



## Ethiopia

**For Prelims:** Horn of Africa, Middle East, Red Sea, East Africa Community

**Foer Mains:** Conflict in Ethiopia and way Forward, Indian-Ethiopia Relations.

### Why in News?

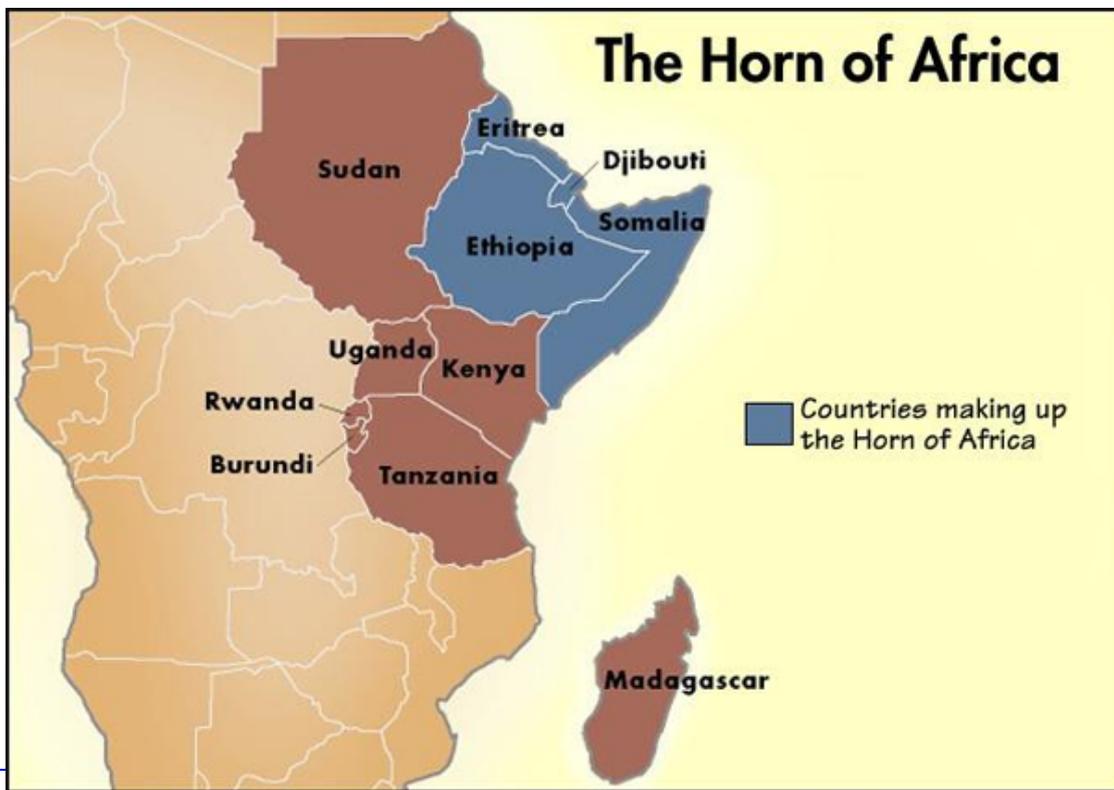
An **Ethiopian government team and Tigray forces** are going to have peace talks in South Africa.

### What Paved to the Peace Talks?

- The spectrum of political, economic, and security problems that confronted Ethiopia and Eritrea paved the way for a **strategy that essentially incorporated reconciliation and democratisation**, social and economic development, and, importantly, ties with the western world.
- This is the first formal Peace talks between the two led by the [African Union](#) and is happening at a time when Ethiopian forces and allies have made some gains in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region.
  - Tigray was a prominent force in the **country's ruling coalition until Ethiopia's current leader** and Nobel Peace laureate (2019) Abiy Ahmed became the Prime Minister in 2018.

### Where is Ethiopia?

- It is a landlocked country located in the Horn of Africa, officially known as the Federal **Democratic Republic of Ethiopia**.
- The country lies completely **within the tropical latitudes and is relatively compact**, with similar **north-south and east-west dimensions**.
- The capital is Addis Ababa.
- Ethiopia is one of the world's oldest countries, its territorial **extent having varied over the millennia of its existence**.
- It is the tenth-largest country in Africa in terms of area.
- Ethiopia is located from Sudan in the southeast, Eritrea to the south, Djibouti and Somalia to the west, Kenya to the north, and South Sudan to the east.
- It is the most **populous landlocked country in the world**.



## What is the Conflict in Ethiopia?

### ▪ Background:

- Ethiopia was an imperial state that gradually weakened with the **emergence of regional and religious rivalries**.
  - Currently Ethiopia has more than 70 ethnic groups. It has Oromo 34.5%, Amhara 26.91%, Somali 6.20%, Tigre 6.07%.
- A major insurgency followed in the 1970s — in Tigray, where the Meles Zenawi-led **Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)**, rebelled against the military government and its policies.
  - It was the backing of the then Soviet Union and allies that propped up both the armed forces and the Mengistu government, but this support began to dissipate in the **1980s, influencing the course of conflicts with the Eritreans and Tigray**.

### ▪ Separation of Eritrea:

- Eritrea, formerly part of Ethiopia, **separated from Ethiopia in 1991** and a majority of Eritrea was in the hands of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), while in Ethiopia it was the TPLF.
- The war between 1998 and 2000 and the border in Eritrea and **Ethiopia remained tense until 2018**.

### ▪ Ethnic Rivalries:

- Abi Ahmed was elected to the post of Prime Minister in **2018 and signed a peace deal to end the border dispute with Eritrea**.
  - After the implementation of this peace agreement, Abi Ahmad was **awarded the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize**.
- But then the conflict started after Ahmed, who belongs to the Oroma community, was accused **by local leaders of the Tigray community** that the community was being harassed by **military officials and bureaucrats**.
  - The original inhabitants of Tigray are considered to be the fighting community of Ethiopia and 60% of senior military positions are **dominated by the Tigray community**.

### ▪ Civil War:

- Along with this, various international agencies have accused **Abi Ahmad of imposing an**

- **internet shutdown to curtail press freedom in Ethiopia** and curbing personal rights.
- As a result of Abi Ahmad's policies, the dissatisfaction of the Tigray community increased and **there was a situation of civil war**.
- Missiles were fired by the **Tigray army in the neighboring country of Eritrea, Asmara**, after which the Federal Government of Ethiopia declared an **armed struggle against the Tigray Army (Tigray People's Liberation Front)**.

## What are the Implications of this Conflict?

- **Impact on Neighboring Countries:**
  - Ethiopia is the region of the Horn of Africa which has countries like **Eritrea, Djibouti, and Sudan in addition to Ethiopia**. The launch of missiles at the capital of Eritrea by the Tigray community of Ethiopia also makes **other countries suspicious**.
- **Hydro Project on the Blue Nile:**
  - Tigrayan tensions are also linked to the mega hydroproject on the Blue Nile, the 6,450 MW Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which will be Africa's largest hydroelectric facility.
  - It is a few hundred kilometres away from the Tigrayan border and upstream and east of the border with Sudan.
  - There is a threat of regional disquiet with Sudan and Egypt which depend on the Nile and fear restrictions to water use.
- **Global Impact:**
  - Global organizations are also affected by this conflict. Recently the President of the World Health Organization has condemned the conflict in Ethiopia.
  - The conflict with Tigray worries the world as it could spill beyond the borders and ignite a crisis in **north-east Africa**.
- **Impact on India:**
  - India considers Africa as an important part of its diplomacy at this time. Various types of welfare programs are being run by India in African countries. Educational work and industrial work are done by Indians in Ethiopia.

## How have been the India-Ethiopia Relations?

- **Ethiopia is one of the largest recipients of long-term concessional credit** from India in Africa.
  - Lines of Credit worth more than USD1 billion have been sanctioned to Ethiopia for sectors such as rural electrification, sugar industry and railways.
- Tele-Education and Tele-Medicine services under the **Pan African e-network Project** was launched in Addis Ababa in July 2007.
  - The Tele-Education project has been replicated by the Ethiopian side and linkages established between the Addis Ababa University and the Indian Institutes of Technology at Delhi and Kanpur.
- Bilateral trade between Ethiopia and India stood at **USD 1.28 billion in 2018-19**, out of which Indian exports to Ethiopia were USD 1.23 billion and imports were USD 55.01 million.
  - There are more than 586 Indian companies in Ethiopia employing more than 55,000 people with licensed investment of over USD 4 billion.
  - About 58.7% of Indian investments are in the manufacturing sector, followed by agriculture (15.6%).
- Indian Mission has been celebrating the **International Day of Yoga** in Addis Ababa. Mission held Gandhi@150 celebrations in Addis Ababa (Oct 2020).

## Way Forward

- Abiy can reach out to regional political leaderships, especially the TPLF, find common ground, and run the country peacefully by restoring the balance between ethnicities and regions and decentralising the federal government.
- The protection of civilian safety and security is essential. The **African Union** can play a role in this.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions

Q. Consider the following pairs: (2018)

|    | Regions sometimes mentioned in news |   | Country     |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|-------------|
| 1. | Catalonia                           | — | Spain       |
| 2. | Crimea                              | — | Hungary     |
| 3. | Mindanao                            | — | Philippines |
| 4. | Oromia                              | — | Nigeria     |

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
- (b) 3 and 4 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 2 and 4 only

**Ans: (c)**

- Catalonia is in Spain. It is an autonomous region in North-east Spain with a distinct history dating back almost 1,000 years. It initiated a referendum for independence from Spain in October 2017 and unilaterally declared independence. Hence, pair 1 is correctly matched.
- Crimea was a Ukrainian territory which was annexed by Russia in 2014. Hence, pair 2 is not correctly matched.
- Mindanao is the second largest island in the Philippines. Hundreds of pro-Islamic State militants seized parts of the predominantly Islamic city of Marawi in Mindanao in May 2017. Hence, pair 3 is correctly matched.
- Oromia region is inhabited primarily by the Oromo ethnic group, the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia. There were clashes between Oromo and Somali ethnic groups in December 2016 following territorial disputes between the two communities in Ethiopia. **Hence, pair 4 is not correctly matched.**
- **Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

Source: [TH](#)

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