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Timothy Ubelejit Nte
Ph.D., Department of Political
and Administrative Studies,
University of Port Harcourt,
Nigeria

Battlefield might and sanctions as drivers of mediation in the tigray conflict

Timothy Ubelejit Nte

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Abstract

Battlefield might have been regarded as the major determinant of right since antiquity but we are now in a globalised world where outcomes are determined by peaceful democratic processes and not through the barrel of guns. The specific objective of the study is to evaluate the mediation of the Tigray Conflict (TC) with regards to the intense diplomatic engagements that did not yield a ceasefire as at when due in juxtaposition with battlefield might and sanctions that paved the way for a ceasefire on 22 March 2022. In accordance, the study is guided by the following research questions. How did battle field might facilitate a ceasefire in TC? What are the sanctions and international pressures that enhanced mediation of TC? Why was the mediation process of TC cumbersome? The study is guided by the theoretical framework of Classical Realism as made popular by Thucydides. The qualitative research methodology was adopted for the study. The study concludes that sanctions and international pressures facilitated the mediation process of TC. The study recommends that State and non-State actors should refrain from actions capable of truncating the peace and seek for conflict resolution mechanism such as mediation.

Keywords: Battlefield might, sanctions, mediation, tigray conflict, ceasefire

1. Introduction

Battlefield might have been regarded as the major determinant of right since antiquity. The Tigray Conflict has attracted several passionate mediation efforts from the international community from the very beginnings in November 2020 all through the year 2021 to no avail. Despite the intense diplomatic engagements for a ceasefire, the warring factions have remained adamant and blindfolded by the quest for outright military victory.

The specific objective of the study is to evaluate the mediation of the Tigray conflict with regards to the intense diplomatic engagements that did not yield a ceasefire as at when due in juxtaposition with battlefield might and sanctions that paved the way for a ceasefire on 22 March 2022. In accordance, the study is guided by the following research questions. What is the How did battle field might facilitate a ceasefire in the Tigray Conflict? What are the sanctions and international pressures that enhanced mediation of the Tigray Conflict? Why was the mediation process of the Tigray Conflict cumbersome?

The study is guided by the theoretical framework of Classical Realism as made popular by Thucydides. Thucydides is the grand master or father of the realist school of thought. Some of the catchy phrases in his Melian Dialogue are: (a) The standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel (b) The strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept (Baylis and Smith, 2001) ^[12]. In sum the realist worldview is that capabilities of States are crucial and promotes peace, stability and cordial international relations (Ghosh, 2009) ^[70]. Also, power should be acquired and consolidated because relations between states are basically determined by their relative levels of power (Morgentha, 1978) ^[46]. Victory in the Tigray Conflict for either the Prime Minister Ahmed Abiy led Federal Government of Ethiopia or the Tigray Defence Force would bring relative power of deciding who get what and how. The capabilities of powerful countries were crucial in the Tigray Ceasefire through their pressures and sanctions.

Qualitative Method is the research methodology of the study. It consists of content and documentary analysis whereby data was gathered through mainly secondary sources like text books, journals, newspapers, internet materials etc.

Corresponding Author:
Timothy Ubelejit Nte
Ph.D., Department of Political
and Administrative Studies
University of Port Harcourt,
Nigeria

The gathered data was reviewed and critically analysed. The article is divided into five sections. We are already in the first section which is the introduction. The second is battle field might and ceasefire in Tigray Conflict; the third section is on sanctions and international pressure for peace in the Tigray Conflict; the fourth section is mediation of the Tigray Conflict and section five is the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendation.

2. Battle Field Might and Ceasefire in Tigray Conflict

Might has been the major determinant of right since antiquity. This was made very popular in the account of the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides who noted that “the level of justice depends on the ability to compel”. Invariably a powerful state or cartel would always achieve their goals by the use of force.

The Tigray Conflict has attracted several passionate mediation efforts from the international community from the very beginnings in November 2020 all through the year 2021 to no avail. Despite the intense diplomatic engagements for a ceasefire, the warring factions have remained adamant and blindfolded by the quest for outright military victory. Might makes right is the propelling factor or reason why “the Ethiopian government and the Tigray forces remained essentially non-responsive, each seeking to press temporary military advantage, if not outright military defeat of the opponent, before negotiating or making any concessions” (Vanda, 2022:3) ^[61].

The 3rd November 2020 midnight attack by Tigray forces on Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) in Mekelle, Dansha and other barracks in Northern Ethiopian with very heavy casualties was the casus belli of the Tigray Conflict (France24, 2020; Eritrea Hub, 2020) ^[31]. In what was codenamed ‘law enforcement operations’ by the Prime Minister Abiy led Ethiopian federal government; the ENDF counterattacked Tigray (Zavis and Tattersall, 2020) ^[69]. Within a very short duration ENDF captured Mekelle the capital of Tigray and on 28 November, 2020 Abiy declared the operation on Tigray over (BBC News 2020) ^[13]. The proportional casualties and short duration of this operation was in tandem with the Just War theory thereby making it commendable.

What eventually manifested and intensified as battle field might as condition for a ceasefire in the Tigray Conflict evidently started with Tigray forces and consummated by the Prime Minister Abiy led federal government. The first ceasefire offer for the Tigray Conflict was literally offered by Prime Minister Abiy on 28 November 2020 when he declared the ‘law enforcement operations’ over. The pathetic humanitarian crisis and continuation of the conflict with heavy casualties would have been averted if the forces of Tigray took advantage of this declaration of the ‘operation over’ to seek for a political solution to their grievances through appropriate international diplomatic channels.

Instead the TDF remobilised and evidently took advantage of the peaceful disposition of the ‘operation over’ to launch another offensive and declaring that the fight continues until the law enforcement operation troops tagged ‘invaders’ are completely withdrawn from Tigray (The Economist, 2020). “Following the TDF's rapid advances, Abiy threatened to resume war with Tigray and crush the rebels, raising fears of genocide” (Collins, 2021:1) ^[26]. The threat to resume war by Prime Minister Abiy is an indication that

the ENDF were actually observing the cease fire as enshrined in the ‘operation over’ declaration. The logical deduction here is that Tigray forces capitalized on the truce engrained in the ‘operation over’ declaration by Prime Minister Abiy to retake Mekelle and intensified their military offensive into Amhara and Afar regions which were captured while the ENDF observed the ceasefire.

Amidst this caution and the radical intensification of TPFL offensive the Abiy led ENDF declared a ceasefire on 28 June 2021 and withdrawal of ENDF forces from Tigray (Abbink, 2021) ^[1]. The argument could be that the cease fire was declared because of the battle field might of the TPFL at this material point in time. The TPFL actually refused and mocked the ceasefire regarding it as unilateral and sign of military victory of Tigray.

The ‘sign of weakness’ disposition of Tigray forces to the ceasefire was magnified and apparently justified by BBC when Vivienne Nunis reported that “Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed appears to have had few options left when he unilaterally declared a ceasefire. But by framing the decision as a ‘humanitarian’ one, the government in Addis Ababa is attempting to save face” (Nunis, 2021:1) ^[48]. There are indications that the quest for outright military victory for power control in totality was the motivating factor for the rejection of the ceasefire by Tigray forces and not just signs of weakness or measures to save face of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

In sharp contrast to their ‘withdrawal of invaders’ earlier justification for continuing the war after Prime Minister Abiy had declared the ‘law enforcement operations’ over; there was an aggressive offensive by the TPFL on Afar and Amhara regions following the withdrawal of ENDF forces from Tigray. Invariably, withdrawal of ENDF forces on 28 June 2021 emboldened the TPFL seek for battle field might instead of reciprocating the ceasefire for a political solution. On 30 June 2021 the Prime Minister Abiy led Ethiopian Federal Government announced that ENDF forces and Eritrean forces had withdrawn from Tigray in compliance with the ceasefire. Abiy warned that the ceasefire was not a sign of weakness because the ENDF forces can maul Tigray forces and take over Mekelle in less than three weeks if that is their desire (Matt, 2021) ^[45]. The ceasefire declared by Prime Minister Abiy was observed for 105 days by the ENDF forces despite the acts of aggression and highly provocative atrocities of TDF who attempted to take advantage of the ceasefire to make rapid advances and consolidate their power for might is right settlements. A second offensive by the ENDF began on 11 October 2021 and this effectively ended the ceasefire declared on 28 June 2021 (Associated Press, 2021) ^[10].

The TDF under the leadership of General Tsadkan Gebretensae declared that there have been preparations for this offensive for months and envisaged that the battle will be decisive (Walsh, 2021) ^[63]. The impression is that the TDF leadership, ignored the fears of genocide caution of Prime Minister Abiy as well as the need to salvage the prevalent critical humanitarian crisis and treated the 28 June 2021 ceasefire with levity because they want to win the decisive battle. Why would they want to win the final battle when the 28 June 2021 ceasefire afforded a political solution that would have saved thousands of lives and resources? The answer is battlefield might- makes-right. The TDF leadership intend to push the Prime Minister Abiy government to a corner where they can get anything they

want without fair consideration. Unfortunately, Tigray forces lost the battle of the second offensive. Beginning from 11 October, 2021 the ENDF forces launched coordinate attacks against Tigray (Bariyo 2021) ^[11].

The offensive led to the recapture of different towns in the Amhara and Afar regions (Sargent, 2021) ^[53]. This was later confirmed by TPLF spokesman Getachew Reda (Harter, 2021) ^[34]. Haven recaptured all the towns captured by Tigray forces the ENDF started to advance further into Tigray and the TDF requested for a ceasefire on 20 December 2021 (Liffey, 2021) ^[43]. On account of the ceasefire request by the TDF, the Prime Minister Abiy ordered the ENDF to exercise restraint and not to advance further into Tigray region (ABC News 2021) ^[3]. The death toll and humanitarian crisis would have worsened for Tigray if the Prime Minister Abiy led ENDF had rebuffed the ceasefire request of TDF when it was about to be mauled as signs of weakness or measures to save face in retaliation. As a follow up to the ceasefire restraint an indefinite humanitarian truce was declared on 24 March 2022 by the Prime Minister Abiy led Ethiopian federal government to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and pave way for sustainable peace (Aljazeera 2022) ^[8].

In a similar vein the Prime Minister Abiy led Ethiopian federal government has opposed the pressures and sanctions of the international community with propensity of stifling the might to resist rebellion and opposition. It was for this reason that the EFT dismissed as regrettable and unsubstantiated the statements of the international community (Fröhlich, 2021; Fox, 2021) ^[33, 32]. The EFT enjoined the international community not wilfully intervene or interfere in the internal affairs of Ethiopia as a sovereign state in accordance with the dictates of the United Nations (Wall, 2020) ^[71]. This not intervention cum interference disposition pitched him against some stakeholders in the international community in the process of mediation. To this we turn.

3. Sanctions and International Pressures in Tigray Conflict

Sanctions are coercive diplomatic actions taken by an organization or powerful country against a State, State actor, non-State entity etc. that pose a threat to peace and security of the international system at varied levels. Economic impediments are the bedrock of sanctions and are normally applied as substitute to the use of armed force and are part of a diplomatic process to weaken and cajole perpetrators of heinous atrocity with a view to maintaining peace and security at domestic, regional or international dimensions. Sanctions would normally lead to a diplomatic settlement and the restrictions or actions taken are normally lifted when there is a settlement or restitution by the culprit (Hufbauer, 2007) ^[37].

Sanctions with universal applicability are normally applied by the United Nations (UN) when approved by the UN Security Council. The sanctions of the UN are different from that of individual countries or regional organizations (Carisch *et al*, 2017) ^[29]. Powerful countries such as the United States of America, United Kingdom etc. have the potential of imposing effective sanction that can facilitate diplomatic settlement in the same way with regional organizations such as the European Union (EU), African Union (AU) etc. In the case of the Tigray Conflict sanctions were applied by the USA and EU.

Treats of Sanction can enhance successful mediation. Treats of sanctions may not necessary come from the mediator but from states in the international system interested in the peaceful resolution of a conflict as was the case in the late 1990s when the AU threatened to impose sanctions on the governments of Sudan and Burundi prior to a drop in their uncompromising positions which served as an obstacle to the conflict resolution. This cajoling and coaxing tactic is more effective if it is not coming directly from the mediator or if the mediator is very powerful.

Sanctions and the international pressures greatly facilitated the peaceful resolution of the Tigray conflict. Ethiopia was the highest beneficiary of U.S. humanitarian assistance in the world which was pivotal to its development and socio-economic stability (Blanchard, 2021) ^[19]. Ethiopia was also benefiting in many ways from donor countries and the international community in general. For this reason, the threat of sanctions and international pressures played a crucial role in shaping the behaviour of the Prime Minister Abiy led Federal Government of Ethiopia (FGE) and culminated into the sustainable humanitarian truce that was declared on 24 March 2022 (Aljazeera 2022) ^[8].

The pressures, threats of sanction, and sanctions on the warring factions of the Tigray Conflict by the United States of America evidently contributed the most in saving the looming ethnic genocide and catastrophic humanitarian mayhem. U.S. policymakers and Members of Congress mounted adequate pressures and motion for action to stop the atrocities and humanitarian crisis of the Tigray Conflict. To this end the U.S. Senate passed by Unanimous Consent S. Res. 97 in the month of May 2021 which encompasses the use of all legal, developmental and diplomatic tools to forestall the continuation of ethnic gruesome hostilities in Ethiopia, the amelioration of the human rights and humanitarian conditions as well as the departure of Eritrean forces etc. The U.S. Congress also advocated an investigation through the office of the Secretary of States; to determine if the enormity of atrocities committed amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity and to recommend appropriate penalties or sanctions (Blanchard, 2021) ^[19].

The good thing about the sanctions and pressures of the United States of America in the Tigray Conflict was that there were no sacred cows as it was inflicted on any individual or group that committed atrocity. On this Premise the United States of America in May 2021, announced visa restrictions on Ethiopian and Eritrean government officials and members of the security forces of these two countries as well as the forces and members of the Tigray People's Liberation Front. The U.S. Department of State warned that further actions would be taken if they fail to reverse course (Blanchard, 2021) ^[19].

At about the same period, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanction on Generals of the Eritrean Defence Force (EDF) for their scorched earth tactics in the offensive against Tigray. Under their command the EDF wantonly massacred people, destroyed and looted properties and engaged in vicious sexual assaults on the population of Tigray. Broad economic and security restrictions were also imposed on Eritrea to pressure ceasefire and respect for human rights and humanitarian uprightness. Based on the deplorable human right conditions in Tigray, the U.S. imposed economic restrictions, withheld security assistance and enacted new defence trade controls on the Prime

Minister Abiy led FGE. The U.S. also withheld assistance on the new multilateral development bank lending and advocated same action to partners (Blanchard, 2021)^[19].

The EU is obviously one the international actors that have mounted highest pressures and taken adequate action to facilitate mediation and peaceful resolution of the Tigray Conflict. This is manifest in the postponement its direct budgetary assistance of €88million until the Prime Minister Abiy led FGE fulfilled certain provisions, such as giving secure and easy entrance of humanitarian services to alleviate the plight of Tigray Conflict victims (Borrell, 2021)^[22].

The justification for this sanction according to the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, was that the gruesome killings, ethnic targeted atrocities, rapes, lootings, wilful destruction of properties, forceful returns of refugees etc. goes beyond internal law enforcement operation (Borrell, 2021)^[22]. The EU also imposed sanctions on the intelligence agency of Eritrea for several human rights violations and atrocities against the population of Tigray reminiscent of scorched earth tactics (Blanchard, 2021)^[19].

As part of Chapter VII: Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace... Article 41 of the United Nations Charter stipulates that it is only the United Nations Security Council that has the power to apply sanctions that would be binding on all the members of the United Nations. Sequel to the call by some international leaders and human rights group for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to take action geared towards the quick resolution of the Tigray Conflict, the UNSC had on two different open briefings on the Tigray Conflict, under the agenda – item of peace and security in Africa. On the action to be taking including application of sanctions or possibly invoking the Responsibility to Protect Clause; Russia, China and India citing undue interference restraint and respect for Ethiopia's sovereignty, objected to the call (Welle, 2021a; Blanchard, 2021)^[66, 19].

Evidently, the call for an emergency UNSC session for the Tigray Conflict scheduled for 5 March 2021 but cancelled due to opposition from Russia and China was not actually to take radical action against the government of Ethiopia as envisaged but to issue a statement calling for an end to violence in Ethiopia's Tigray region (Welle, 2021b)^[67]. The fear of how UNSC Resolution 1483 and UNSC Resolution 1973 became triggers for the invasion of Iraq and Libya respectively may have informed the apprehension of Russia and China. Following the critical humanitarian plight, brutal human rights abuses and gruesome atrocities obviously committed by all sides in the Tigray Conflict; the UNSC on 5 November 2021, unanimously issued a statement calling for cessation of hostilities (Lederer, 2021)^[42].

4. Mediation of the Tigray Conflict

Mediation is a conflict resolution mechanism whereby a neutral third party, acceptable to the contending parties, presides over deliberations that enables parties to reach a negotiated settlement. In practice, the mediator is a third party permitted to assist the parties negotiate a settlement or agreement. The third-party must be neutral and accepted by both parties. Mediation is a form of assisted negotiation or a catalyst for negotiation (Touval and Zartman, 2001)^[55]. Mediation enhances communication between adversaries and is highly supportive to communication hampered conflict by aiding their communication.

The most important function of mediation is to keep the communication flow balanced, fair, and productive through the prudent adoption of skills which may commence by open contact and continue with carrying of messages, supply of missing information, clarification of meanings and the development of a rapport. The communication may take the shape of a brainstorming session that would reveal the areas of agreement and disagreement. Highly emotional and turbulent sessions can be managed through separate caucus-meetings with each of the parties (Touval and Zartman, 2001)^[55].

Mediators that are statesmen of powerful countries are very influential as they command much respect and authority. Their vantage position enhances high pressure tactics. Jimmy Carter is a very good example of a mediator that wields much respect and authority. At a stage in the Camp David Summit, President Sadat of Egypt wanted to opt out but the high-pressure tactics of Jimmy Carter as mediator saved the situation and eventually gave rise to a successful mediation – The Camp David Accord. Also, high pressure tactics played out in the negotiation of 1979 between rebel forces led by Robert Mugabe and the White-Government. When stalemate was imminent, President Samora Machel of Mozambique applied high pressure tactics to buffer the British position and Mugabe succumbed. The reason was that the Mozambican government led by President Machel provided the support base for Mugabe's military operations as a freedom fighter. This is best referred to as high pressure tactics (Touval and Zartman, 2001)^[55].

These procedures were adopted for many months by the African Union, United States, United Nations, East African Heads of Government, Ethiopian civil society organizations, the Interreligious Council of Ethiopia, Britain, Canada, Kenya, Sudan and other mediators in the process of mediating for peace or a ceasefire between the federal government of Ethiopia and the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front with very slow progress or headway (Sany and Sheehy, 2022)^[52].

At the formative stages of the conflict a peace and mediation proposals were tendered by the African Union but refused by the Federal Government of Ethiopia under the leadership of President Abiy Ahmed (Wanjohi, 2020)^[65]. On the 9th of November 2020 - the AU Commission Chairman, Moussa Faki called for the immediate cessation of hostilities by the warring parties and engage in robust negotiations that should facilitate the peaceful resolution of the conflict (African Union, 2020)^[6]. At about this same time AU Chairman Cyril Ramaphosa appointed three former African Heads of State *viz.* former President Kgalema Motlante of South Africa, former President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia and former President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique as mediators to pave way for the peaceful resolution of the conflict (African Union, 2020)^[6].

The appointment of these powerful statesmen by the AU as mediation envoys in the Tigray Conflict is in tandem with the prerequisites of effective mediation. This is because successful mediations would be enhanced if the mediator possesses exceptional qualities. Former heads of powerful states have this personality and quality. Also, the use of mediators helps the adversaries not to lose face or look weak (Jeong, 2010)^[39].

Unfortunately, this well-articulated arrangement was snubbed by the Prime Minister Abiy led Federal Government of Ethiopia (FGE) as fake news (Reuters, 2020;

Deleersnyder, 2021)^[28]. The mediators arrived Addis Ababa on 27 November 2020 and received by the FGE but barred from meeting with the leadership of the TPLF whom Prime Minister Abiy regarded as a criminal clique not worthy of negotiating with (Deleersnyder, 2021)^[28]. Penultimate to the arrival of the envoys the FGE announced another military campaign on Tigray and this signaled non-cooperation with the AU mediators (Wall, 2020)^[71].

Prime Minister Abiy eventually met with the mediators and stated that the military actions against Tigray are law enforcement operations within the ambit of the constitution; dismissing AU Mediations as wanton interference in the internal affairs of Ethiopia (ICG, 2021; Deleersnyder, 2021)^[38, 28]. Invariably, Prime Minister Abiy rejected the November 2020 mediation offer of the African Union (Woldemichael, 2021)^[68]. “Abiy’s government resisted international efforts to mediate between the two sides, putting the African Union (AU), whose headquarters Ethiopia hosts in Addis Ababa, in a difficult position” (Blanchard, 2020:8)^[18].

On the 20 December 2020, the international Authority on Development summit of East African heads of government and state had an emergency summit in Djibouti to deliberate on modalities to mediate the Tigray Conflict. At the end of this summit the East African heads of government issued a communiqué for unhindered humanitarian access to alleviate the plight of victims of the Tigray Conflict as well as support for the Ethiopian constitutional order (Horn Diplomat, 2020)^[36].

The United Nations, United States of America, and European Union officially expressed unflinching support to this African Union Peace initiative to Ethiopia despite the lukewarm attitude of Abiy towards negotiating with the TPLF. To this end the European Union warned that the only way forward to avert gruesome conflict devastation in Ethiopia is dialogue and negotiations for peaceful political settlement. The United States of America has been playing a fundamental role in the mediation of the Tigray Conflict – urging on the need for a peace deal through negotiations for cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of their forces from location they have advanced sequel to the commencement of the conflict (Blanchard, 2020)^[18].

The atrocities, hostilities and humanitarian crisis in Tigray have also generated tremendous apprehension among Members of US Congress who eventually came up with major resolutions *viz.* S. Res. 97 – which the American Senate passed by unanimous consent in May 2021. The resolution called on US government “to push for a cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of Eritrean forces, to mitigate the humanitarian crisis...and to use all diplomatic, developmental, and legal tools to prevent further ethnic-based violence and promote multi-party democracy in Ethiopia” (Blanchard, 2021:22)^[19]. In another vein H.Res. 445 called for “the removal of Eritrean forces and for all belligerents to cease hostilities, improve humanitarian access, and cooperate with human rights investigations” (Blanchard, 2021:23)^[19].

They also called on the US Secretary of States – Antony Blinken to intensify efforts towards the realization of peace talks and peace deal by the warring factions. Accordingly Antony Blinken announced that USA will assiduously working with major stakeholders of the Tigray Conflict and like-minded governments to (a) secure a ceasefire (b) ensure the departure of Eritrean forces (c) provide humanitarian aid

(d) end the conflict (e) hold accountable violators of humanitarian law (Blanchard, 2021:23)^[19]. The U.N. Security Council also called for a cease-fire in the Tigray Conflict (Sany and Sheehy, 2022)^[52].

At the request of President Biden, Senator Chris Coons visited Ethiopia in March 2021 to convey the concerns of the American government with special emphasis on human rights violations and humanitarian crisis Prime Minister Abiy proclaimed that Eritrean troops would soon withdraw from Ethiopia but rejected the call for a cease fire by USA. Jeffrey Feltman was eventually named as U.S Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa in pursuant of effective mediation for an enduring peace in the region (Blanchard, 2021)^[19]. Blinken – the US Secretary of State also met with former President Olusegun Obasanjo – the AU envoy to Ethiopia, to discuss the Tigray crisis (Walsh, 2021)^[63].

Three African countries namely: Kenya, Tunisia and Niger in collaboration with Saint Vincent and Grenadines which is a non-African country formed a formidable mediation group popularly called “A3+1” which translates as “A3 Plus One” for the mediation of the Tigray Conflict. The A3 + 1 Mediating Group had meetings in the months of July 2021 and August 2021 for deliberations on ways to amicably resolve the Tigray Conflict and came up with some resolutions. In the spirit of African solution to African challenges the A3 + 1 Group called for peace resolution processes that respects the sovereignty of Ethiopia galvanized by AU peace resolution processes devoid of undue external interventions (Plaut, 2021)^[50].

President Joe Biden of USA later met with President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya to talk about the worsening humanitarian condition in Tigray and how to forestall additional loss of life and to guarantee uninterrupted humanitarian support (Beech and Hogue 2021)^[16]. Eventually, President Kenyatta called for the warring parties in the Tigray conflict to ceasefire and consider negotiations for peace (Cheruiyok, 2021)^[25].

As the conflict unabatedly intensified, USAID Administrator Samantha Power in the month of August 2021 visited Ethiopia on behalf of the Biden Administration and enjoined the belligerents to ceasefire and negotiate for peace through political concessions to alleviate the sufferings of the broad mass of Ethiopians who are in dire need of humanitarian assistance which the blockage of Tigray is hindering (Blanchard, 2021)^[19].

Obasanjo was appointed as the AU High Representative for the Horn of African region in late August 2021 and has been working relentlessly to advance peace and stability in Ethiopia (Blanchard, 2021)^[19] Former President Obasanjo was able to broker talks with some diplomatic progress as he talked with the warring parties *viz.* the Abiy led FGE and the Debretsion led TPLF separately. In the AU Peace and Security Council, Obasanjo stated on the 8th of November 2021 that the belligerents have accepted the fact that their bone of contention is political disparities which require political solution through effective negotiation (Anna, 2021)^[9].

Canada also made diplomatic overtures calling for ceasefire and enduring peace in Ethiopia through its foreign ministry under the auspices of François-Philippe Champagne who is the Canadian Foreign Minister (Khoury, 2020). Like other well-meaning democratic countries Britain made attempts to secure a cease fire in Ethiopia through its ministry of external affairs under the leadership of Dominic Raab who

is the British Foreign Secretary. Raab spoke with Prime Minister Abiy calling for de-escalation, humanitarian consideration and peaceful solution to the Tigray Conflict (Magdy, 2020) ^[44].

The Government of Sudan made propositions in the month of August 2021; to act as mediator between the warring factions in the Tigray Conflict. This suggestion was turned down by the Ethiopian government because of the lingering border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan over al-Fashaga territory, which has the propensity of assuaging prejudice in the mediation of Sudan (Africa News, 2021) ^[5]. The attempts of Civil Societies in Ethiopia to mediate the Tigray Conflict is worthy of commendation. Twenty-four (24) Civil Society Organisations of Ethiopia appealed for a peaceful resolution of the war stating that the traumatic impact of the conflict on children, girls, women, the elderly, vulnerable groups, etc. is better imagined than described (Addis Standard, 2021) ^[4].

The EU High Representative and the Group of Seven (G7) countries have described the presence of Eritrean forces and other foreign mercenaries committing atrocities in the Tigray Conflict as deeply disturbing and disastrous. They raised the motion for immediate withdrawal of Eritrean Forces in Tigray and supported an inclusive political process and wider national reconciliation for sustainable peace in the Tigray Conflict (Blanchard, 2021) ^[19]. This stance was reiterated by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who on 27 February 2021 called for the immediate withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Tigray. Blinken also solicited the support of the African Union and other regional partners in the collective pursuit of lasting peace in Ethiopia. In a nutshell, the various mediation efforts since November 2020 called for: a ceasefire, the withdrawal of antagonistic forces to their original territories, an uninterrupted humanitarian access, and a political solution to the conflict including the release of political prisoners. The mediation-demands started yielding dividends in January 2022 when President Ahmed Abiy released several political prisoners, indicated interest in negotiations and ordered the withdrawal of federal government forces from Tigray. United Nations Secretary General António Guterres commended the diplomatic action of Abiy and beckoned on the opposing factions to take advantage of the reconciliatory disposition of the Abiy led FGE to work with Obasanjo and other international mediators for a peaceful resolution of the conflict (Vanda, 2022) ^[61].

On Thursday 24th March 2022 a truce was declared by Ethiopia's government in agreement with Tigray Defence Forces. The truce came after 16 months of very deadly fighting and now paves way for humanitarian aid that is direly needed to alleviate the mass starvation in the Tigray region. This gesture would facilitate durable cease-fire and pave way for national dialogue or political solution for enduring peace and stability (Sany & Sheehy, 2022; Aljazeera, 2022) ^[52, 8].

Many positive actions were taken by Prime Minister Abiy in the month of March and April 2022. To this end a press statement was issued by Anthony J. Blinken, US Secretary of States commending Abiy for the series of encouraging actions taken in recent months such as lifting the state of emergency, releasing of some political prisoners declaring cessation of hostilities in parallel with Tigrayan authorities. Blinken urged the warring parties to negotiate a ceasefire and restoration of peace, security and stability in Ethiopia

(Blinken, 2022) ^[20]. In the same direction UN.

Secretary-General António Guterres commended the declaration of truce by the Abiy led Ethiopian National Defence Forces and the commitment of the Tigray Defence Forces to immediately comply with the ceasefire (Uchchukwu, 2022) ^[57].

5. Summary of finding and conclusion

In summary, what eventually manifested and intensified as battle field might as condition for a ceasefire in the Tigray Conflict started with Tigray forces and consummated by the Prime Minister Abiy led federal government. The first ceasefire offer for the Tigray Conflict was literally offered by Prime Minister Abiy on 28 November 2020 when he declared the 'law enforcement operations' over. The ceasefire was formalized on 28 June 2021 and consolidated by the withdrawal of ENDF forces from Tigray. The ceasefire was derided as action to save face and sign of weakness by Tigray Defence Forces who took advantage of the ceasefire go offensive, retaking Tigray and mauling Amhara and Afar regions thereby complicating the peace process

The sanctions and international pressures by the United States of America and the European Union on the warring factions of the Tigray Conflict evidently contributed the most in saving the looming ethnic genocide and catastrophic humanitarian mayhem. Sequel to the call by some international leaders and human rights group for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to take action geared towards the quick resolution of the Tigray Conflict; Russia, China and India citing undue interference, restraint and respect for Ethiopia's sovereignty, objected to the call for threats to sanctions. Following the critical humanitarian plight, brutal human rights abuses and gruesome atrocities obviously committed by all sides in the Tigray Conflict; the UNSC on 5 November 2021, unanimously issued a statement calling for cessation of hostilities. There were no threats of sanctions from the African Union but international diplomatic pressures manifested.

Mediation is a conflict resolution mechanism whereby a neutral third party, acceptable to the contending parties, presides over deliberations that enables parties to reach a negotiated settlement. Mediators that are statesmen of powerful countries are very influential as they command much respect and authority. Their vantage position enhances high pressure tactics. These procedures were adopted for many months by the African Union, United States, United Nations, East African Heads of Government, Ethiopian civil society organizations, the Interreligious Council of Ethiopia, Britain, Canada, Kenya, Sudan and other mediators in the process of mediating for peace or a ceasefire between the federal government of Ethiopia and the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front with very slow progress or headway. As earlier indicated the warring factions remained adamant because of the quest for outright military victory for purposes of wielding the power to control outcomes.

The study concludes that the Tigray Conflict lingered because the warring factions were desirous of battlefield victory from military might in order to control power reminiscent of 'might makes right' as made popular by Thucydides in classical realism. The threats to sanctions, sanctions and international pressures facilitated the mediation process of the Tigray Conflict and paved the way for the Thursday 24 March 2022 truce that was declared by

the Prime Minister Abiy led Federal Government of Ethiopia in agreement with Tigray Defence Forces. The study recommends that the high-pressure tactics of mediation should be explored and exhausted by powerful countries before presentation to the United Nations Security Council for sanctions with universal applicability. State and non-State actors should refrain from actions capable of truncating the peace and seek for conflict resolution mechanism such as mediation, when war inevitably occurs. State and non-State actors should be reminded that battlefield might for right is outdated. We are now in a globalized world where outcomes are determined by peaceful democratic processes and not through the barrel of guns. The use of sanctions should be systematic in order not to do more harm than good. The sanctions and threats of sanctions by the United States of America and European Union meet this criterion and played a major role in facilitating the ceasefire of the Tigray Conflict.

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