

# HABSMUN 2022

## SECURITY COUNCIL BRIEFING PAPER



# Question of the War in Tigray

## Introduction

A conflict between the government of Ethiopia and rebel forces in its northern Tigray region has thrown the country into turmoil. Fighting has been going on since November 2020, destabilising the populous country in the Horn of Africa, leaving thousands of people dead with 350,000 others living in famine conditions.

Eritrean soldiers are also fighting in Tigray for the Ethiopian government. All sides have been accused of atrocities.

A power struggle, an election and a push for political reform are among several factors that led to the crisis.

## Background

For many years, ethnically-diverse Ethiopia was a highly centralised country under a monarchy, managing to be the only country in Africa avoiding various attempts of colonialism and invasion, save for a brief Italian occupation in the 1940s. In 1990, a brutal civil war was won by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of four democratic ethnic movements, each representing the main ethnic groups of Ethiopia.

These were

- The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) from the Tigray region - 6% of the population
- The Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) from the Oromia region - 29% of the population
- The Amhara Democratic Party (ADP) based in the Amhara Region - 18% of the population
- The Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPPDM), based in the Southern Peoples' Region - 8% of the population

The ethno-federalist EPRDF dominated Ethiopian politics, remaining in power until 2019, yet subject to increasingly less free and fair elections. In the remaining five regions of Ethiopia not represented by one of the four parties, groups founded by or affiliated with the Front experienced similar electoral success, remaining in power in the majority of Ethiopian regions, as well as the national legislature.

Despite being only 6% of the population, the party and national security apparatus were wholly dominated by the Tigrayan TPLF from its founding up until 2018, when Abiy Ahmed, an Oromo, was elected as the first non-Tigrayan party chairman and Prime Minister of Ethiopia in a closed door election by the three other parties.

After being ousted from senior cabinet positions, TPLF officials moved back to Tigray, where they continued to administer the region at consistent odds with the federal

government and wider Front, in one instance refusing to let federal police arrest a former security chief.

In December 2019, Ahmed dissolved the EPRDF and invited its member parties to join his new Prosperity Party, with a centralised leadership removing the federal governance structure. While the rest of the former EPRDF merged into this new party, the TPLF refused the invitation.

Following a delayed election due to COVID, which the TPLF claimed was unconstitutional, withdrawing recognition of the federal governments legitimacy, tensions grew as elite forces positioned themselves closer to Tigray, and the federal government moved to declare the TPLF a terrorist organisation. With war looking inevitable, forces loyal to the Tigray government pre-emptively attacked command bases in the region.

Prospects for an end to the conflict remain dim. All sides have committed war crimes during the conflict - with ethnic cleaning and civilian massacres alone claiming the lives of 2,000 people, including infants and people in their 90s, hundreds at a time. Reports of horrific human rights abuses, mass internal displacement, and significant humanitarian needs have prompted ever stronger calls by the international community for parties to cease hostilities and allow unfettered humanitarian access. An estimated 350,000 people are at risk of famine. The conflict has raised questions about the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 only a year after taking office.

## Key Issues

### **Constitutional discrepancy**

The 1995 Constitution of Ethiopia states in Article 39.1, "Every Nation, Nationality, and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession."

However, Article 62.9 grants the House of Federation the right to "order Federal intervention if any State [government], in violation of [the] Constitution, endangers the constitutional order."

Fundamentally, the legal standing of either sides claims are unclear. While mediation is necessary to end the conflict, the immediate concern should be the human rights abuses and atrocities being incurred every day, in pursuit of the speedy end of the conflict.

The Security Council has access and authority over many resources, including the ability to agree economic and military sanctions, as well as access to UN peacekeepers. However, restraint is required to stop the atrocities getting worse in light of UN intervention.

### **Regional fighting beyond Tigray**

When the conflict in Tigray broke out in late 2020, analysts warned of the potential for unrest to spread within Ethiopia, with old disputes over land and regional borders resurrected by the fighting. There have been clashes between Oromo and Amhara communities, the two largest ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Attacks across the Oromo and Amhara regional border have, according to Reuters, been increasing in recent months. At

least 18 people are reported to have been killed in mid-April in Ataye, which lies in Amhara region but whose residents are predominantly Oromos.

At least 100 people were reportedly killed by fighting between the Afar and Somali regions in early April, an official from Afar region told Reuters. Clashes between regional forces are not new and focus on three contested municipalities, or kebeles, that are predominantly inhabited by ethnic Somali Issa communities but lie within Afar region. They hold strategic importance because they are located along the highway linking Addis Ababa, Djibouti and the Assab port in Eritrea. UNOCHA notes the route is important for access and the movement of humanitarian supplies.

Discontent is also reportedly high in Oromia, the largest of Ethiopia's nine regions, and Abiy's home region. The killing of a popular Oromo singer in June 2020 triggered deadly unrest in the region and the capital. Tensions remain high.

### **Restricted telecommunications and media access**

When the offensive began in November 2020, the Government imposed a communications blackout, restricting access to the internet and telecommunications.

BBC News examined misinformation about the situation on social media during the early stages of the conflict. A Washington Post study of social media posts between November and January concluded that "by blocking communications and access to Tigray, the government helped create conditions where disinformation and misinformation can thrive".

Journalists have also been targeted. An Al Jazeera report on the battle to control information chronicles the ways in which press freedom, initially championed by Abiy, is being curtailed in Ethiopia. In March, Channel 4 News documented allegations of atrocities in Tigray in a special report by Africa correspondent Jamal Osman.

### **Risk of region-wide famine**

Serious food shortages have raised fears of famine in the northern region and humanitarian agencies face difficulties accessing people in need.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reported visible signs of starvation amongst people in the central zone and warns of an impending famine: Levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, which are already at catastrophic levels in some areas, will deteriorate further to the risk of substantial famine, if not addressed immediately.

In June 2021 it was declared that over 350,000 people are now assessed to be in phase 5 of the Famine Early Warning System, catastrophe, meaning they are at risk of famine. Altogether, over 5.5 million people face acute food insecurity.

### **Atrocities and Sexual Violence**

Reports of atrocities and the use of sexual violence and rape began filtering out of Tigray shortly after the conflict began, but media restrictions imposed early in the conflict have also hampered the flow of information out of Tigray.

Senior UN officials began raising concerns about ethnic-based and sexual violence across the region in early 2021. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, said in January she was greatly concerned about the high number of reported rapes in Mekelle (the capital of Tigray region) and disturbing allegations of “individuals allegedly forced to rape members of their own family”.

The Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, said she is alarmed at the “continued escalation of ethnic violence” amid reports of civilians being targeted based on their ethnicity and region.

Both called for an independent and impartial investigation into these allegations. The conflict has drawn in militias from neighbouring Amhara region, which lies between Tigray and the capital, Addis Ababa. Antony Blinken, the US Secretary of State, has called on Amhara regional forces to withdraw from Tigray.

Amhara militias have been accused of atrocities against Tigrayans, taking crops and cattle and preventing them from leaving. They are said to patrol western and parts of southern Tigray and Amhara regional leaders say they have reclaimed territory they say was taken by the TPLF in the early 1990s. Sustained Amhara control or formal inclusion of territory into Amhara region could trigger years of instability.

## Previous Responses

### **Security Council**

So far, all discussions at the UN Security Council on the situation in Tigray have taken place under the category of “any other business”. The website, Security Council Report, a body separate to the UN, noted that the Council had failed to agree an outcome on four occasions, and only agreed a press statement following its meeting on 15 April 2021.

Security Council Report suggests members are divided on the situation in Tigray, with some believing it to be an internal situation for Ethiopia to resolve. Senior UN officials have spoken out about allegations of abuses in Tigray. In March, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights agreed to jointly investigate human rights violations and abuses with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

In 2018, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2417 which explicitly condemns starvation as a method of warfare and the denial of humanitarian access to civilian populations. The resolution has since been cited in reference to Tigray. Africa analyst Alex De Waal says the UN could reference resolution 2417 to apply pressure to Ethiopia.

### **African Union**

When the conflict began, the African Union appointed three former heads of state: Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Kgalema Motlanthe of South Africa, as special envoys to seek a ceasefire and mediation talks. Their efforts in November were rebuffed by Abiy, who described the military operation as a law enforcement one which would not last long. On 17 June, the African Union launched a Commission of Inquiry into allegations of violations of human rights in Tigray. It will sit initially for three months and will be based in The Gambia. The Ethiopian Foreign Ministry described the inquiry as “misguided” and lacking legal basis

### Questions to consider

1. How can the conflict in Tigray be resolved politically? How can the UN mediate a ceasefire? Should secession be on the table?
2. How can the humanitarian atrocities in Ethiopia be terminated? Does this require UN intervention?
3. Should sanctions be considered for any party, or their leaders?
4. How can the immediate risk of food insecurity in the region be mitigated? What if the concerned parties aren't cooperative?

### Useful Links

Some Good Articles:

[CNN Summary of the Conflict](#)

[Fair Planet: The Forgotten Victims of the Tigray War](#)

[Guardian: The Rise and Fall of the TPLF, from rebels to rulers and back](#)

Documents:

[Resolution 2417](#)

[Constitution of Ethiopia](#)

Miscellaneous:

[TPLF Facebook Page](#)

# Question of Security Council Reform

## Introduction

The Security Council, the United Nations' principal crisis-management body, is empowered to impose binding obligations on the 193 UN member states to maintain peace. The council's five permanent and ten elected members meet regularly to assess threats to international security, including civil wars, natural disasters, arms proliferation, and terrorism.

Structurally, the council remains largely unchanged since its founding in 1946, stirring debate among members about the need for reforms. In recent years, members' competing interests have often stymied the council's ability to respond to major conflicts and crises, such as Syria's civil war, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the coronavirus pandemic.

The Security Council has five permanent members—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—collectively known as the P5. Any one of them can veto a resolution. The council's ten elected members, which serve two-year, non-consecutive terms, are not afforded veto power.

The members of the P5 have exercised the veto power to varying degrees. Counting the years when the Soviet Union held its seat, Russia has been the most frequent user of the veto, blocking more than one hundred resolutions since the council's founding. The United States is second, last using the veto in 2020 to reject a resolution that called for the prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration of those engaged in terrorism-related activities. The country objected to the resolution's not calling for the repatriation of fighters from the self-proclaimed Islamic State and their family members. China's use of the veto has risen in recent years. In contrast, France and the United Kingdom have not exercised their veto power since 1989 and have advocated for other P5 members to use it less.

The Security Council aims to peacefully resolve international disputes in accordance with Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which authorizes the council to call on parties to seek solutions via negotiation, arbitration, or other peaceful means. Failing that, Chapter VII empowers the Security Council to take more assertive actions, such as imposing sanctions or authorizing the use of force "to maintain or restore international peace and security." Peacekeeping missions are the most visible face of the United Nations' conflict-management work; in mid-2021, the council was overseeing twelve operations across three continents, involving a total of roughly eighty-eight thousand uniformed personnel.

The council's presidency rotates on a monthly basis, ensuring some agenda-setting influence for its ten non-permanent members, which are elected by a two-thirds vote of the UN General Assembly. The main criterion for eligibility is contribution "to the maintenance of international peace and security," often defined by financial or troop contributions to peacekeeping operations or leadership on matters of regional security likely to appear before the council.

## Key Facts

According to Article 27 of the UN Charter, each Security Council member has one vote, with decision on procedural matters requiring a minimum of nine affirmative votes and no vetoes from the P5 members

As of December 2021, Russia/USSR has used its veto 118 times, the US 82 times, the UK 29 times, France 16 times and China 17 times

The victors of World War II shaped the United Nations Charter in their national interests, assigning themselves the permanent seats and associated veto power, among themselves. Any reform of the Security Council would require an amendment to the Charter. Article 108 of the Charter states: "Amendments to the present Charter shall come into force for all Members of the United Nations when they have been adopted by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the General Assembly and ratified in accordance with their respective constitutional processes by two-thirds of the Members of the United Nations, including all the permanent members of the Security Council."

The G4 Nations of Brazil, Germany, India and Japan formed an interest group such that all mutually support one another's bids for permanent seats on the Security Council

The G4 Nations have traditionally been opposed by the Uniting for Consensus group, who favour expansion of non-permanent seats instead, and comprises primarily of nations who are regional rivals and economic competitors of the G4: Pakistan, Italy, Spain, Mexico, Columbia, Argentina, South Korea, Turkey and Indonesia (among others)

On 21 March 2005, the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called on the UN to reach a consensus on expanding the council to 24 members, in a plan referred to as "In Larger Freedom".

In its lifetime the Security Council has imposed 30 sanctions regimes, with 14 ongoing today

The non-permanent members are generally chosen to achieve equitable representation among geographic regions, with five members coming from Africa or Asia, one from eastern Europe, two from Latin America, and two from western Europe or other areas.

Five of the 10 non-permanent members are elected each year by the General Assembly for two-year terms, and five retire each year. The presidency is held by each member in rotation for a period of one month.

Every P5 nation has to some extent endorsed reform of the Security Council. While the US, France, China openly support absolute reform of the council and veto system, either including the G4 or reforming the veto altogether, China's calls for reform have been more muted, although it still acknowledges the need for a consensus for reform.

## Timeline

- 1945 - UN Security Council founded with 11 members after the end of the Second World War, with the main winners giving themselves P5 positions



- 1946 - United Nations Security Council Resolution 1 passed as first session held in Westminster, London
- 1950 - United Nations Security Council Resolution 83 passed declaring North Korean actions a breach of peace during the Korean war and recommending UN members provide assistance to South Korea
- 1965 - General Assembly decided to reform the Security Council by creating four additional non-permanent seats
- 1965-66 - reforms take place, with new structure implemented that remains unchanged from 1966 to present day
- 1967 - United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 passed calling for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict
- 1968 - Security Council imposes first set of comprehensive mandatory sanctions against Rhodesia through Resolution 253
- 1971 - People's Republic of China replaces the Republic of China (now also known as Taiwan)
- 1991 - the Russian Federation succeeds the Soviet Union
- 2001 - Resolution 1368 adopted condemning the 9/11 attacks and stating international terrorism to be a threat to international peace and security
- 2011 - present - Security Council fails to pass significant resolutions regarding the Syrian crisis, with Russia and China vetoing 16 Draft Resolutions
- 2014 - Resolution against Russian incursion of Crimea fails to pass, as 13 of Council's members voted in favour, China abstained, and Russia vetoed.

### Questions to Consider

1. Has the Security Council been successful in its aims since 1945? Does it still have a unique role to play?
2. Should the Security Council be the only UN body able to impose sanctions or authorise military action? Do global superpowers have a larger role in arbitrating international issues?
3. Is it fair that the votes of P5 nations should overshadow those of others? How necessary is the veto in maintaining global accord over passed resolutions?

### Useful Links

[UN Plenary - Security Council must reflect twenty-first century realities](#)

[An Analysis of the G4 Proposal](#)

[Uniting for Consensus](#)

# Question of State-Sponsored ‘Counter-Terrorism’

## Background

Counterterrorism also known as anti-terrorism, incorporates the practice, military tactics, techniques, and strategy that government, military, law enforcement, business, and intelligence agencies use to combat or prevent terrorism. A counter-terrorism strategy is a government's plan to use the instruments of national power to neutralize terrorists, their organizations, and their networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instil fear and to coerce the government or its citizens to react in accordance with the terrorists' goals.

If terrorism is part of a broader insurgency, counter-terrorism may employ counter-insurgency measures. The United States Armed Forces use the term foreign internal defence for programs that support other countries in attempts to suppress insurgency, lawlessness, or subversion or to reduce the conditions under which these threats to security may develop.

## History & Key Facts

Counter-terrorism forces expanded with the perceived growing threat of terrorism in the late 20th century. Specifically, after the September 11 attacks, Western governments made counter-terrorism efforts a priority, including more foreign cooperation, shifting tactics involving red teams, and preventive measures. Although sensational attacks in the developed world receive a great deal of media attention, most terrorism occurs in less developed countries. Government responses to terrorism, in some cases, generate substantial unintended consequences. While most counter terrorism can be seen to be in the common good, the torture of Islamist terrorists in US foreign basis and targeting of civilians in the Russo-Chechen wars are examples where counter-terrorism has involved atrocities perhaps unbecoming of the ethical motives of counter-terrorism.

The United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy is composed of 4 pillars:

1. Addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism
2. Measures to prevent and combat terrorism
3. Measures to build states' capacity to prevent combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the UN System in that regard
4. Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as a fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre focuses on these aspects of counter-terrorism:

- Border Security  
*Enhancing awareness and understanding of established 'good practices' stems the flow of foreign terrorist fighters across borders.*
- Cybersecurity

*Cyber-capacities, artificial intelligence and unmanned aerial vehicles continue to become more widely available*

- WMD/CBRN terrorism

*In the wrong hands, weapons of mass destruction and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear materials are a global threat*

- South-South Cooperation

*Terrorism has severely affected countries in the Global South*

- Civil Society

*Seeks to strengthen and more systematically engage civil society organisation at the global, regional, national, and local levels with a focus on human rights, gender, and youth*

- Human Rights

*Prevent counter violent extremism, and ensure all member states comply with international human rights law, international refugee law, and international humanitarian law*

- Prison Management

*Further radicalising incarcerated violent extremists poses a challenge for prison management*

- Youth Engagement

*Ensure participation of young men and women in developing and delivering policies that aim to prevent and counter violent extremism*

### Some Definitions:

**Terrorism** - the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.

**Act of terrorism** - a use or threat of the following guidelines the purpose of advancing a political, religious, racial, or ideological cause:

- serious violence against a person.
- serious damage to property.
- endangering a person's life (other than that of the person committing the action).
- creating a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public; and
- action designed to seriously interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system.

**International terrorism** - refers to terrorism that goes beyond national boundaries in terms of the methods used, the people that are targeted or the places from which the terrorists operate

**Right wing terrorism** - extreme right-wing terrorists promote messages of hate-filled prejudice which can encourage radicalisation among people motivated by race hate.

### Questions to consider

1. Is the current global counter-terrorism strategy sufficient to combat terrorism? If not, what needs to be included/taken out?

2. How can states protect human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism?
3. Where is the line between freedom of speech and terrorism?
4. Is it acceptable to violate human rights and commit atrocities in the name of preventing terrorist attacks? To what extent do the ends justify the means?
5. How do we define terrorism?

### Useful Links

[The Council of Europe's guidelines on ethical Counter-Terrorism](#)

[Website of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while counting terrorism](#)



*Written/Sourced by Keshav Kedia and Prashant Pandya, Presidents of the Security Council, for use at the thirteenth annual Haberdashers' Boys' School Model United Nations Conference, 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> March 2022.*