External Intervention in the Ethiopia-Tigray Conflict and Its Implications on Conflict Resolution and Political Stability[1]

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Abstract:

The Ethiopia-Tigray conflict unleashed devastating consequences on the Horn of Africa sub-region, entailing widespread humanitarian suffering and security concerns. Through a comprehensive analysis of historical, political, and socio-economic factors, this paper investigates the impact of external intervention on either exacerbating or resolving the conflict. Drawing on primary and secondary sources, including interviews, scholarly articles, and reports, this paper examines the various forms of external intervention employed during the course of the Tigray conflict. By critically assessing the effectiveness and limitations of these interventions, we provide valuable insights into their role in shaping the trajectory of the conflict. Based on the findings, this paper concludes that external intervention in the Tigray conflict has had mixed results. While certain interventions have contributed to de-escalation and the provision of humanitarian assistance, others have inadvertently fuelled tensions and perpetuated the conflict. In light of these findings, this paper recommends prioritising diplomatic efforts that include dialogue and negotiation processes, taking into account the legitimate concerns and grievances of all parties involved.

Introduction

Conflict in Africa has become a plague that seems to be never ending. While inter-state conflict is on decline, intra-state conflict has increased over the years since 1989, as most conflicts which had been previously on hold violently reignited, as seen in the case of Rwanda, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia. These conflicts have had substantial human and financial impacts, as they redirect scarce resources from development to support war, resulting in a deceleration of the continent's political and economic progress (Cilliers & Schunemann, 2013). Conflicts not only cause physical destruction to individuals and property, but also pose a challenge to the enforcement of laws, undermine the credibility of governments, and put their institutions at risk. Moreover, internal conflicts give rise to a state of significant unpredictability that amplifies the likelihood of both political and economic volatility, potentially affecting neighbouring states. The cause of these conflicts cannot be divorced from the nature of the colonial administration in the continent and the tangled process of political independence of African states, creating unstable marginalised states, highly characterised by diversity, and prone to conflicts and wars. In most cases, issues responsible for conflicts were consolidated by non-inclusive political settlements, instability and natural cataclysm (Milián, Aspa, García, Arestizábal, Ariño & Ariño, 2021).

The Ethiopia-Tigray conflict, which erupted in the Tigray region of Ethiopia on 4 November 2020, has caused immense suffering, displacement, and humanitarian crisis. The conflict emerged as a culmination of long-standing grievances, power struggles, and political tensions between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Federal Government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. For a country with over 80 ethnic groups that have been enjoying the constitutional rights of self-administration and self-determination, a call for unitary government would naturally generate tension and opposition. Relatively, political unrest, anti-government protests, assassination and other vices returned to the country (Human Rights Watch, 2019). To "purge" the federal state institutions, the Prime Minister in response implemented a series of measures including arrests of Protestants, limiting press freedom by clamping down on journalists, detaining opposition political leaders and heads of ethnic associations. In the cause of the protest, over 4000 people were prosecuted by the Federal authorities, including senior Oromo leaders - where the Prime Minister came from (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS), 2020; Antehungn, 2021).

External interventions in the Ethiopia-Tigray conflict played a role, with various actors becoming involved in attempts to shape the outcome and impact the trajectory of the conflict. Sudan, sharing a border with Tigray, faced the influx of refugees and the spillover of the conflict, leading to concerns over its own security. Eritrea, a historical rival of the TPLF, supported the Ethiopian government by deploying troops and engaging in military operations within Tigray (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Regional organisations, including the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), sought to mediate and facilitate dialogue between the conflicting parties. The AU established a mediation team to promote peace talks, but its efforts faced challenges due to the complex dynamics and the lack of consensus among its member states. The United Nations (UN), was also engaged in addressing the Tigray conflict (Plaut, 2021). The UN called for a ceasefire, expressed concerns over human rights violations, and urged all parties to engage in peaceful negotiations.

However, the ability of the international community to influence the conflict was limited, as the Ethiopian government maintained a stance of national sovereignty and resisted external interference. Non-state actors, including humanitarian organisations and advocacy groups, played a crucial role in responding to the humanitarian crisis and raising awareness about the conflict. The effects of external intervention in the Tigray conflict had been both complex and consequential. External actors' involvement has influenced the conflict dynamics, the prospects for peace, and the suffering experienced by the Tigray population (Mushoriwa, 2022).

This paper aims to analyse the multifaceted impacts of external actors on the resolution or escalation of the Ethiopia-Tigray conflict. By drawing on empirical evidence, documented accounts, and scholarly analysis, this comprehensive study aims to shed light on the complexities and nuances of external intervention in the Tigray conflict, ultimately contributing to the broader understanding of conflict dynamics, peacebuilding strategies, and the potential for sustainable resolution in the Tigray region. Understanding the impacts of external intervention in the Tigray conflict can guide the formulation of more effective strategies and policies that promote peaceful resolution, mitigate harm, and address the root causes of conflicts.

Africa and Intra-State Conflicts

Many African nations saw tumultuous transitions following their independence, marked by instances of intra-state conflicts and large-scale killings. Given the contentiousness of the initial boundary-establishment procedures, the forceful character of colonial governance, and the chaotic course of achieving independence, this outcome is unsurprising. According to Cilliers & Schünemanm (2013), post-colonial states, hastily established, frequently had similar traits to their colonial predecessors. These challenges were sometimes worsened by political compromises that did not include everyone, failings in governance, and natural disasters.

Cilliers (2018) posited that the complexity of conflict in Africa is growing due to a rise in the number of conflict participants. Rebel factions, including extremist groups, tend to be abundant and frequently splinter into further subdivisions. Africa has consistently borne the greatest weight of non-state warfare on a global scale. Instances encompass insurgent factions that engage in conflicts to assert dominance over populations and valuable assets in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, rural Central African Republic, or northern Mali. The limited geographical authority of numerous African governments is evident in this metric, which highlights their inability

to guarantee stability and law enforcement over vast areas of state territory. Consequently, there is a prevalence of communal violence related to disputes over water, land, and other precious resources. Furthermore, numerous non-state conflicts are interconnected with conflicts that originate from states.

In 2023, there was a significant increase of intra-state conflict in the sub-Saharan African region, particularly in Sudan, Niger Republic, and Gabon. This phenomenon prompted numerous experts to investigate the abrupt proliferation of violent and intra-state disputes in these regions.

According to Uyangoda (2005), countries with a propensity for conflict experience instability and constraints in their political state, despite the prevailing political mainstream that promotes revolution and federalism. Drawing on the Obuasi Artisanal Small-Scale Mining (ASM-mining) company conflict in Ghana as an illustrative instance, Okoh (2014) expounded upon the notion that grievances among the involved parties constitute a significant catalyst for conflict and its subsequent intensification. In numerous African nations, including Uganda, the enduring consequences of violence and the resulting societal disruption persist in the present, shaping the daily lives and identities of individuals. These repercussions coexist with ongoing conflicts and the ongoing contestation of significance, remembrance, and commemoration (Moles, Anek, Baker, Komakech, Owor, Pennell, and Rowsell, 2023).

Palik, Rustard, and Methi (2020) in their research on intra-state conflicts in Africa observed that since 1946, there have been recorded 101 state-based conflicts in Africa - more than any other region, followed by Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States; with 77, 48, 38, and 26 number of conflicts respectively. Over the same period, the majority of state-based conflicts in Africa were fought over issues of governance rather than territorial disputes, such as the choice of political system, the restructuring of the administrative structure, or the removal of the central authority. In Africa, there were 46 reported State-based conflicts between 2018 and 2019. Africa suffered 11 intra-state conflicts and 14 internationalised civil wars in 2019 alone, with external players getting involved in domestic hostilities in nations including Somalia, Burkina Faso, and Burundi. These conflicts have not only resulted in the collapse or near collapse of certain nations, but they have also led to significant economic upheaval and disruption in the delivery of public services.

Politicisation of Conflicts in Africa

The politicisation of conflicts in Africa refers to the phenomenon where conflicts are shaped and influenced by political actors and their interests, often resulting in the manipulation of ethnic, religious, or regional divisions for political gain (Wilén, 2018). Siyum (2021) called it "political entrepreneurs", through instrumentalization of identity, political actors in Africa have frequently exploited ethnic, religious, or regional identities for political purposes. By manipulating existing divisions or creating new ones to mobilise support, consolidate power, or divert attention from other issues, these actors

utilise this to gain power over the minority; which often fuels conflicts and deepens divisions within societies (Ifaloye, Folarin & Duruji, 2022).

External actors, including neighbouring countries or global powers, sometimes use conflicts in Africa as proxies to advance their own interests (Mngomezulu & Fayayo, 2019). They may provide support to specific factions or groups, thereby exacerbating existing conflicts or prolonging their duration, which contributes to the politicisation of conflicts, thereby complicating their resolution. The proxy war between Sudan and Uganda in the 1990s and the proxy war between Sudan and Chad, which fuelled the crisis in Darfur, are two examples that greatly affected the political stability of these countries. Through the cross-border assistance of rebels, the nation's sought to change the regional power structures in several instances (Brewer, 2011). This assistance led to a situation known as the Prisoners' Dilemma, in which the patron nations refused to stop providing proxies until the other side did as well.

In Sudan, the long-standing conflict between the central government and various rebel groups, particularly in the Darfur is said to have been fueled by political divisions along ethnic and regional lines. Similarly, the secession of South Sudan in 2011 led to a civil war between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and opposition groups, largely driven by political power struggles (Marina & El-Sandany, 2012). The conflict in Somalia has been marred by political fragmentation and the involvement of various political actors seeking power; as the country has experienced a long-standing civil war. In the Central African Republic (CAR), political leaders have exploited religious differences between Christians and Muslims, leading to violent clashes and widespread human rights abuses (Shehu, 2015). In addition, the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria has been politicised in various ways; political actors have used the conflict to rally support or demonise opponents, and corruption and political patronage have undermined efforts to address the root causes of the conflict. The intercommunal conflicts between farmers and herders in Nigeria, have been politicised by politicians who manipulate ethnic and religious fault lines for personal or political gain (Shehu, 2015).

It is important to note that while conflicts in Africa are often politicised, there are also complex historical, socioeconomic, and ethnic factors that contribute to their emergence and persistence. In the context of Ethiopia's history, conflicts between different groups have commonly erupted due to religious, regional, or national ideologies, or a combination of these. The underlying objective of these battles has been to gain control over resources and establish authority (Geda, 2004). Politicians with self-serving agendas have exploited ethnic identity in Ethiopia, resulting in political instability (Taye, 2017). The nation's historical progression led to the emergence of many political factions. The elites' inability to establish a national consensus stem from the complex historical development of the nation, which has led to the emergence of varied political interests among different ethnic groups. The national flag, language, ownership of the capital city, and the federal system itself are key issues that Ethiopian elites are unable to reach a consensus on (Belay, Ndiaye, Tazi, Cynthia, & Soumahoro, 2020).

External Intervention in Intra-State Conflicts in the Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa is known to be the most volatile region in Africa (Woodward, 2013). Unlike Central Africa which is characterised by political instability, the Horn of Africa is more prone to conflict and disputes, which has spanned from the historical times until now, with mostly unlasting resolution between conflicting parties. This session reflects the influence of external interventions and meditations in the Horn of Africa during the period of conflicts, to examine how instrumental these actors have been in determining the transformation and nature of conflicts in the Horn of Africa.

The Cold war period

During the Cold War, which was an ideological warfare between the then Soviet Union and the United States of America from 1947-1991, the Horn of Africa became a sideshow in the middle of a global struggle as a direct result of the political factions in the area seeking aid from the major powers. This brought the USA, establishing itself as the first Cold War power in the region, particularly in Ethiopia where it acts as the patron of the country, supporting its conflict with Eritrea over border dispute, and also against the Oromo and Somali insurgencies (Geda & Befekadu, 2003). However, after the fall of the Imperial era; establishing the military Dergue regime in 1974, and the invasion of Ethiopia by Somalia in 1977, USA withdrew its support from Ethiopia, aligning and supporting the government of Somalia, whereas the Soviet Union, former supporter of Somalia, equally reversed its alliance to Ethiopia. As a result, the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia became even more intense, and the socioeconomic order of the society was thrown into disarray, which had a detrimental impact on both the political and the economic stability (Suny, 2009; Woodward, 2013). The length of the struggle was increased by their funding and training of the combatants. Migration caused by violence also caused a massive diaspora that financed the conflict and the economy, thereby prolonging these conflicts (Geda & Befekadu, 2005; UNECA, 2016).

As the Cold War surged on, foreign intervention in the Horn of Africa primarily had a negative effect. The most obvious outcome was violence escalation and continuation. This was caused by an endless supply of sophisticated weapons, which brought warfare's technology and devastation to a level much beyond what the combatants alone could have managed. Although economic assistance was given, however, any influence it may have had on development was negated by the damage caused by the protracted conflict (UNECA, 2016).

Intervention in Inter-State Conflicts

The end of the Soviet Union placed the USA as the sole arbitrator of regional affairs; as a result, the backing and endorsement of the USA became crucial. In the case of Sudan, for example, prior to the independence of South Sudan, the conflict that broke out

between rebel groups and the Federal Government was resolved through the intervention of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and led to the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord, which granted self-rule to the South. This occurred before the independence of South Sudan. However, eleven years after the peace agreement, in 1983, another civil war broke out in Sudan. This conflict is believed to have been sparked by the further segmentation of the South into different three provinces as well as the implementation of Sharia Law in the region that is predominantly inhabited by Christians. After 22 years of war between both regions, in January 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed by both parties - which gave the South the choice through a referendum to decide its state of existence at the end of a 6-year period. This was the long-term outcome of the war that led to independence and self-governance of the South. And on 9 July, 2011, South Sudan was officially recognized as a sovereign state (UNECA, 2016).

The conflict that transpired between Ethiopia and Eritrea from 1998 to 2000 and the border dispute that occurred between 2000 and 2018 were both legally resolved as a result of the Peace Accord reached in 2018. This Accord was mediated by the AU and the UN, and it also resulted in the restoration of diplomatic and economic ties between the two countries (New York Times, 2018; Ylonen, 2019). Following the comparatively peaceful power transition in Ethiopia in 2018, as well as the series of restructuring led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed that culminated in the establishment of the national political framework, the Joint Declaration on Peace and Friendship between both nations was signed (Davis, 2020).

After the end of the Cold War, the USA made the decision to celebrate and support the victories won by the oppositions through revolution in Ethiopia, Uganda, Eritrea, and later in Southern Sudan. This was done in the hopes that it would usher in a new era marked by democracy, peace, and socio-economic development under a new class of leaders (Suny, 2009). However, Woodward (2013) postulates that when the Horn became identified as a volatile region with a high terrorist infiltration, USA priorities were suddenly rearranged and they demanded cooperation of its allies in the fight against terrorism, identifying Somalia who had been their good ally in the 1970s as the focal point of this anti-terrorism fight. Ethiopia and Djibouti joined the military campaign and established military forces with the USA and its allies, further defecting stability in the region. This caused the collapse of the 2008 Ethiopia-Eritrea peace process, and conflict ensued, which continued until the 2018 Peaceful resolution championed by the current Ethiopia President; Abiy Ahmed.

In 2019, with the compelling objective of weakening the erupting insurgency in Somalia before the anticipated transfer of security and political operations from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to the Somali Armed Militia by 2021, the USA heightened its intervention and meditation in Somalia, conducted 63 air raid against al-Shabab targets, which when compared to 5 years ago was more than 50% increase - 2018 (45), 2017 (35), 2016 (14), 2015 (11), and between 2007–2014 (11) (New York Times, 2019). Independent reports claim that civilian casualties from air-strikes had

continued but unreported by the US military (Dewan & Dahir, 2019). However, in spite of the heightened military operations from USA and other international forces, al-Shabab persisted in carrying out armed attacks on both the foreign forces and civilians, heightening political instability in the country (Al Jazeera, 2019).

Methodology

This study employed qualitative research methods to investigate the influence of external involvement on either intensifying or resolving the Ethiopian-Tigray conflict. The research examines the various dimensions of political, military, economic, and humanitarian interventions in the conflict. The primary data source consists of comprehensive interviews conducted with five respondents: mediators and experts in political affairs who possess extensive knowledge about the conflict and its impact on Ethiopia's political development. Additionally, individuals from Ethiopia were also included in the interviews.

These participants were contacted virtually and physically, through which the interview took place. Following their consents and outlined interview questions, responses were recorded and transcribed thematically. The study was conducted in accordance with the Covenant Health Research Ethics Committee (CHREC), under the National Code for Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC - Nigeria). All participants to this research gave their informed consent for inclusion and publication. Furthermore, secondary data were obtained from academic papers, books, articles, and media reporting on the Tigray conflict, government publications, non-governmental reports, political development reports, and organisational reports.

Results and Findings

The Tigray conflict was primarily fought between Ethiopian federal forces, including the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF), and the TPLF. However, neighbouring countries and international actors have been involved in various ways. The intervention of external actors in the Tigray conflict has had mixed effects; while some interventions have aimed to provide humanitarian aid and mediate a peaceful resolution, others have contributed to the complexity of the conflict; thereby worsening the humanitarian situation. These interventions are subdivided into four categories: political, military, economic and humanitarian interventions.

Political intervention

The earliest response to the Ethiopian-Tigray conflict came from President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, who was the AU chairperson at the time, when he named three special envoys to Ethiopia to mediate in the conflict which started on 4 November, 2020. The ambassadors were former South African President Kgalema Motlanthe, former Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano, and former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The AU created a commission in June 2021 to look into claims of human

rights abuses allegedly committed by all parties to the conflict headed by former International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor; Fatou Bensouda. Olusegun Obasanjo, a former president of Nigeria, was appointed the AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa in August 2021 by the chairperson of the AU Commission. Obasanjo explained to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) that the disagreements between the Ethiopian government and the TPLF are political in nature and calls for a political resolution, including an unqualified ceasefire (Mushoriwa, 2022).

Additionally, in July and August 2021, a mediation team known as "A3+1," made up of three African nations (Kenya, Niger, and Tunisia), and one non-African nation (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) was dispatched by the African Union to mediate in the Tigray Conflict, following the unilateral ceasefire in July, 2021 (Boutellis, 2022). However, according to Respondent 3, the intervention of the African Union in the Tigray conflict failed to achieve its objectives.

The AU which is vested with the authority to secure peace and mitigate conflict in Africa was actually a total failure when it comes to the Ethiopian Civil Wars from day one. Even though the AU headquarters is located in Addis Ababa, since its establishment, the Union has been very hesitant in addressing any internal contentious issues in African countries. Many other countries like the US and EU intervened. But although the AU is a union of all other actors, which are determining on any kind of peace process, I cannot think of one example where AU has solely spearheaded a peace process in Africa and been successful with that. Even the former Nigerian President Obasanjo as a new mediator could not really do much, as most of the people distrusted the system.

In agreement, Respondent 1 postulated that most countries that intervened in the Tigray conflict had interest in the affairs of Ethiopia, which one way or the other affects its foreign relations with other nations. Contrarily, according to Respondent 4, if the AU had not intervened and established negotiation and peace agreement, both parties would have still been pressured to continue the conflict. The European Union for instance intervened in the conflict to prevent further escalation, which would be detrimental to Europe, by the high surge of refugees and displaced persons, who usually through Libya migrate to Europe.

To Moles et al. (2023), conflict can be curtailed and mitigated by fostering local interactions and encounters for the construction of a reparative future, especially for youths, who are forcefully involved during wars and conflicts. To him, through creative actions and shared conversations; the acts of 'being together' both physically and across geographical space, will foster understanding and subsequent stability.

Military intervention

The escalation of the Ethiopia-Tigray conflict extended beyond Ethiopia's boundaries, resulting in violent clashes in the disputed border area of al-Fashaga between Sudanese troops and Amhara insurgents from Ethiopia. This prompted the intervention of Sudanese, Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Amhara forces in the fight. Reports indicated that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) employed unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) to launch

offensive strikes against Tigrayan forces, providing assistance to the Ethiopian and Eritrean military operation (Mlaba, 2021).

According to the New York Times, the supply of weaponized drones by China, Iran, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates to the Ethiopian government was a form of military backing for that country's leadership during its attack against the Tigray region (Walsh, 2021). Since August 2021, there have been 15 freight flights between Iran and Ethiopia, while there have been an estimated 119 cargo flights from the UAE to Ethiopia. The UAE's acquisition of Chinese-made machinery has been connected to the December 2021 bombing of civilians in Alamata, Tigray, via missile fragments found in airstrike locations (Semhal, 2022).

The International Crisis Group (2021) stated that Eritrea's involvement in the Tigray conflict hinged on President Isaias Afwerki's political and national interest over the Tigray region and the TPLF. By defeating the Tigrayan forces, Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki would have the opportunity of reclaiming the northern regions of Ethiopia that were given to Asmara by the UN boundary commission in 2002. Despite substantial Eritrean support for the TPLF's uprising against Mengistu Haile Mariam's military rule, the Eritrean President considers Tigray leaders as enemies who turned Ethiopia's military against his regime in 1998. According Respondent 5, the pillaging of Tigray by Eritrean troops could be interpreted as retaliation for the damage Eritrea endured during the 1998-2000 war, and also, to regain Eritrean territory that was forcibly taken during the 1998 war, particularly the Badme Triangle, which Abiy Ahmed was unable to deliver despite his agreement with Isaias Afwerki in 2018. Even after the Prime Minister announced on 26 March, 2021 that the Eritrean forces would leave the country, the military forces under the influence of the Prime Minister still lingered within the country, determined to defeat the Tigrayan forces. As stated by Respondent 5:

"I would adhere to the role played by the Eritrean Defence Force, and the Eritrea government. The Eritrean government had embedded Tigray and Ethiopia as a sovereign country, with the claims that they were invited by the Ethiopian government. They should manage their own affairs … Eritrea occupied some parts of Tigray harassing and killing Tigrayans. So, as far as there are some spoilers, the role of AU comes under pressure to sanction Eritrea. The UN had to convince them to sanction Eritrea because they were spoilers to the Tigray conflict. Some countries sent their drones and jets, and Eritrea supplied the Federal government with bombs against Tigray. In summary, most of the external actors that intervened were biased, which affected the resolution of the conflict."

Following international pressure, especially from the US President Joe Biden, who through Senator Chris Coons delivered a message to Prime Minister Abiy in April to end the conflict and have a peaceful agreement, Ethiopia's public stance on the presence of Eritrean troops changed. Acknowledging this, on 26 March, the Ethiopian prime

travelled to Asmara and declared that Eritrean troops would leave. According to Respondent 5:

> "There is little or no importance of external intervention in internal conflicts. The invitation of external actions for the resolution or mediation in intra-state conflicts only escalate and worsen the conflicts. Just like the theory of realism highlights, states only act for their national interest, no state would intervene in the Tigray conflict without having its own selfish reasons."

Economic intervention

Although the UN Security Council convened a meeting on 24 November, 2020 concerning the escalation of the Ethiopia-Tigray conflict and number of deaths in the region, it was alleged that African states refused to facilitate the talks. African nations were said to have dragged their feet, while the European Union started to put more pressure on Prime Minister Abiy. In addition, more than €400 million from the EU Trust Fund were made available for Africa; the Union had given Ethiopia €815 million for the financial period of 2014-2020. However, following its warnings to Ethiopia; concerning the aid restrictions and road blockades imposed by the Federal Government against the Tigray region, the European Union suspended $107 million in funding unless Tigray was opened up to aid organisations without restriction. The Union called on Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia to take action, and create access for humanitarian aid and the relief workers (Hagos & Plaut, 2021). In alignment, Respondent 1 stated:

> "Many of us think the African Union is toothless, unless supported by the US in which we saw in the Tigray conflict. While the African Union was given the absolute credit for solving the conflict in Ethiopia, it was the US that really funded and pushed it to be implemented in Ethiopia. And there are many other interested parties, including the European Union, to really see if Ethiopia would become a peaceful nation."

Deleersnyder (2022) accordingly stated that the EU demonstrated a strong stance against hostilities by withholding direct budgetary support of €88 million until the Ethiopian government fulfilled certain conditions. These conditions included granting unrestricted and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid operations in the Tigray region. This action positioned the EU as one of the most outspoken international actors in condemning the hostilities. Josep Borrell, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, justified the decision by asserting that the situation in Ethiopia had surpassed a mere internal law enforcement operation. He supported his argument by referring to accounts of violence targeting specific ethnic groups, instances of murder, extensive looting, sexual assaults, coerced repatriation of refugees, and the possibility of war crimes. To give the conflict-affected population in Ethiopia access to life-saving supplies and services, the EU enhanced humanitarian funding by €18.8 million.

Additionally, the Union gave Sudan and Kenya €2 million and €2.9 million, respectively, for refugees who are migrating into their countries from Ethiopia.

As a measure against Ethiopia and Eritrea involvement in the Tigray conflict, the US imposed sanctions on Eritrea, and subjected Ethiopians and their families who had been complicit in the atrocities in Tigray to visa restrictions. Although Ethiopian government denied the allegations and responded angrily to the sanctions, on 27 May, 2021, Robert Godec, the acting assistant secretary of state and director of the Bureau of African Affairs, made it abundantly plain in his testimony that unless human rights were upheld, no aid would be permitted to continue and Eritrean forces would be recalled. There will be more action against Eritrea and Ethiopia.

The involvement of the US in the Tigray conflict Respondent 3 believes was a big hope, not just to the Tigrayans, but to the country as whole.

> "I think the involvement of the US has been a huge issue in Ethiopia, we have seen it in Libya and other countries. But sometimes, the US is a big head of hope for many others. If it wasn't for the US involvement, I don't think the conflict in Ethiopia would have been resolved: they invested money, resources, sent some of the leadership to Addis Ababa, appointed envoys to solve the issue and financially supported the end of the conflict. It was exceptional leadership from the US to the country, when they came to end the conflict. But again, Ethiopia has to be respected as an independent nation; a country that has its own internet."

Humanitarian intervention

According to James Dudridge, the British Minister for Africa, the UK gave Ethiopia more than £100 million in humanitarian aid in 2020-2021. Included in this was £19 million in humanitarian aid for those impacted by the fighting in Tigray, including supplies for food, shelter, healthcare, and security. Instead of the Ethiopian government, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other UN organisations delivered the aid. By June, the amount had increased to £22 million. Although the British government claims time and time again that it has discussed human rights concerns with the Ethiopian government "at the highest level" and called for an end to the violence (Hagos & Plaut, 2021).

In December 2020, the EU stopped paying out €88 million in fiscal support to the Ethiopian government, but rather channelled it to humanitarian aid; in order to provide basic services to vulnerable populations, such as addressing gender-based violence or food insecurity caused by the Tigray conflict. In the first half of 2022, the EU provided €58.25 million in humanitarian aid to Ethiopia, with a particular focus on refugees, as well as those - particularly children - who were impacted by food shortages, malnutrition, and the drought in the south. Since the start of the crisis, the EU increased its assistance to Sudan, where thousands of Tigrayans have fled. Even after a humanitarian ceasefire was reached between the belligerents in March 2022, the EU urged further humanitarian access, and the restoration of basic services in Tigray. The

Council on 17 October, 2022, demanded "an immediate halt to the joint offensives launched by Ethiopian National Defence Forces in collaboration with Eritrean Defence Forces, and a full withdrawal of Eritrean troops from the sovereign territory of Ethiopia." Additionally, the Tigray Forces were compelled to "refrain from any further military operations" (European Parliament, 2022).

As Respondent 2 highlighted: "Peace would not have come without the African Union, at the same time, peace will not have come without the United States either. So, the combination of pressure from AU, US, EU and Kenya ultimately led to peace".

Discussion of Findings

The effects of external intervention in escalating or resolving the Tigray conflict is a complex issue that involves various actors and factors. The African Union, the United Nations, and the United States all called for an immediate ceasefire and a peaceful resolution to the conflict, which were ignored or failed until the Peace Agreement of November 2022. The European Union also expressed its concern and called for dialogue and an end to the fighting. Furthermore, neighbouring countries like Sudan and Kenya played crucial roles in resolving the conflict by providing humanitarian aid and mediating between the parties involved. However, the situation remained complex, and the level of external intervention required to resolve the conflict was highly uncertain. Nonetheless, the international community in its active engagement in the conflict towards peace and stability helped to resolve the conflict and mitigated further escalation to other regions and neighbouring states.

The involvement of external actors in the conflict prolonged the conflict and made it harder to reach a peaceful resolution, as each party has its own interests and agenda. Eritrean intervention in the Tigray conflict has been widely criticised for escalating the conflict and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the region. Eritrean forces have been accused of committing human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and looting. The presence of Eritrean troops also made it more difficult for humanitarian organisations to reach those in need, as they have been subjected to harassment and intimidation. Moreover, the Eritrean intervention deepened ethnic tensions in the region and complicated efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. For many Tigrayans, the presence of Eritrean forces is seen as an occupation, and there have been reports of attacks on Eritrean refugees and businesses in Tigray.

However, conflicts can be mitigated for the exposition of development and economic growth when societies intertwine and interdependently relate during post-conflict eras. External mediation and intervention have been crucial in mitigating the humanitarian crisis and promoting peace and stability in the region. External mediation efforts facilitated negotiations between the warring parties, encouraging a ceasefire, and promoting dialogue and reconciliation. These efforts have been led by the African Union, the USA, the EU, the UN, and neighbouring countries, among others. Additionally, external humanitarian aid provided much-needed assistance to the people of Tigray, who have been severely affected by the conflict. International organisations,

such as the World Food Program and UNICEF, have been working to provide food, water, shelter, and medical assistance to those in need. Overall, external mediation and intervention have been important factors in trying to resolve the conflict in Tigray. While the situation remains complex and challenging, it is important that the international community continues to work together to promote peace and stability in the region.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The effects of external intervention in the Tigray conflict are complex and multifaceted. While external actors have played a role in providing much-needed humanitarian assistance and raising global awareness, their involvement has also prolonged the conflict and exacerbated its violence. This comprehensive study has sought to understand the effects of external intervention on the conflict and its implications for the region. Through an analysis of various factors and perspectives, it is clear that external intervention has had both positive and negative consequences, shaping the course and outcome of the conflict in significant ways. External intervention has played a crucial role in providing humanitarian aid and relief efforts to the suffering population of Tigray. The conflict has resulted in widespread displacement, food insecurity, and other humanitarian crises, and the assistance provided by international actors has undoubtedly saved lives and alleviated some of the suffering.

On the other hand, the involvement of external actors, particularly neighbouring countries, fuelled the conflict and perpetuated its violence. The provision of military aid to different factions prolonged the fighting and hindered efforts for a swift resolution. The interests of external powers complicated the conflict, turning it into a proxy war beyond the initial grievances of the Tigray region. The influx of arms and the militarization of the conflict resulted in widespread human rights abuses, including sexual violence, massacres, and forced displacement.

To mitigate the negative effects of external intervention and promote a peaceful resolution, a comprehensive approach is needed. First, there must be a cessation of hostilities and a commitment to negotiated settlement. Regional and international actors should prioritise diplomacy, mediation, and dialogue, focusing on finding political solutions that addresses the underlying causes of conflicts. This should include efforts to promote inclusive governance, respect for human rights, and development in the Tigray region and Ethiopia as a whole.

Furthermore, accountability and justice must be pursued for the atrocities committed during the conflict. Perpetrators of human rights abuses, regardless of their affiliation, should be held accountable to ensure a sense of justice and prevent future cycles of violence. Truth and reconciliation processes, along with support for local initiatives promoting healing and social cohesion, can contribute to long-term stability. Also, long-term development initiatives should be implemented to address the underlying socioeconomic disparities that contributed to the conflict. This includes investing in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and job creation in all regions. Additionally,

regional actors, particularly neighbouring countries, should collaborate to de-escalate tensions and prevent conflict from spilling over into other regions. A regional approach is crucial to ensure lasting peace and stability in the broader Horn of Africa.

Lastly, the formation of a formidable informal association in the conflictual regions will ensue and establish short-term stability, which could be employed as a key strategy for ameliorating future disputes.

Conflict of Interest
The author hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

Notes on Contributors
Olileanya Amuche Ezugwu is the first and corresponding author of this paper. She initiated the paper topic, wrote most sections of the paper, conducted the interviews, transcribed, thematically analysed them, and drafted the Recommendations and Conclusion section.

Professor Moses M. Duruji is the paper supervisor. He reviewed and edited the manuscript, wrote part of the Literature Review section, and finalized the recommendations and conclusion section. The whole work was proofread and finalized by Professor Moses Duruji.

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