Cyberdefence: yet another frontline in Ethiopia's developmental landscape?

Briefing with INSA's Cyber–Emergency Response Division (Ethio–Cert)

Editor's Note:

Since the inception of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, the structural soundness of the Dam, the reservoir capacity and the years of filling, and drought mitigation measures have all been subjects of intense debate. Regrettably, there is yet to be a tacit consensus on any of these issues between the Blue Nile riparians, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, even after several rounds of negotiation attempts. Although the non-consumptive hydroelectric dam is yet to be fully operational, the creeping issue of cyberdefense once the Dam is online and fully operational is rarely discussed as a policy priority.

This Thirteenth Edition of Horn Review aims to bring into focus the issue of cyberdefense, particularly in SCADA systems of critical infrastructure projects. As cyberwarfare mounts as one of the top three global security threats, it is important to ask "What is the level of preparedness of developing countries to protect their infrastructure and mega projects in their ambitious attempts to climb out of poverty?" The case of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam presents an interesting blueprint for many developing countries as they navigate their development projects in today's rapidly evolving technological landscape.

I would like to thank members of INSA's Ethio-Cert team for their willingness to touch on this subject and for elaborating on INSA's various efforts to protect Ethiopian key infrastructure, its government offices, the banking and medical sectors, and more– and for bringing to salience the burning issue of security and privacy in today's digital age.

I would also like to thank Dr. Kaleab Sigatu, a reputed military sciences researcher based in Addis Ababa, for his elaborate discussion on the hasty withdrawal of Ethiopia's peacekeepers from UNISFA – in the wider context of the nation's illustrious history of participation in international missions. Lastly, I would like to thank Yirga Abebe, Conflict Management Ph.D. Candidate at Addis Ababa University, for his brief discussion on the merits of Africa's longstanding relationship with the United States, particularly in such a time when global political and economic alliances are fast evolving.

About us:

Founded in 2021, Horn Review is a premier research and publication think-tank dedicated to exploring and amplifying African voices with a goal of interlinking subject matter experts, practitioners, and academics from Ethiopia, the Horn Region, and the African continent with the broader public. With a stated mission of Africa for Africans, Horn Review aims to amplify and mainstream uniquely African ideas and perspectives on sociopolitical, economic, and geostrategic issues relevant to the continent. Horn Review aims to connect African thinkers, practitioners, and policymakers with their respective communities to create greater synergy and a people-centered discourse on African matters.

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In today's day and age, cyber-capacity has increasingly become a necessary precondition for any country's global competitiveness; in trade and commerce, technological advancement, intellectual property, and political and social well-being. As such, cyberspace has quickly become one of the top three global security threats in our current highly globalized world. Africa, expecting a population boom in the coming decades is expected to become a target of this security threat by cyber thieves, terrorists, and countries. With the increasing digitization of banking and financial systems, election systems, education, and healthcare systems, multi-billion dollar infrastructure projects, as well as security and intelligence systems– global financial loss and damages make this sector the third largest economy in the world.

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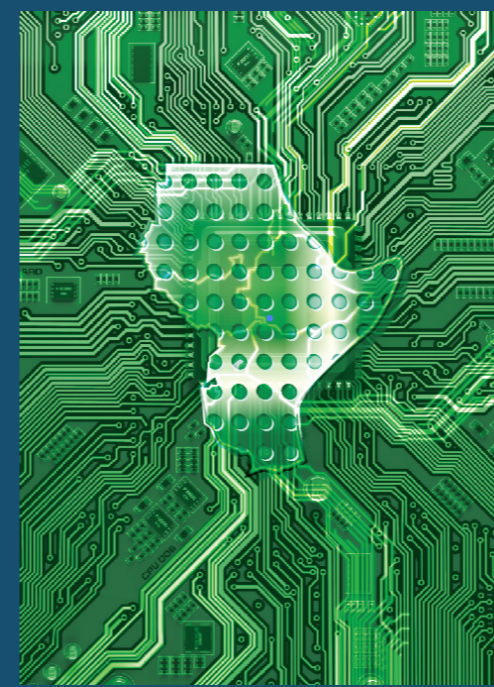
Cyberdefense: yet another frontline in Ethiopia's developmental landscape?

Briefing with INSA's Cyber–Emergency Response Division (Ethio CERT)

Question: In February of this year, INSA reported that more than 2145 cyberattacks were launched at Ethiopia– primarily targeting Ethiopian financial institutions, educational institutions, security and intelligence institutions, medical institution, media establishments, as well as government offices. However, the report does not detail the countries [geographical locations]/ groups/ or entities launching these attacks. Are there identified entities/ groups/ countries responsible for the attacks? Could you name and rank them?

A: Normally in Cyberspace, every attack has a source from which it originates. One of the raw measures for our assessment is the IP (internet protocol) address to which

it can often be traced. Although the originating country may not necessarily be an indicator of the exact source of the attack, due to the use of VPN or other ways of concealing IP addresses, we are able to identify the origin nonetheless. In INSA's February report, we disclosed that there were over 2,145 attacks launched on Ethiopia's various sectors, organizations, and public institutions; the recurring IP addresses include countries one would consider superpowers in today's international arena. There are less oft-considered nations like the Netherlands and the Korean Republic (DPRK) that also make a list. Given that an IP identification does not necessarily implicate a country, a great solution would be to cultivate cooperation–

diplomatically or otherwise– with other nations in identifying the attacks (and attackers) from each other's cyberspace. This is what we have come to call "cyber-diplomacy"; given the lack of physical boundaries for this problem and its global prevalence, mutual cooperation between countries is vital. In this context, if a country is unwilling to cooperate in this matter, that might also be an answer in itself.

Beyond the identification of countries and geographic locations, determining groups/ entities responsible for cyberattacks requires more advanced methods of attribution; here we look beyond the IP address to identify and attribute the attack to a specific threat actor

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such as an individual, a group, or a state itself. For example, if malware$_1$ was sent, there are routine ways to analize and reverse-engineer the origin that would reveal details like the timezone or language of the source of the attack. Although much can be done to further analyze such threats, Ethio-Cert as a division, primarily focuses on identifying and monitoring critical assets, and containing threats to these assets.

Going into further attribution might have its own limitations as it requires technological, financial, systems, and manpower capacities. Entities like the Cyber Horus group, an Egypt-affiliated known entity/ group operating in the open. Helpfully enough, the group announces its own attacks and identifies itself in attacks- or better- announces the attacks it plans to launch. This helps us scout the geo-political and security landscape better. Previously, domestic organizations and institutions were under the impression that INSA is the sole line of defense against cyberattacks, however, it is now clear - for domestic actors- that cyberdefense requires a collective-level effort.

Question: Given that this particular sector is undisclosed, would you say Ethiopian infrastructure projects are

also a target of such cyberattacks?

A: Cyberattacks, or threats thereof, are attempted periodically and in tandem with the reservoir filling period. These could be direct or indirect attacks. **Direct attacks** are launched at the project (GERD) itself; this might look like disruptions to source/ input factories directly feeding the project. This could also look like attacks on SACDA $_2$ systems: factories, and grids, given that we digitally operate.

A real-world example of this would be the Iranian Natanz Nuclear plant that was attacked, an attack that destroyed the electricity grid of the site, among other disruptions, delaying the project by several years. This is also to say that even the most isolated systems are rarely hidden from cyberattacks. It is also worth noting that the more resourceful an entity, a state- for example, the higher the capacity to use cyber means to its ends. Silently gathering data and information to one's own end and publically disclosing the

2   SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) is a category of software applications for controlling industrial processes, which is the gathering of data in real-time from remote locations in order to control equipment and conditions.

information is another form of this attack.

There was a past instance of cutting electricity supply to entire cities by attacking control systems to power grids- and INSA has responded with the appropriate measures. Though our duty is to proactively defend against cyberattacks, once they do occur, we ensure that the damage is minimized- without such diligence in cyberspace defense- we can certainly say that there is a will to inflict more damage to cause hurdles in the competition of GERD. It is important to note that once the Dam is fully connected and operational, the risk of a cyberattack is exponential. Security is not something to ensure later, at completion, but a crucial concern at this stage. Alongside the construction of the structure and electrical work of the GERD, building a cyberdefense against the project is a crucial aspect that is often neglected.

Indirect attacks on the GERD might look like, attacking websites and government pages; hacking into public websites and defacing them by injecting malicious codes to display the attacker's messages is yet another trick. We have a past experience where the message stock widespread fear or panic. At the individual level, high-level

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authorities (influential people) might be victims of phishing ploys- malware or ransomware that might compromise their work. The indirect attacks are often intended to impose a psychological effect. On our end, we have proactive measures in place for addressing these threats. The first SOC: security operations center. We have 24/7 monitoring and proactive defense operations on systems and networks of national assets; like key infrastructure, services and customers, financial institutions, and others. Our real-time proactive defense includes scanning and detecting vulnerabilities. What kinds of gaps exist? Our team checks if the network traffic is healthy, monitors malicious threats from known databases, and builds situational awareness so as to create effective countermeasures.

In June 2020, associated with the first filling of the GERD reservoir, the Cyber Horus group launched a cyberattack on government institutions' websites within a five-day span. This creates a psychological impact on the population on a highly anticipated national milestone event. Secondly, in a similar timeframe in June of 2021, there was a similar attack on 37,000 computers associated with the second round of filling by the same group. Additionally, in October 2022, we observed similar activity targeting websites

of government institutions, for example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Ethio Cert, as a rapid response team, does not move further into determining the extent and severity of these attacks as our focus is detection, containment, and mitigation.

We also receive requests, tips, and reports from sectoral CERT units of national organizations and institutions that enable us to devise a nationwide early warning system. This loops back to the earlier point on building a collective defense system in cyberspace. Although reactive in our response, small businesses, and enterprises also reach out when they are subject to malware and ransomware attacks where we attempt to mitigate the damages and restore lost files.

Question: Given the manifold threats being made against the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) primarily from Egypt, has the Administration aggregated information on the amount and frequency of such cyberattacks on this infrastructure from Egypt?

A: It is rare for an attacker/actor to overtly launch attacks from a geographic space and make it easy to attribute. However, the easiest way to identify threats originating

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from Egypt is their own disclosure through official means like their national mainstream media. Though such threats are not acceptable in diplomatic correspondence, the same is true in cyberspace, where Egypt– affiliated groups identify themselves and their activities; like the Cyber Horus group mentioned earlier.

Question: Describe, for a non-technical audience, what constitutes an attack. And relate it to the broader context of the GERD project.

A: In general, building a robust cyberdefense encompasses three aspects, which also constitute the key threats: Confidentiality, Integrity, and Availability. Ensuring confidentiality of protected and privileged information and data by mending vulnerabilities; is a key component of our work as the damages from a breach in confidentiality could, at worst, create crises of national proportions. Integrity has to do with modifications or changes to existing data; for example in the finance

sector – if one change's the name of a bank account holder, or adds zeros to a sum of money– this constitutes a breach of the integrity of data– and results in financial damages and loss of trust. Lastly, availability means a continuous, and uninterrupted, stream of service; As a familiar example, power outages and network loss or degradations (operation at suboptimal levels) mean that availability is compromised. This aspect, availability, should be of utmost concern once the GERD is online and operational. Especially for a country that wishes not only to utilize hydroelectric power from the project but aspires to sell electricity to neighbors in the region; providing uninterrupted service to buyers, availability is of critical importance. We also need to update knowledge and public awareness of these threats that may arise.

Question: In the unfortunate incident that Egypt launches a successful cyberattack against Ethiopian major infrastructure or public institutions, what is

INSA's level of preparedness to fend against an attack, and/or take counteroffensive measures?

A: The mandate of our particular unit is to reduce the probability of a successful attack and foil a possible attack at the reconnaissance level. Although we do not take offensive measures, our work and mandate is to ensure that a successful attack does not happen.
Our early prevention work includes securing ports, which serve as gateways or doors, to systems of operation, and routinely monitoring threat scans. In the instance of DDos[3], malware, and ransomware (attempt to exfiltrate, overload, or crash systems) we take the appropriate action depending on the threat level. Though we prepare for cyberdefense measures in advance, let's say that a bank has been targeted; the rapid response team is deployed to then

3   Distributed Network Attacks (DDoS) attack takes advantage of the specific capacity limits that apply to any network resources and attempt to overwhelm/ crash systems.

identify the threat– then we monitor the threat before responding. If the threat is on a network, systems, or other SCADA– we respond with the appropriate course of action. We then eradicate the threat, much like cleaning an infection. We then attempt to recover lost files and mend damages after which we compile 'lessons learned' which help as input to better build our defense for future attack attempts. This might look like adding this new threat to our database to prevent the same breach. This cycles us back to our initial work: preventative defense. In addition to National CERT, there are also sectoral CERT units that perform this work in the finance sector, in national institutions and assets, and in key national infrastructure. INSA is the agency that ensures this level of coordination.

In addition, setting privacy and security standards, and pushing for a legislative framework to protect citizen data is also a priority. Ensuring compliance with data protection protocols is another aspect of the institution's work. For example, if any bank is to issue VISA cards to customers, they will not only need to comply with PCI DDS[4], the industry standard, but also fulfill their obligations to INSAs audit requirements

Question: to follow up on the point about individual–level effort, what safeguards would you recommend to everyday citizens to protect their digital identity?

A: There are 3 components to cybersecurity: People, Processes, and Technology (PPT). This question relates to the people component of cyberdefense and an aspect that narrows or widens the chances of an information breach. People, be it unknowingly or out

knowledge of the source. The same is true for computer applications, like MsOffice and Windows applications, where users will obtain 'cracked' software to avoid paying for them. This is yet another common negligent practice that leaves internet users susceptible to the theft of their data. These gaps in awareness can be addressed by public awareness efforts and education.

At the organizational level, companies need the utmost due diligence in their procurement process as they might be vulnerable to supply chain threats for purchasing, en masse, the cheapest possible products (anti-virus software, for example) with no knowledge of the source.

Question: What recommendations does the Administration forward to public sector employees, and regular people, to safeguard the security and privacy of their information?

A: Although there is much to be done in the protection of private data for individuals, through legislative means and public awareness; state institutions like ours primarily prioritize issues of national security. Due diligence, at the individual level, is important and also requires national–level awareness campaigns on private data protection. INSA does some public awareness activities on our social media channels and websites, through mainstream media channels, TV, and radio. In addition, we host a national cybersecurity awareness month, a month dedicated to building public awareness of cyberspace, and the threats, furnished with various activities for all sectors. Exhibitions, such as the one held this year at the National Science Museum, have an exponential benefit to the field and we hope to continue such engagements with the public in the coming years.

Question: How would Ethio-CERT encourage young scholars to pursue the cybersecurity field?

A: First, youngsters need to identify their interests and talents. They need to know their hobbies and leanings. If they take a keen interest in coding and programming, there are various open–source learning opportunities online. Family support is also crucial in nurturing and connecting youngsters to the necessary resources to develop their talents. INSA also hosts various events for youngsters and young professionals with knowledge and interest in networking, windows/ Linux, and operating systems. In the Capture the Flag (CTF) hacking marathon we hosted in this year's Cyber Awareness month, we identified over 45 talented youngsters, as young as twelve years old, with a natural talent in the various assessments we offered. INSA has a host of initiatives, like the Ethio–cyber Talent Center

Footnotes

1. Malware or malicious software, is any program or file that is intentionally disruptive or harmful to a computer, network, or server.

2. SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) is a category of software applications for controlling industrial processes, which is the gathering of data in real-time from remote locations in order to control equipment and conditions.

3. Distributed Network Attacks (DDoS) attack takes advantage of the specific capacity limits that apply to any network resources and attempt to overwhelm/ crash systems.

4. The PCI DSS is the global data security standard that any business of any size must adhere to in order to accept payment cards.

From Security Provider to a Security Vaccum?
The Hasty Withdrawal of Ethiopia's Decade–Long Peacekeeping Mission in UNISFA

By Kaleab Tadesse

Kaleab[1] holds a B.A. in Political Science and International Relations and an M.A. in International Relations, both from Addis Ababa University. He got his Ph.D. in Military Science from the University of Public Service, Doctoral School of Military Sciences, in Budapest, Hungary. His research interests are peace support operations, foreign policy, military doctrine, defense policies, and peace and security issues in the Horn of Africa. Currently, he is a researcher at the Research Department of

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Ethiopia has been participating actively in UN peacekeeping missions since the 1950s up to now. The reasons were based on the sending regime's intention, the nature of the armed forces, and the focus area of the deployment. The Imperial Ethiopian Government under Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930–1974) sent peacekeeping troops to Korea, Congo, and to the contested region of Jammu and Kashmir of India and Pakistan. The socialist military regime (1974–1991) did not participate in any peacekeeping missions at all. The post-1991 Ethiopian Government mostly focused on peacekeeping missions in Africa and contributed peacekeepers to Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and also in Haiti, and Yemen. Lastly, the new reformist government, which came to power in 2018, has made no policy change

from the aforementioned regime toward participating in peacekeeping missions.

The Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) therefore acquired a paramount peacekeeping capability with the regional standard in training and experience gained through previous international peacekeeping deployments. This resulted in Ethiopia playing an important role in regional stability as the prevalent contributor to UN and AU peacekeeping missions, especially in Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.[2] Even though Ethiopia's military (peacekeeping) and peace mediating role is not without criticisms it became "a formidable force for peace, security, and stability in the Horn of Africa, and in Africa in general".[3] This is especially true concerning Ethiopia's interventionist role in Somalia.[4] Ethiopia's first unilateral action in Somalia was in 1995 to remove the

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Islamic insurgent, Al-Ittihad Al-Islamiya (AIAI). In 1998 Ethiopia launched a second military intervention at the time of the Ethiopia–Eritrea war, following Eritrea's effort – in collaboration with a Baidoa–based Somali warlord Hussein Aideed and involving the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) to open a second front.[5] Ethiopia's third intervention was in 2006, against the threat from the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and supporting the Somali Transitional Federal Government. Lastly, Ethiopia joined AMISOM in 2014, simultaneously deploying troops outside the AMISOM command to support its troops under AMISOM.

Likewise, Ethiopia has been a part of the peacekeeping missions in Sudan and South Sudan for more than a decade. Ethiopia contributed police personnel for the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) from 2005 until

the independence of South Sudan in 2011. It is also a part of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), which is still optional since 2011. Since joining in 2014 Ethiopia has contributed around 2,000 troops to UNMISS making it one of the top five largest contributors.[6] It also contributed around 20,000 mainly continent troops, in different rotations for the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), (2007–2020) in Sudan.[7] Moreover, Ethiopia contributed the entire contingent troops to the United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA), at the disputed border region between South Sudan and Sudan, which is the focus of this paper and discussed below. All missions make Ethiopia a 'security provider' in most of the conflict regions in the African continent, which is compounded by intra-regional and international intervention.[8]

South Sudan and Sudan and the conflict over Abyei

The north–south conflict in Sudan was between the mostly desert, largely Muslim and culturally Arabic North Sudan and the tropical, largely Christian or animist and culturally sub-Saharan Southern Sudan. The first Sudanese civil war happened between 1955 and 1972; it begins before the independence of Sudan from the Anglo– Egyptian colony and ended at the signing of the Addis Ababa Accord, an agreement that gave Southern Sudan autonomy, signed in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. However, in 1983, the government enforced Shari'a law on the south when President Nimeiry declared all of Sudan as an Islamic state, terminating the autonomous status of Southern Sudan, which triggered the second Sudanese civil war.[9] It was the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005 that ended the civil war.

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The CPA was signed between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/SPLA) after having continuous negotiations since 2002 under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development(IGAD) and the government of Kenya.[10] The CPA established a six-year interim period during which the southern Sudanese will have the right to govern affairs in their region; one of the major agreements of the CPA was the fact that Southern Sudan will have the right to vote for the referendum. The other CPA agreement was the resolution of the contested border region of Abyei, which gave Abyei special administrative status during the interim period. At the end of the six-year interim period, Abyei residents will vote in a referendum either to maintain special administrative status in the north or to become part of the south. The government of Sudan and SPLM/SPLA also agreed to share oil revenues from Abyei, to be split between the north and south with small percentages of revenues allocated to other states and ethnic groups.[11]

Consequently, South Sudan separated from northern Sudan and became an independent state after six years as per the agreement of the CPA on 9 July 2011. However, the demarcation of the border of the oil-rich Abyei region between South Sudan and Sudan became contentious because both states claimed it as their own territory.[12] In addition, the South Sudanese referendum did not take place in Abyei because both sides failed to put it into practice, as they could not agree on who was eligible to vote.[13]

> **However, the demarcation of the border of the oil-rich Abyei region between South Sudan and Sudan became contentious because both states claimed it as their own territory.**

Political scientists argue that there is a likelihood of conflict between the secessionist or newly established and the former 'mother' state or rump on the territorial issue.[14] This is true in the Horn of Africa in the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea and Somaliland and Puntland/Somalia. When a territory of a state breaks away and becomes an independent entity, the new land boundaries that emerge are often violently contested.

Jaroslav Tir in his study on interstate relations especially territorial disagreement between rump and secessionist states after a separation, put his argument as follows: Through the secession, the rump state has lost some of the territories it previously controlled to the secessionist state and may want a portion or all of it back. Conversely, the secessionist state may not be satisfied with how much land it has received and may desire even more of the rump state's land. Finally, the secessionist state may set its sights on another secessionist state's territory.

Land's strategic value arises from its characteristics and/or location. Losing a high ground or an impenetrable swamp or desert may make the country easier to invade and thus undermine its defensive ability. Losing a piece of land containing resources such as ore deposits, ports, and so on undermines the rump state's economic, and, by extension, military, capability. The desire of countries to pursue power is one of the cornerstones of the realist school of thought, and at least some realists view the role of territorial control as crucial to a state's power.[15]

On the other hand, resource-related conflicts rose because of the geographical location of the resource. Anderson and Browne argue that the vast majority of the most significant oil fields so far identified in the Horn of Africa lie in troubled border areas and disputed territories. In addition to the case of this study, Abyei, the Ilemi Triangle and northern Kenya, the Lake Albert basin, the Ogaden, and the Sool region between Somaliland and Puntland are unresolved international disputes.[16]

In the case of Abyei, the indigenous population is the Ngok Dinka who supported the South Sudanese rebels during the civil war (1983–2005). However, every year Northern Misseriya pastoralists, who are aligned with Khartoum, migrate to Abyei in search of pasture. This migration and sharing of land and pasture created conflict between the two communities over scarce resources.[17] The root causes of the Abyei conflict go back to the early 1900s when the people of Ngok Dinka were transferred in 1905 by British colonial authorities from Bahr el Ghazal to Kordofan (a northern province) for administrative reasons.[18] During the first civil war that erupted in Southern Sudan in 1955, the people of the Abyei area joined the Southern resistance movement known as "Anya-Nya" with the aim of returning the administration of Abyei back to Southern Sudan.[19] Later, the governments of both Sudan and South Sudan became heavily involved in the Abyei conflict, fighting to control oil fields in the area.

Figure 1: South Sudan, Sudan and the contested area of Abyei

> **The root causes of the Abyei conflict go back to the early 1900s when the people of Ngok Dinka were transferred in 1905 by British colonial authorities from Bahr el Ghazal to Kordofan (a northern province) for administrative reasons.**

The Abyei region is referred to by some as "an area which had been a symbol of peaceful coexistence and cooperation has become a point of confrontation and conflict that is both identity-based and resource-driven".[20] Others say Abyei is "Sudan's 'Kashmir'",[21] and "a breaking point of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement".[22] The Chief of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, Deng Majok said

"the thread that stitches the north and south of Sudan together through Abyei".[23]

United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA) and the Ethiopian Deployment

The Security Council passed a Resolution on 27 June 2011, based on the agreement between the government of Sudan and the SPLM on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area reached on 20 June 2011 in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. The 2011 resolution established UNISFA with the strength of 4,200 military personnel, 50 police personnel, and appropriate civilian support.[24] The resolution also pointed out that both the government of Sudan and the SPLM requested the assistance of the Ethiopian Government, which resulted in the exclusive responsibility of Ethiopian troops to monitor the area by contributing the leadership with both the head of mission and force commander for UNISFA.[25]

The reason was that Sudan would not accept non-African troops and South Sudan had thus asked IGAD for additional mediation support, and the need for a third party to monitor the flashpoint border, troops from Ethiopia.[26] This can be considered a diplomatic success for Ethiopia to have smooth relations with both states and both accept Ethiopia's singular mono-nation mission to deploy its contingent.

The resolution decided the demilitarisation of the Abyei area except for forces other than UNISFA and the Abyei Police Service. At the beginning of the mission, as of August 2011, Ethiopia contributed a total of 1,707 personnel, 1,634 contingents, and 73 experts to the mission. At the beginning of the mission, the total amount of personnel was 1,814; including Ethiopia only four countries contributed contingents: Egypt 11 officers, India 36 officers, and Zambia 12 officers. This means Ethiopia contributed 97% of the total contingent.[27]

> **The resolution decided the demilitarization of the Abyei area except for forces other than UNISFA and the Abyei Police Service.**

UNISFA's deployment was on 22 July 2011, after one month of the authorization of the mission. The UNSC Resolution 1990 also came out swiftly, three days after the conclusion of the Addis Agreement. Under normal circumstances, the deployment of peacekeeping missions takes a long time, as it requires convincing troop-contributing countries, mobilizing resources required, and deploying them on the ground.[28] However, in the case of UNISFA, Ethiopia's contribution came swiftly. Osterrieder et al. describe the deployment as follows:

The deployment of troops for UNISFA took place significantly more quickly

than is usually the case (with UN peacekeeping operations). Only one month after its authorization, almost 500 troops had been deployed to the Abyei region. Operations started on 8 August 2011, while patrols began at the end of August 2011. The fact that UNISFA troops were drawn from one country, Ethiopia, helps to explain this prompt deployment. Indeed, the Ethiopian troops were ready to be deployed even before the UN Security Council authorized the mission. The land route from Ethiopia to Abyei was used to transfer troops within a week. Some existing UNMIS facilities were also used for UNISFA. The Ethiopian troops did not require the living standards normally necessary for UN missions. Temporary housing in tents was an efficient way to ensure the timely deployment of troops. Only a few months after its authorization, the UN Secretary-General declared that the mission was "in a position to secure the Abyei area," and thus able to fulfill its mandate.[29]

At the time, Ethiopian ongoing peacekeeping mission participation in both Sudan (Darfur) and South Sudan made the deployment prompt. In May 2013, the Security Council, by its resolution 2104, increased UNISFA's military strength up to 5,326 peacekeepers, as requested by Sudan and South Sudan.[30] By the end of the year, 4,102 military personnel were deployed, 17 individual police, 129 experts on mission, and 3,956 contingents. Ethiopia deployed 7 individual police, 78 experts on mission, and 3,930 contingent troops. This means 99% of the

contingents are from Ethiopia. Even though 20 countries contributed contingent troops, no state contributed more than two personnel.

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In May 2018 Security Council Adopts Resolution 2416 (2018), extending the mandate of UNISFA in Abyei. It also decided to reduce UNISFA's authorized troop ceiling to 4,500 until 15 November 2018, and that as of 15 October 2018, that ceiling would decrease further to 3,959 unless the aforementioned mandate modifications were extended.[31] However, the mission continued without the decline in size. As of December 2018, 100% of the contingent troops were from Ethiopia. One of the main reasons Ethiopia took the initiative to deploy its troops to the disputed region right away, aside from the fact that Ethiopia has a long history of taking part in peacekeeping missions, was the fact that the negative effects of a full-fledged war between Sudan
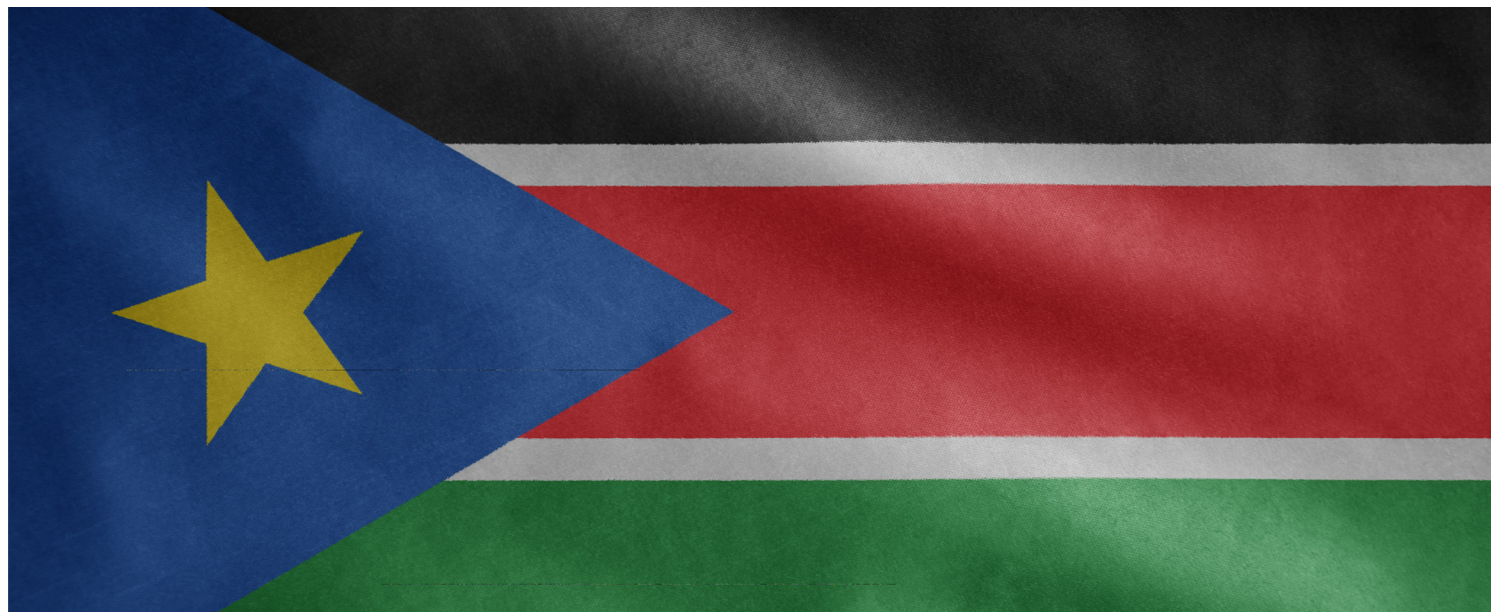
and South Sudan will not only be felt by the two countries but also by the entire region, including Ethiopia. At the time, the Peace and Security Council of the AU acknowledged the Ethiopian Government for its effort in its communiqué in November 2011, as follows:

The Council also expresses its deep appreciation to the Government of Ethiopia, particularly Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Chair of IGAD, for its commitment and sustained efforts towards the promotion of peace and the resolution of the post secession issues, including the speedy deployment of troops within the framework of the UNISFA.[32]

Some experts argue that such peacekeeping involvement of a neighboring state runs counter to a longstanding, although unwritten, principle that UN peacekeeping missions should seek to avoid deployment of troops or police from 'neighbors' in order to mitigate the risks associated with these countries' national interests in the host countries.[33] Moreover, in 1958, Hammarskjold warned about the dangers of deploying peacekeepers from states with direct interests in the conflict. In order to limit the scope of possible differences of opinion, the United Nations in recent operations has followed two principles: not to include units from any of the permanent members of the Security Council; and not to include units from any country which, because of its geographical position or for other reasons, might be considered as possibly having a special interest in the situation which has called for the operation.[34]

However, UNISFA was able to manage effectively to keep the area of Abyei free from armed infiltration by Ngok Dinka activists, Misseriya cattle herders, or security forces from Sudan or South Sudan.[35] According to Osterrieder et al., the fact that Ethiopian troops understand the culture, local situation, and the conflict helped them to accomplish the peacekeeping well. Moreover, it is simpler to coordinate missions with a single nation's military than it is to coordinate missions with numerous states that contribute forces.[36] Nevertheless, there has been much progress made on political mechanisms to determine the final status of Abyei, demilitarise, and demarcate the border.[37]

Ethiopia's involvement in Abyei also emanates from its foreign policy. Ethiopia has a strong strategic interest in the peaceful coexistence of Sudan and South Sudan and in upholding its good relationship with both countries. Instability in Sudan and South Sudan and the possibility of renewed conflict between the two states pose a threat to Ethiopia's national security. Ethiopia also has economic interests in natural resources in Sudan and South Sudan. Ethiopia has been trying hard not to be involved in the internal affairs of the two counties. After the passing of the Meles Zenawi in 2012, the then-acting prime minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, confirmed Ethiopia would "maintain its neutral and principled support to the two brotherly countries' effort towards resolving their dispute."[38]

The Ethiopian Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy states Ethiopia's policy and strategy towards the Horn of African states as "…these countries have long-standing links with Ethiopia in such areas as language, culture, history, natural resources, and so on. Changes in Ethiopia affect them directly, and what happens to them has an impact on us".[39] Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver also confirm that conflict between and within the two Sudans could have both a direct and indirect spillover effect on Ethiopia, thus Ethiopia can be seen to have a genuine interest in peace in and between the two countries.[40]

The Ethiopian relations with South Sudan

Ethiopia's relations with South Sudan began in pre-independence days when both the previous governments of Emperor Haile Selassie I and Colonel Mengistu supported the southern Sudanese secessionist movements most importantly SPLM. Ethiopia played a very important role in the independence of South Sudan. After its independence, Ethiopia has been actively involved in peace processes with Sudan in the case of Abyei and after the 2013 civil war broke out. Besides the spillover effect of the conflict to Ethiopia's Gambella region, Ethiopia has a great advantage in a stable South Sudan in using South Sudan's oil and market. Ethiopia deployed more than 40,000 peacekeeping troops in both UNMISS, UNISFA, and CTSAMM in different rotations. Moreover, Ethiopia was actively involved in the efforts of IGAD to bring peace in South Sudan by appointing its former foreign minister the late Seyoum Mesfin, to lead an international mediation process. In 2015, President Salva Kiir of South Sudan met rebel leader Riek Machar in Addis Ababa for the first time to start a peace talk. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed also hosted both Salva Kiir and Riek Machar in Addis Ababa to initiate the talk in 2018. During the meeting, the Ethiopian Prime Minister's Chief of Staff said, "…faced with the continued suffering in South Sudan, Ethiopia simply can't stand by".[41]

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Is the United States a better-suited ally than China? An Exploration of United States' Comparative Advantage in Africa

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Africa has long been a center of intense rivalry between major powers. The continent has one of the world's fastest-growing populations, the world's most diverse ecosystems, abundant natural resources, and one of the largest voting blocks in the United Nations Assembly. The United States and China have been vying for political, economic, and regional influence in Africa since the early 2010s; it has, in recent, years intensified and brought ideological and geostrategic divisions to full display. The history and current state of relations that the two countries have with Africa are vastly different, both in

> **The United States and China have been vying for political, economic, and regional influence in Africa since the early 2010s; it has, in recent, years intensified and brought ideological and geostrategic divisions to full display.**

The US and Africa have a long and tumultuous history; since the second half of the 20th century, the relations between the US and Africa have gone through at least three major phases each with

different features: during the Cold War, during the transitional period between 1990 to 1998, and after 1998. On August 2022, the United States adopted a new strategy towards Sub-Saharan Africa. Articulating a new vision for a 21st Century U.S.-African Partnership, the strategy aims to pursue four main objectives in sub-Saharan Africa:

foster openness and open societies; deliver democratic and security dividends; advance pandemic recovery and economic opportunity; and support conservation, climate adaptation, and a just energy transition.

China's activities in Africa date back to the continent's pre-independence period, when ideologically driven Beijing supported liberation movements fighting colonial powers. Nowadays, China is Africa's largest trading partner, hitting $254 billion in 2021, exceeding by a factor of four US-Africa trade. China has become a preferred investment partner, a source of accessible loans for African countries across the board. Chinese funds back a wide range of projects from transportation to energy and minerals, medicine, agriculture, and telecommunications. However, these engagements are not without certain drawbacks.

For Africa, both the US and China have come up with their own comparative advantages/benefits. These factors would also benefit African countries and are the main reasons why African countries should favor closer ties with the United States than with China. What follows is a

brief discussion of the US's comparative advantages to the African continent at large.

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Demographic factors

There is a large number of African descent living in the USA. This has a long history tracing back to the trans-Atlantic slave trade between the 16th and 19th centuries. It is indicated that 12% of the USA population, around 43 million, are of African descent.

It is estimated that over 28.3 million sub-Saharan Africans reside outside their countries of origin. Of these, while

about 17.8 million (63%) lived elsewhere within the region, the United States is the top destination for sub-Saharan Africans outside the region. There are approximately 2.1 million sub-Saharan African immigrants who resided in the United States in 2019. 53% of these immigrants came from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, or Somalia. On the other hand, there are 381,000 immigrants in the United States from North African countries mainly Egypt, Morocco, and Sudan. In comparison, the number of Africans in the USA is by far greater than an estimated 500,000 African migrants that live in China, many of which are merchants. This led the USA to have an advantage over China in its engagement in Africa.

> **It is estimated that over 28.3 million sub-Saharan Africans reside outside their countries of origin.**

national/international civil societies in African countries, which is the by-product of the US's engagement, will fill this vacuum.

> ❝ The promotion of democracy, human rights, and civil societies has been an integral part of the US's domestic and foreign policies.

On the other hand, Chinese engagement in Africa is often criticized for lack of transparency as many business practices are claimed to be fraudulent, abusive, and corrupt. Similarly, China is also accused of undermining the strengthening of democratic institutions and governance in Africa as it continues to invest in countries with governance challenges such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Conflict resolution and security diplomacy

The US usually assumes a larger diplomatic role in the overall efforts to resolve African conflicts. Despite its evergrowing influence and increasing commercial engagement, China's diplomacy has traditionally kept a non-partisan stance concerning inter and intra-state conflicts, and their resolution attempts, in Africa. It is stated that although Beijing did appoint a special envoy for the Horn of Africa earlier in 2022, it has not

been active in diplomacy surrounding the war in Northern Ethiopia as might be expected given its heavy investment in the country. While the African Union has taken the diplomatic lead, the United States was playing both a public and behind-the-scenes role in Ethiopia.

China has traditionally adopted a "non-interference" policy in African and global conflicts. However, this policy seems to have evolved with its new Belt Road Initiative (BRI) over the past 10 years. In February 2023, Beijing launched its Global Security Initiative, with the aim of "peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation".
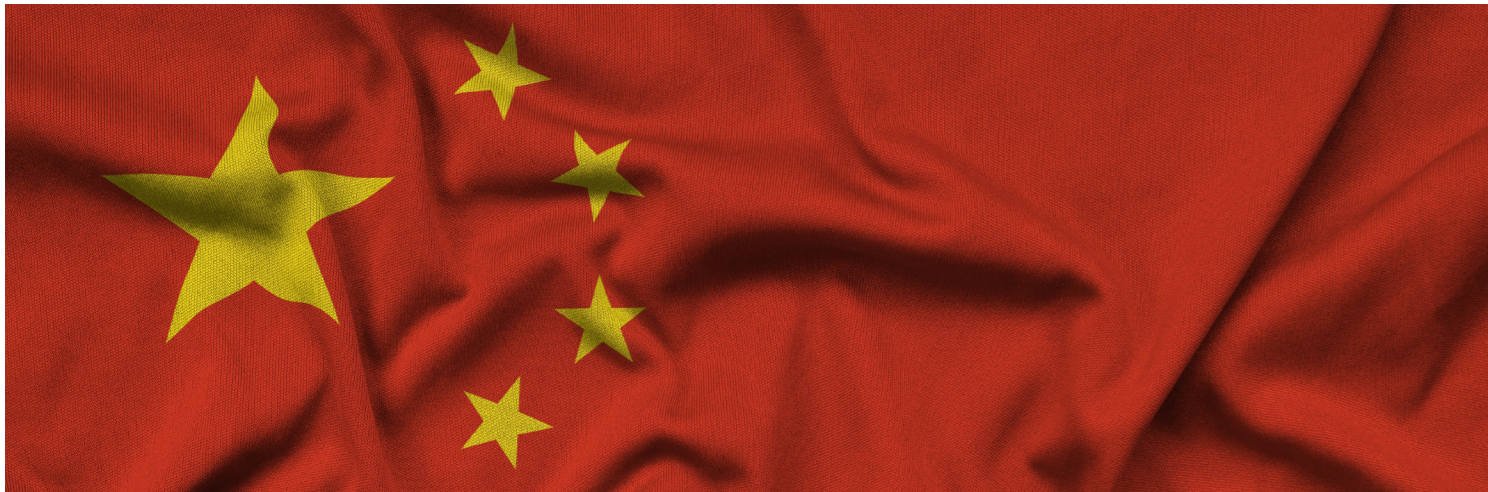
> ❝ China has traditionally adopted a "non-interference" policy in African and global conflicts. However, this policy seems to have evolved with its new Belt Road Initiative (BRI) over the past 10 years.

The US has a strong military and security presence in Africa. According to the US African Command, there are a total of 29 US military bases located in 15 different countries in Africa in 2019. These bases are categorized as an "enduring footprint" (a permanent

African's positive perception of the US is slightly greater than China

According to a survey conducted by Afrobarometer in 2019 and 2020 in 18 African countries, China and the United States are placed in roughly equivalent positions as external influencers. Asked about their perceptions of the economic and political influence of the two powers, 59% of African respondents viewed China somewhat, or very, positively and 15 percent viewed China somewhat or very negatively. The comparable numbers for the United States were similar: 58% in positive and 13% in negative view. The same study reported that, when respondents were asked

to name the best national model for development, 32% cited the United States, and 23% named China. Moreover, many scholars anticipate that Africans' positive perceptions of the United States may continue to increase during the presidency of Joe Biden. This positive perception that Africans have towards the United States, somehow greater than China, will be an advantage to be utilized while engaging in Africa.

The spread of democracy, human rights, and civil societies

The US is best known for safeguarding liberal principles and institutions. The promotion of democracy, human rights, and civil societies has been an integral part of the US's domestic and foreign policies. This in turn contributes to the spread of these values and institutions across Africa. This has enabled to empower the people so that they can exercise their power to elect and scrutinize their governments. It makes it somewhat more difficult for African governments to get away with blatant and excessive abuses of power in due course of governing. As many of the public services in Africa are not only provided by the government, the emergence of local/

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base) and those with a "non-enduring footprint" or" (semi-permanent or contingency base). On the other hand, China established its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017. In general, the US has more leverage in terms of conflict resolution and security diplomacy than China which is known for its emphasis on economic diplomacy. This will enable to maintain military and security ties between Africa and the US.

Strong humanitarian engagement

The US has been more strongly engaged in humanitarian sectors, than Chinese, in sub–Saharan Africa. The U.S. gave out $97.67 billion between 2000 and 2018 in Official Development Assistance to sub–Saharan Africa, with infrastructure projects (48 percent of total aid) and humanitarian aid (26 percent) being the top priorities. The health sector was given $6 billion, the agriculture sector received $4.2 billion, and $3.5 billion was committed to education. In Fiscal Year 2021, USAID and the U.S. Department of State provided $8.5 billion of assistance to 47 countries and 8 regional programs in sub–Saharan Africa. China's global foreign aid expenditure has reached $3.18 billion in 2021. Between 2013 and 2018, 45% of China's around $26 billion foreign aid went to Africa, much of this aid went to transportation, energy, and communication sectors. Unlike the Chinese development priorities in Africa, United States development efforts place greater emphasis on health, education, and other humanitarian sectors.

Diaspora Remittances

There is a large number of African diaspora in the USA. According to Migration Policy Institute (2022), the number of sub–Saharan African diaspora in the United States is more than 4.5 million. The figure is expected to increase considering the number of Diasporas in the USA from North African states. The African diaspora living in the US, Europe, and elsewhere send back significant amounts in remittances to the continent. World Bank figures show that there is a total of $95.6 billion in remittance flows to Africa in 2021, of which $46.6 billion went to North Africa and $49 billion to sub–Saharan Africa. The extent of remittance is more favorable than the official development assistance to Africa of $35bn and foreign direct investment to sub–Saharan Africa of $88bn in 2021.

Acknowledging this role, the African Diaspora has been among the priority issues in the US–Africa Leaders' Summit which was undertaken in Washington DC on December 2022. It is also pronounced that the Biden administration will provide targeted support to small– and medium–sized businesses "with a specific focus on the African diaspora and their businesses and investors across the United States". Therefore, the African diaspora, their business, and remittances will serve as an entry point for US's comparative advantage over China related to Africa.

Chinese debt trap policy

China is undoubtedly Africa's largest bilateral creditor and a crucial partner in pioneering infrastructure development projects. Chinese loans have resulted in a significant debt held by African states. It is stated that overall external debt held by governments in the continent has doubled in two years, from a 5.8 percent average of government revenue in 2015 to 11.8 percent in 2017. Some African nations do have extensive Chinese loans and are suffering from out-of-control debt, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, high-interest rates, and other factors. While maintaining its image as a friend of developing nations, the extensive Chinese loans made to African countries will create the possibility of forced repayments, another headache to the continent's development.

> ❝
> **China is undoubtedly Africa's largest bilateral creditor and a crucial partner in pioneering infrastructure development projects.**

Some Pitfalls of Chinese Engagement in Africa

China is often criticized for an unfair and lack of a long–term strategy when engaging Africa. Compared with the US, the quality and standard of Chinese businesses in Africa is questionable. Its strategy is more about exploiting African natural resources than spurring the continent's development, which also raises questions about sustainability for future generations in the continent and environmental concerns as well. In this regard, former President of the USA, Barack Obama, once said:

> *We don't look to Africa simply for its natural resources. We recognize Africa for its greatest resource which is its people and its talents and its potential. We don't simply want to extract minerals from the ground for our growth. We want to build partnerships that create jobs and opportunities for all our peoples that unleash the next era of African growth [...]*

While it is common to assume that China has been deeply engaged in Africa even surpassing the US, there is a repertoire of comparative advantages that the US offers to Africa. These stem from the US' own strengths, as well as the pitfalls of Chinese engagement in the continent. These include factors related to demography, African perception, democracy, diaspora remittances, and strong engagement of the US in conflict resolution, security, and humanitarian–led diplomacy, on the other hand, China's debt trap strategies and its trade practices in Africa present the United States as a better–suited ally.

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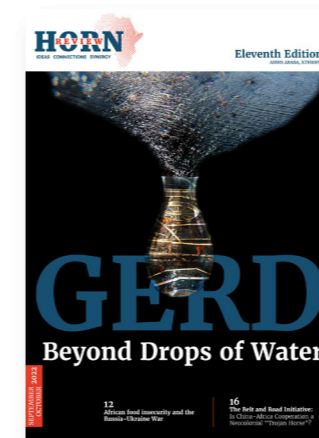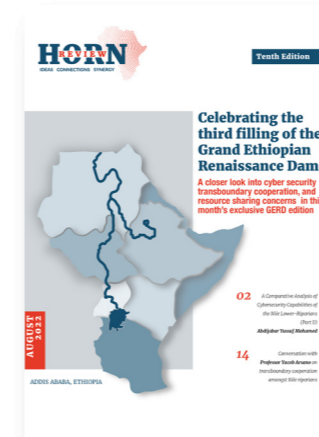
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> Alongside the construction of the structure and electrical work of the GERD, building a cyberdefense for the project is a crucial aspect that is often neglected.
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