopia authorities and Washington during the preparation this article. It appears that the U.S. is considering two competing foreign policy priorities: the prominent human right centred approach or prioritizing the growing great power competition in Horn of Africa and getting back Ethiopia, an important state in the region.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study identified key issues and factors that resulted in deterioration in Ethio-U.S. relations during the war in the northern Ethiopia including alleged human rights violations established by the U.S. against Ethiopia, Ethiopia's change in the foreign policy orientation to the contrary of U.S. expectation in the post 2018, increasing geopolitical competition in the Horn of Africa, and relations between the U.S. and former TPLF officials that arguably necessitated U.S. officials protection of the TPLF during the war.

On the bilateral diplomatic relations aspect, the war contributed to the deterioration of the bilateral relations although the relations were already severed prelude to the war due to Trump administration's position on GERD. The diplomatic pressures and sanctions imposed by the U.S. against Ethiopia to end the alleged human rights abuses has made the relations more tough. In turn, diplomatic pressure has led to two important implications in bilateral relations. First, Ethiopia came under intense international diplomatic pressure as some European powers also aligned themselves with the United States. This has led Ethiopia to increasingly seek alternative alliances with U.S. strategic rivals, namely China and Russia. These powers have also taken the opportunity to score points against the U.S. and assist Ethiopia in blocking U.S.-sponsored agendas in the UN Security Council and help Ethiopia through international diplomacy and finance. Other middle powers such as Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran have also strengthened their ties with Ethiopia and provided military assistance during the war to strengthen their position in the strategically important Horn of Africa. Second, in response to U.S. sanctions and pressure against Ethiopia, protests have intensified from local publics and the diaspora against the U.S.

In the bilateral economic cooperation aspect, the war caused negative implications. Chief among this is the termination of Ethiopia's access to AGOA opportunity and suspension of the U.S. economic aids except humanitarian assistance. Ethiopia had lost over USD 200 million export earnings from AGOA preferential export trade alone. It also caused considerable number of employees to lay-off as companies stopped production over termination of AGOA. However, Ethiopia managed to get an alternative market from other countries notably China which effectively assisted the county to withstand the economic sanctions. On the bilateral trade aspect, the finding of the study shows U.S. import to Ethiopia declined by 14.2 percent in 2021 in comparison to 2020.

Factors other than the decline in relations such as Ethiopian government change in import regulation and weakened capacity in the part of Ethiopia to import goods due to the war were responsible for the decline in U.S imports to Ethiopia. On the other hand, Ethiopia's export to the U.S. increased by 59.4 percent in 2021 in comparison to 2020. The reason was that Ethiopian exporters used tariff-based export lines such as GSP while the business communities in the two countries showed solid interconnection even during the war.

The finding of the study also implies a significant shifting in Ethiopia's geopolitical security alliances during the period that showed decline in the Ethio-U.S. relations. Accordingly, multiple security cooperation agreements concluded between Ethiopia and multiple states. This includes Ethiopia-Russia security cooperation agreement (2021); Ethiopia-China agreement to safeguard security of China projects in Ethiopia and East Africa (2021); Ethiopia-Turkey military financial cooperation (2021). This implies the decline in the Ethio-U.S. bilateral relations over the war again motivated those powers to work towards replacing the U.S in Ethiopia.

The study implies the two countries have vital common interests and values that would help them to revitalize bilateral relations. This requires Ethiopia to engage with the U.S. clearly and boldly on the areas that demand clarity such as human rights, peace, and stability as well as GERD politics. The U.S. on its part also should have a clear policy for Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa in general cognizant of the increasing strategic competition among the great powers and lessons learnt during the war in Ethiopia. More clarity is needed in competing issues such as setting human rights as the center of the U.S. foreign policy and U.S. engagement modality in the growing strategic geopolitical competition with China and other middle powers.

Moreover, this study suggests restoring Ethiopia's AGOA opportunity status and reinstating the suspended multiple assistance as well as helping Ethiopia in accessing the international financial institutions require serious bilateral discussion and prompt actions to advance the ties. The two countries may also strengthen the strategic bilateral security cooperation, to positively contribute to the peace and stability of the Horn of Africa, considering the growing fragility and armed conflict in the region. Finally, the researcher would like to suggest a more detailed assessment to be conducted on the recent changes and continuities in the Ethio-U.S. relation implied by this study.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1

List of Key Informant Interviewees

No	Informant Name	Institution	Position	Date and Place of Interview
1	Herman Cohen (Ambassador)	Ward Circle Strategies	Senior U.S diplomat	January 24, 2023 Conducted via Zoom- meeting. Archived.
2	Henok Gebisa (PHD)	Private lawyer in the U.S.	Senior lawyer	May 2, 2023 Conducted via Zoom- meeting. Archived.
3	Hermela Aregawi	Independent Journalist and activst	#NoMore movement founder and leader	April 30, 2023 Conducted via Zoom- meeting. Archived.
4	Gebretsadik Tassew	Ministry of Trade and Regional Cooperation	Director, Bilateral Trade Relation, and Negotiation Directorate	January 17, 2023 MoTRI office
5	Gabriel Nigatu	The Atlantic Council, U.S think-tank organization	Senior Research Fellow	January 28, 2023 Conducted via Zoom- meeting. Archived.
8		U.S Embassy, Public Affairs Office	Public Affairs Officer	February 2, 2023, U.S Embassy in Addis Ababa
6	Jon Abbink (PHD)	University of Leiden, Netherlands	University Professor; Researcher on the international dimension of the war	January 05, 2023 Conducted via Zoom- meeting. Archived.
7	Tesfaye Yetayi (Ambassador)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Director, U.S and North America Directorate	January 20, 2023 MoFA office
9	Yechalework Aynalem	Bole Lemi Industrial Park	Support and Fellow Up Senior Expert	January 30, 2023 Bole Lemi Industrial Park office
10	Yibeltal Adefres	Industrial Parks Development Corporation	Corporate Communications Expert	IDPC office January 16, 2023

Annex 2
Interview Guide
[For Government Agencies]

1. What were the major features of the Ethio-U.S. relations before war broke in northern Ethiopia in 2020?
2. What were the major issues and factors that led to decline of the Ethio-U.S. relations over the war?
3. What are the major implications of the war from Nov 2020-Nov 2022 on Ethio-U.S. Relations?
4. Were there diplomatic efforts from Ethiopia's side to reverse or change the policy and sanctions of the U.S over the war? What are they?
5. Did the decline in the Ethio-U.S. relations create gaps in the security cooperation efforts in the Horn of Africa?
6. How do you see the position of U.S in the great power competition/rivalry in the Horn of Africa?
7. Did the U.S has had roles/ stakes in the Pretoria peace agreement and its implementations?
8. What is the status of Ethio-U.S. relations?
9. What should be done to re-strengthen the bilateral relation and strategic cooperation among the two friendly countries? What are challenges ahead in the Ethio-U.S. relations?

Annex-3
Interview Guide
For Diplomats/ Researchers

1. What are the factors and issues that led to decline in the Ethio-U.S. Relations over the war?
2. What is your evaluation on how the war impacted on Ethio-U.S. bilateral relations?
3. Did the U.S sanctions on Ethiopia over the war succeed in achieving the intended objectives.
4. Did Eritrea's involvement in the war in north Ethiopia affected the Ethio-U.S. relations? And why?
5. To what level Ethiopia succeeded in seeking alternative alliances and cooperation with other global powers as its relationship with U.S declined?
6. What are the opportunities and challenges for the Ethio-U.S. relations [inline to the strategic partnership and cooperation in the Horn]

Declaration

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

Tolera Fikru Gemta

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