

The Geopolitics of Ethiopian Civil War and India's Task

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Abstract

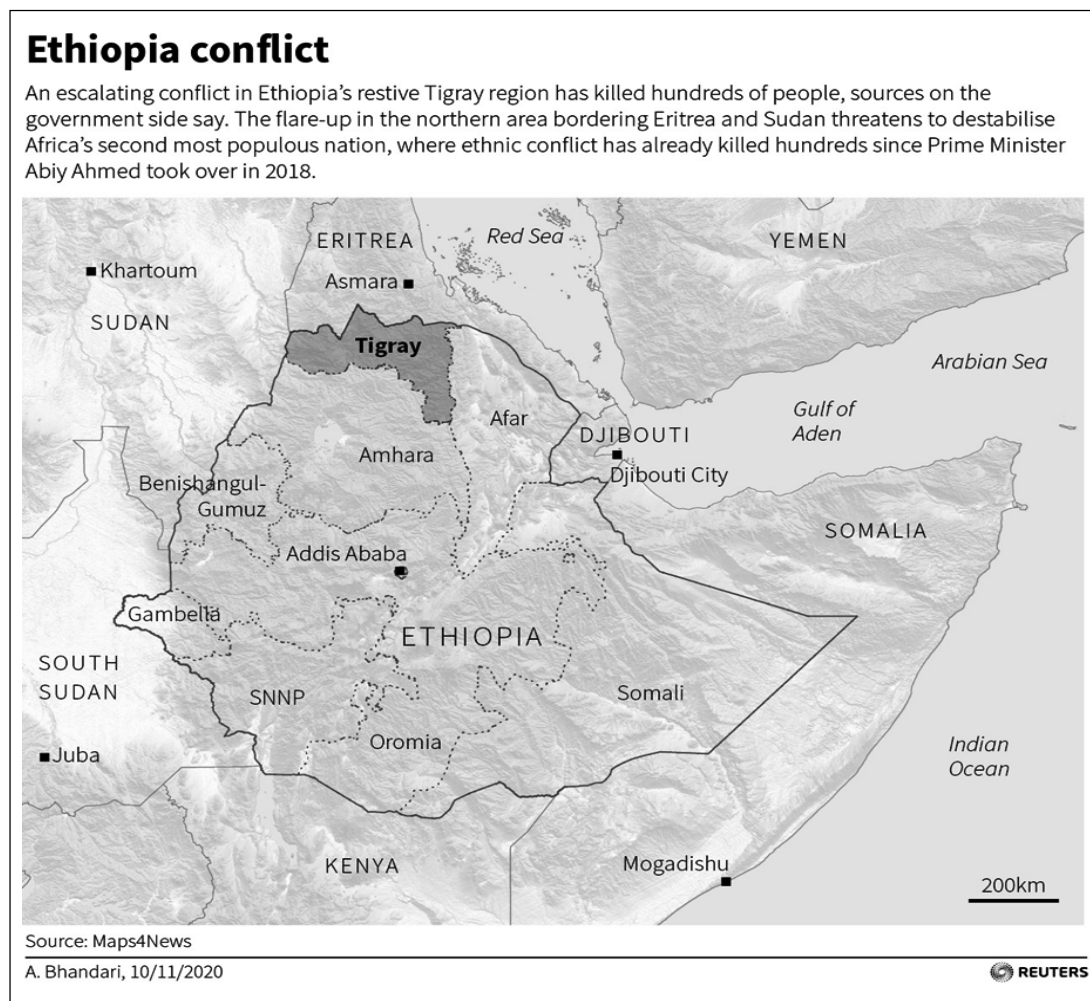
With the civil war in Ethiopia showing no signs of a closure even after a year, the Ethiopian Government has declared a state of emergency, reflecting the rapid escalation of a metastasizing war. If the Ethiopian belligerents fail to end the war immediately, it will tear the country apart and further destabilize the already volatile Horn of Africa region. While the principal cause of war appears to be the ethnicisation of Ethiopian politics, the genesis of the war can be traced to geopolitics. The construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Nile has created a catch-22 situation where Egypt and Ethiopia are stuck even after multiple rounds of discussions. With the fate of Ethiopia—one of India's closest partners in Africa -- hanging in a precarious balance, New Delhi needs to press for concerted efforts by the world community to end the ongoing massacre and destruction of the state.

The ongoing civil war in Ethiopia—the second most populous country in Africa— is of deep concern to India. Strategically located in the Horn of Africa, close to the major shipping lanes that connect the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea, Ethiopia is one of Africa's most important states. The civil war in the country is not only taking an enormous human toll but has the potential to destabilise the entire region stretching from the

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Horn of Africa to East Africa. It is a region of growing Indian political, economic and strategic interest. Among African countries, Ethiopia is a major Indian partner and receives the maximum Line of Credit (LoC). Ethiopia also hosts a large Indian diaspora. A pillar of African independence, unity and development, Ethiopia is a country of immense significance, and its conflict needs an urgent resolution.



The Road to Civil War

When Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed decided a year ago to punish the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the rebel group from Ethiopia's northern Tigray region, for their alleged role in attacking a federal military base, it was expected to be a swift operation. Indeed, the Ethiopian government forces, helped by neighbouring Eritrean troops, captured the whole Tigray region, including the rebel capital Mekelle within a month.¹ However, it was just the beginning of a long metastasizing war as Ethiopia continues to be at war with itself, and the situation is deteriorating every passing day. The 2nd most populous country of Africa seems to be on the verge of an unprecedented blood bath. In the meantime, over a year of the civil war has already cost Ethiopia thousands of lives, two million refugees and a catastrophic famine.²

Ethiopia has been a strong ally of the United States in its war against terrorism. Though landlocked since the secession of Eritrea, the size and geographical location of the country make it the fulcrum of stability in the region. Destabilisation of Ethiopia can lead to many catastrophic consequences, including the dangerous destabilisation of the Horn of Africa, Eastern Africa and even the Red Sea regions. From India's perspective the stability of Ethiopia and the region is crucial as it not only shares a strong bond with Ethiopia but has growing interest in the region. Several high-profile bilateral visits, including the visit of the President of India in 2017, underline the importance of the relationship. Among African countries, Ethiopia receives the maximum Line of Credit (LoC) from India. Ethiopia also hosts a large Indian diaspora. Given India's relationship with Ethiopia and its role in countering terrorism and Islamist extremism in the region as well as at the continental level, preventing the break-down of the Ethiopia state should be a high priority for India.

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Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic country of Africa, consisting of more than 90 ethnic groups and 80 languages.³ It has nine ethnic-based autonomous regional states and two Chartered cities.⁴ The two major ethnic groups are the Oromo and the Amhara that make up 60 percent of the population. Tigrayans are the third largest and constitute seven percent.⁵ TPLF was born in the mid-seventies to fight for the rights of the Tigrayan

people. Born as a small militia group, the TPLF became the most powerful rebel group and toppled the Marxist Military dictatorship of Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991.⁶ Thereupon, the rebel groups ruled the country in coalition, with the TPLF leading the ruling coalition. During the three decades of TPLF rule, Ethiopia saw decent economic growth, and emerged as a stable country in the volatile, violence-prone Horn of Africa region.⁷

In 2016, public protests erupted against the TPLF led coalition government. In 2018, the protest ultimately brought the present Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to power. Though a former member of the TPLF coalition government, from the moment Abiy came to power, he started alienating the TPLF members in the government by stripping off the power and authorities of Tigrayans. Eventually, in 2019 Abiy formed a new party called the Prosperity Party, which had all the previous rebel allies, sans the TPLF. He also tried to put an end to the potentially divisive old arrangement where each province enjoyed a constitutionally granted autonomy in a decentralised political system and had the right to secede.⁸ While Abiy's apparent motive behind the alteration of the Constitution was national unity and integrity, his attempt to consolidate power irked the TPLF. Since the TPLF was still ruling the northern region and had a strong army of around 250, 000 trained men, a conflict was always on the cards.

All hell broke loose in early 2020 when, due to the Covid pandemic, the government decided to postpone the general election till June 2021. TPLF rejected this move as unconstitutional and despite the continuing pandemic decided to hold a separate election in the Tigray region in September 2020. Predictably, TPLF won the election with a landslide. However, the central government refused to recognise the result. As a protest to the actions of Abiy, in November 2020, TPLF attacked and took over one federal military base, resulting in several deaths, injuries and property damage.⁹ This was immediately followed by Abiy's call for war. Later, in January 2021, he decided to remove the legal party status of TPLF and in May he went ahead to label the group as a terrorist organisation.¹⁰ The national election in the rest of Ethiopia finally took place in July 2021 in which Abiy came back to power with an overwhelming majority.¹¹ Given their individual fates in two separate elections, both sides consider themselves as legitimate rulers of the Ethiopian people.

As the battle between the two sides continued, in October 2021, the Ethiopian military decided to launch an all-out attack on rebel-occupied areas. The all-out attack, which included airstrikes in the besieged capital Mekelle, killed many civilians.¹² To prevent the rebels from further aggravating the situation by spreading misinformation, the government cut power and blocked phone lines, which forced some hospitals to run on generators. And on 4th November, exactly one year after the war started, the government assured that victory over the TPLF was imminent.¹³

In the meantime, as per different UN reports, the war has left more than 400,000 people in the Tigray region starving and many children have died of malnutrition.¹⁴ Government forces have also been accused of blocking aid to reach the Tigray region. To make the matter worse, there have been reports circulating of ethnic cleansing against the TPLF supporters in the Western Tigray region. According to the Amnesty International, hundreds of unarmed Tigrayan civilians of Axum town in northern Ethiopia were murdered by Eritrean troops.¹⁵ The government, instead of declining the accusations, claimed that the ethnic killing is taking place from both sides and condemned the western countries for highlighting just one side of the story. Even if that's true, it shows the government's inability to control the violence and calls for a more coordinated approach. The government of Ethiopia needs international support more than ever to control the rebels. Yet many in the international media are comparing the march of the TPLF army to Addis with the historical flavour of three decades earlier, in 1991, when it had marched in a similar fashion to oust the Marxist despotic rulers.¹⁶

What is Happening Now in Ethiopia?

Despite the initial losses, in a dramatic turn of events, the TPLF has made an extraordinary comeback and is on the verge of attacking the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. Marching from the north, they have claimed control of two important towns, Dessie and Kombolcha, in the Amhara region.¹⁷ Located on the highway, they are both strategically crucial and dangerously close to the capital. The TPLF has also claimed to have taken control of Afar region in eastern Ethiopia. As Afar links Addis with Djibouti via road and rail, most of Ethiopia's external trade takes place through this direction. As if it was not enough, recently TPLF have joined forces with another rebel group, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), from the country's southern region. OLA is planning to cut Addis from the southern part of the country, enforcing a de facto siege. The rebel

groups are so sure about their victory that they have started preparing for the transition and have been discussing the possibilities of forming a novel alliance that would replace the present government. As per some reports, the soon to be formed group will be known as “the United Front of Ethiopian Federalist Forces”.¹⁸

In the past, considerable international efforts towards a peace talk between the parties failed to produce any result. Neither of the sides showed any remote interest in discussions. For Abiy Ahmed, peace talks would have meant his negotiated exit towards an amicable transition, which he didn't want to accept. In fact, instead of calling the rebel forces to talk, in July 2021, the Prime Minister went on to declare a ceasefire unilaterally.¹⁹ This unilateral declaration was palpably ignored by the Tigray rebel forces. And four months later, he decided to take this fight till death as an existential war and called upon the country to defeat the rebels with “the bones and blood of her children and live forever in glory”.²⁰

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Despite several demands of discussion by the outside stakeholders, including the African Union, the quagmire seems to persist. In the meantime, the PM in his speech compared TPLF with cancer, weed and disease that needs to be eliminated at the earliest.²¹ In a post on Facebook-- that has been removed since then for inciting community violence-- the PM even encouraged the citizens to identify the TPLF agents and kill them by any possible means.²²

To persuade the PM to initiate talks, the US President Biden announced that from 1st January 2022, US would revoke all the trade privileges for Ethiopia, including duty-free access for Ethiopian goods.²³ Similarly, the European Union has decided to cut its aid²⁴. However, none of these could budge the PM who is determined to defeat the enemy.²⁵ And now that rebels have gained an upper hand, the possibility of convincing the rebels to discuss seems bleak too. Some diplomats actually believe that the rebel forces are trying to avoid a possible carnage and are waiting for the PM to surrender or escape. The continuous deteriorating situation has forced the US embassy in Addis Ababa to urge its citizens to leave Ethiopia as soon as possible.²⁶ The United Nations Security Council has also expressed its deep concern regarding the expansion and intensification of military clashes.

As panic keeps soaring, charges and recriminations are flying abundantly. While the government is suspecting the hands of foreign mercenaries backing TPLF, many other rumours like the sabotage by some domestic 'traitors', and even an interest group inside the government, have been doing the rounds. Amid the fear of a riot in the capital, on 2nd November last year, Abiy Ahmed declared a six-month nationwide state of emergency.²⁷ Under the current state of emergency, the president has sweeping powers to arrest and detain anyone suspected of "terrorist" ties, impose curfews at will and restrict the news media that criticises him. As it happens, on 25th November the Ethiopian government banned all unauthorized reporting of military engagements and war front updates.²⁸ On the other hand, as part of the state of emergency measures, the police have obtained the necessary authority to arrest any ethnic Tigrayans living in the capital. As a matter of fact, there have been reports that within hours of the announcement, several Tigrayans were detained or arrested.²⁹

Additionally, the PM has asked all its citizens to be ready to defend the capital city. Reportedly, he has joined the security forces from the frontlines in the war against advancing Tigrayan rebels, and he is expected to be joined by several other eminent Ethiopian personalities, including Olympic heroes Haile Gebrselassie and Feyisa Lilesa.³⁰ Haile is a legend in Ethiopia with two Olympic gold medals, eight World Championship victories and has set 27 world records.³¹ The PM's announcement of leading the war has been ridiculed by many such as Robert Besseling, CEO of the geopolitical risk consultancy.³² However, the fact is this would not be the first time the PM is fighting a war. To recall, Abiy was part of the Ethiopian army during the 1998 war with Eritrea, and for his bravery he also earned the Lieutenant Colonel rank. His decision to lead the battle from the front is expected to raise the nationalist sentiment among different ethnic groups and encourage them to prevent the further advance of the TPLF.

That said, it is clear that the PM is running out of options quickly. In the last five months, the federal army has lost against the rebels several times and probably has lost the appetite of continuing the war. Given the demoralised state of the federal army, the option of attrition warfare also seems unlikely. To garner outside support, Abiy has signed military cooperation agreements with Russia³³ and Turkey.³⁴ But none of the deals have brought good news for him, so far.

The Geopolitics of the Crisis in Ethiopia

In the ongoing civil war in Ethiopia, the Government forces are facing the strong and well-armed TPLF and its allies, which includes the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). Those in favour of Abiy argue that Abiy's policies are pan-Ethiopian and are aimed at attaining a more unitarian state. On the other hand, supporters of the rebels argue that the centralisation of power will curtail the autonomy of ethno-nationalist forces and, therefore, they are fighting for a federal order. Over the period of one year, the conflict has spread across the border and has transformed the regional geopolitical environment. On the one hand, Ethiopia's sworn enemy, the neighbouring Eritrea, has joined the Ethiopian government in its war. Even though these two neighbouring countries have a long history of conflict with regards to secession, the current rapprochement is based on the principle of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend". To recall, the most significant portion of the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea took place when TPLF was ruling Ethiopia. Irregular combatants from the Amhara region, in the south of Tigray, have also joined hands with the Ethiopian army. On the other hand, the TPLF and OLA, two historical rivals, have started fighting on the same side as allies.

This ethnicisation of politics is nothing new in Ethiopia as the country has been suffering from it since decades.³⁵ When Abiy Ahmed took over as PM in 2018, his coalition dharma raised hopes of gradually overcoming the ethnic animosities between the different tribes. Yet, under his leadership, till November 2020, Ethiopia has witnessed 114 ethnic and religious conflicts.³⁶ Questions are being raised whether all these conflicts are manufactured or instigated by external forces with the ulterior motive of leading the country towards balkanisation and, thus, forcing a regime change.

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The Conflict Over Nile Waters

This suspicion stems from the conflict related to the use of Nile River resources and the construction of a giant dam over it. As per the current agreement based on the 1959 settlement, Egypt receives 55.5 billion cubic meters of Nile water annually, whereas Sudan can draw 18.5 billion cubic meters. Ethiopia receives no water from the Nile. In November 2010, Ethiopia decided to alter the arrangement by announcing

its plan to construct a giant dam, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). When completed, the GERD will become the largest hydropower facility in Africa, generating a massive 5150 MW and will be able to maintain water storage of about 74 billion cubic meters (bcm).³⁷

In March 2011, the first challenge towards the fruition of the plan emerged as the international backers sought an agreement between the riparian states before agreeing to fund the project. To overcome the financing challenge, Ethiopia decided to self-fund the project and awarded the contract to the Italian firm Salini. In 2011, when Egypt was on the verge of the Arab Spring protests, the construction work for the dam started. Politically speaking, Egypt's 25th January revolution and the subsequent volatile domestic politics provided Ethiopia a critical window of opportunity. In 2012, the then-Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi tried to revive the negotiations and visited Ethiopia for the first time as an Egyptian leader since a failed assassination attempt on Hosni Mubarak seventeen years ago. However, with Morsi's own political demise, the negotiation process stopped. Negotiations resumed in Khartoum in November 2013, followed by another round in January 2014. In 2015, Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan signed a settlement of cooperation with a seven-year timeline for filling the dam.

Since June 2020, all three parties have been meeting under the African Union leadership, which has been sponsoring the trilateral talks with South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa as AU chair. The latest diplomatic efforts to resolve this long-simmering dispute, which took place in April 2021 in the Congolese capital Kinshasa, also failed to reach an agreement and the stalemate persists. Most recently, in August 2021, Ethiopia went ahead and conducted the second phase of filling. In November, it began the engineering works in preparation for the third filling of the dam's reservoir during the next rainy season. This has caused near panic among the Egyptians as 97 percent of its water comes from the Nile.

An Egyptian Role?

Historically, Egypt has been labelled as a 'hydraulic state' that has successfully mobilised the Nile water resources.³⁸ During the colonial period, the British carried out several hydrological studies, developed the hydraulic infrastructure in Egypt, and favoured them over potential water resource projects in East Africa. Later, the Cold War superpowers sustained and reinforced the Egyptian position and supported the

construction of its hydraulic infrastructure, most notably the Aswan High Dam. After the end of the Cold War in 1991, Egypt has benefited from the political and financial support of the United States and international organisations such as the World Bank.

Egypt has a history of utilising all the approaches, including economic, technological, legal and political, to achieve a consolidated control over Nile water. Since the 1950s, Egypt has impeded Ethiopian dam-building with threats of naval intervention.³⁹ Throughout history, Egypt has mobilised its resources to prevent the upstream riparian states from mobilising water resources and keep using the water for its own benefit. If the Ethiopian Government is to be believed, it is likely that Egypt is trying to stall the progress of this dam by intensifying its covert and overt activities to destabilise Ethiopia.⁴⁰ The blocking of funds from donors could also be one of the tactics used by Egypt.

Lately, Egypt has been accused of assisting the Gumuz militia and soliciting the government of South Sudan to provide a military base for the militia group.⁴¹ Egypt is also accused of pitting Sudan against Ethiopia by rekindling their conflict over the 260-square-kilometer al-Fashaqa region.⁴² Finally, Egypt has been continuously seeking a rapprochement with Somalia. The east African country in the Horn of Africa has been struggling for decades to establish a viable state. In 2020, Egypt in vain solicited the support of the federal government of Somalia by promising military aid. Later it also turned to Somaliland to establish a military base.⁴³ Somaliland has been at loggerheads with the federal government since the independence of Somalia and has been a self-declared state. In May 2021, Egypt held joint military drills with Sudan and dubbed the exercises in most unsubtle term as “Guardians of the Nile”.⁴⁴ Egypt is also playing its soft diplomacy card in the East African region.⁴⁵ In November 2021, Egypt hosted the Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan and discussion over the future of GERD was on the top of the agenda.⁴⁶ Egypt is also trying to befriend Kenya as an upper riparian country. Kenya is a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, currently representing Africa.

Since the 1950s, Egypt has impeded Ethiopian dam-building with threats of naval intervention.

The geopolitics over Ethiopia is not restricted to Egypt only. In addition to Egypt and other co-riparian states along the Nile, 11 in total, and many other international

players are also seeking different ways to control Ethiopia. While some countries are competing to finance development projects, there are others who want to influence the government policies for different reasons. For example, it is highly likely that Egypt has the tacit support of Washington as it wants the United States, United Nations and the European Union to play a larger role in mediation with GERD and has taken its case to the Security Council. On the other hand, the African Union (AU) is accused of supporting the Ethiopian cause.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, Ethiopia has improved its ties with Turkey. Its recent rapprochement includes the purchase of drones from Ankara. It has also developed a strong relationship with China. Chinese loans and investments under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and diplomatic role in Ethiopia, as well as in neighbouring Djibouti and Kenya on the Indian Ocean, and Egypt and South Sudan—across the Horn -- have rapidly grown. The UAE has proximate relations with Sudan, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Eritrea.⁴⁸ However, as both Egypt and the UAE are working to eliminate the Muslim Brotherhood's influence from the politics of their respective countries, the UAE might decide to back Egypt in case of a war with Ethiopia. Meanwhile, the Biden administration wants to ensure that Russia doesn't exploit the situation. Manifestly, the vested interests of each stakeholder -- resulting in conflicting policies -- are pushing the volatile Horn of Africa to become a region of endless wars and destruction.

India-Ethiopia Relations

The relationship between India and Ethiopia precedes the European Christian explorers. There is evidence that Indian merchants started trading with the erstwhile Kingdom of Axum (Aksum), using monsoon winds about 2000 years ago.⁴⁹ The trade and cultural ties have fluctuated over the centuries but have been sustained. In 1950, Ethiopia was the first African country to open an Embassy in India. India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) has been a flagship event of the Indian government to engage with Africa, and Ethiopia hosted the second edition of IAFS in 2011. That was also when an Indian Prime Minister visited Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and one of its first signatories. Most recently, Indian President Ramnath Kovind visited Ethiopia in 2017, emphasising the strategic importance of the country and marking a new era of bilateral relationship.

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In 1997 India and Ethiopia signed the Joint Trade Committee Agreement followed by establishment of a Joint Business Council. Over the years, economic and commercial here the two countries have significantly expanded. Though comparatively low compared to China, the bilateral trade between India and Ethiopia reached 1.23 billion USD in 2018-19, with the balance of trade in favour of India.⁵⁰ Indian exports to Ethiopia include primary and semi-finished iron and steel products, drugs and pharmaceuticals, machinery and instruments, metal goods, etc. India imports pulses, precious and semi-precious stones, vegetables and seeds, leather, and spices.

Currently, there are approximately 604 active Indian companies in Ethiopia with an investment ranging up to five billion USD and employing about 75,000 Ethiopian nationals⁵¹ in various sectors such as agriculture and floriculture, engineering, plastics, manufacturing, cotton and textiles, water management, consultancy and ICT, education, pharmaceuticals, and healthcare. There is a lot of scope for further improvement, particularly in the digital economy, tourism, science and technology, human resource development, and agroindustry. The significance of the current relationship can be understood by the fact that despite the Covid pandemic, there were 35 new investments from Indian companies in the past one year.⁵² Ethiopia is also the largest recipient of India's Line of Credit (LoC) in Africa.

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India and Ethiopia have signed several key agreements such as⁵³:

- I. Air Services Agreement (1993, 2004, and 2008);
- II. Trade Agreement (1997);
- III. Agreement on Cooperation in Micro-Dams and Small-Scale Irrigation Schemes (2002);
- IV. Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Science and Technology (2007);
- V. Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations (2007); and
- VI. The Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty (2011).

In the education sector also, India and Ethiopia share a very cordial relationship. In July 2007, the two countries signed an Educational Exchange Programme and as part of the programme, there has been a regular exchange of students.⁵⁴ Ethiopia is a

major partner country for India under the India Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. The ITEC programme was launched in 1964 as a platform through which India could share its developmental experiences with other developing countries under the framework of South-South Cooperation. Till 2016, over 2,142 Ethiopian students had been trained in India under the ITEC programme in various fields such as diplomacy, food processing, vocational training and entrepreneurship development, mass communication, computer and information technology, etc.⁵⁵ There are also cultural exchange programmes that ensure an active cultural contact. Although the exact figure of the Indian community residing in Ethiopia is not available, it is estimated to be between 5,000-6,000, out of which 2,000-2,500 are Indian academics, working in different universities and higher educational institutes.

Prospects for the Future

Ethiopia is a unique country in Africa. Except for a brief period when Italy invaded and occupied it (1936-41) it was never colonised. It has always supported the cause of pan-African unity. It was a founding member of the erstwhile Organisation of African Unity (OAU). OAU has since been renamed as the African Union (AU) and its headquarter is located in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. It also hosts numerous UN specialized agencies. The Eastern Africa branch office of India's EXIM Bank is also located in Addis Ababa. Ethiopia's government owned Ethiopian Airlines is the largest and most successful in Africa. It's the most important ally of the USA in the Horn of Africa and plays a very significant role in US' counter-terrorism policy.

In addition to the ongoing pandemic, the Horn is battling conflicts on many fronts. The recent coup and subsequent public protests in neighbouring Sudan, as well as an Afghanistan-like diplomatic quagmire in neighbouring Somalia are exemplars. The continued civil war in Ethiopia would severely disturb the regional balance as the domino effect of the conflict would spill over to its already disturbed neighbouring countries. Since the outbreak of the Tigray war, Sudan has already received tens and thousands of Ethiopian refugees. The fall of Abiy would also mean the collapse of rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea which is strongly based on the closer relationship between the Ethiopian PM and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki. This would also change the nature of the bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Somalia.

Ethiopia holds the key to the fight against terrorism in the region as well as at the continental level because of its leading role in the African Union. This was exemplified in 2006 when Ethiopia sent its troops to neighbouring Somalia to fight the Islamist militants. Ethiopia is also a strong supporter of the Intergovernmental Authority of Development (IGAD), an inter-country body to fight against terrorism at the continental level. Ethiopia also contributes the maximum number of troops to UN peacekeeping forces in Africa. Barring the present frictions, Ethiopia has always been on good terms with USA. Ethiopia also shares a very close relationship with Russia and China. The reticence of both the countries until now is rather strange as neither of the two countries has taken any stand in response to the current situation. The US, UN and the African Union have all been urging a ceasefire and some sort of peace deal, which hasn't produced any result so far.

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Owing to its geographical location Ethiopia can become the strategic linchpin of the horn of Africa for India. At different multilateral forums, Ethiopia has supported India on various issues, including Jammu and Kashmir and the reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The present relationship of India with Ethiopia is robust. Also, during the past three decades, when the TPLF led the country, India worked closely with it. With its significant influence over both sides of the divide, India could try to coax the leaders to sit for a peaceful discussion. Indeed, during the last UNSC meet on Ethiopia, India urged both sides to exercise control⁵⁶, but it can do more. India needs to play an active role in helping the political factions peacefully navigate towards a political settlement. And if that doesn't work, India could join hands with the other countries to prevent Africa's second-most-populous country from going the way of Yugoslavia.

The consequences of the unfolding disaster should worry the world. With the fate of 115 million Ethiopians hanging in a precarious balance, concerted efforts from the world leaders will be required to prevent this imminent massacre. The price of inaction would be high.

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