



ETHIOPIA:

A RISK ASSESSMENT BRIEF

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Based on CIFP Risk Assessment Methodology



Ethiopia's turbulent history is marked by authoritarian rule, repression of rights, famines, civil war, ethnic divisions, tense relations with neighbours, and political and economic instability. In addition, Ethiopia hosts more refugees than it produces. Despite these facts, at present a fragile peace prevails.

KEY INDICATORS: STABILIZING FACTORS

History of conflict (See Annex 1 for Chronology of Events and Country Profile)

- United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) was deployed in 2000. Overall, Ethiopia has respected the ceasefire agreement signed in Algiers that year and has shown a willingness to negotiate with Eritrea. Recently, the United States (US) was involved in mediating the conflict.

International Linkages

- *Ethiopia's membership in international organizations:* ACP, AfDB, AU, COMESA, FAO, G-24, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRC, IGAD, ILO (ratified 6 of 8 core conventions), IMF (qualified for debt relief), IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM (observer), ISO, ITU, MIGA, NAM, ONUB, OPCW, PCA, UN (founding member), UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNMIL, UPU, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, UNHCR ExCom, ECOSOC, UNDP; Party to African Charter, CAT, CEDAW, ICCPR, ICESCR, CRC, CEDR, but regularly fails to report.¹

Militarization

Background: Ethiopia has one of the largest armies in Africa. The Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) includes ground forces and an air force. In 2004, Ethiopia's military expenditures reached \$337.1 million (US) dollars, representing 4.6% of GDP.²

- Army discipline is high. Demobilization has occurred since the 1998-2000 war, coinciding with a decrease in military expenditures. The US provides technical assistance to the military. The military maintains internal order. It also participates in peacekeeping operations in the region.

Population Heterogeneity (See Annex I for composition of religious and ethnic groups)

- In line with the Constitution, which provides for freedom of religion, the Government has taken steps to promote interfaith understanding by including religious leaders in major societal campaigns. Relations between religious groups are generally amicable.
- There were no reports of ethnic conflicts between refugees and residents, and no official reports of discrimination against Eritreans in 2004.³

Human Development

- There was a slight drop in infant and child mortality rates between 2002 and 2003, indicating an improvement in women's health.⁴

Economy (See Annex 1 for Economic Statistics)

- Ethiopia has been making strong gains in obtaining investment and credit as a result of the government's economic reforms.⁵
- In April 2004, Ethiopia reached its Completion Point under the Enhanced HIPC initiative and is eligible to benefit from the G-8 proposal to cancel 100% of its debt owed to IDA, the IMF, and AFDB.⁶

KEY INDICATORS: DESTABILIZING FACTORS

History of conflict (See Annex 1 for Chronology of Events and Country Profile)

- History of violent conflict (1974 coup against Haile Selassie, 1977 General Teferi Benti killed, 1991 coup against Colonel Mengistu by EPRDF) and a history of ethnic conflict exacerbated by scarce resources and famine/droughts. Ethiopia has historically been affected by external conflicts as it continues to be a recipient of displaced persons. Border war with Eritrea 1998-2000. Violent suppression of political demonstrations.

Governance and Political Stability

- *Internal Security:* Clashes between ethnic groups, as well as between civilian protesters and state security forces have been frequent in the last five years.⁷ Military forces continue to conduct low-level operations against the outlawed Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Somalia based Al Ittihad Al Islami, and elements of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).⁸ Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) abuses against Anuak civilians and villages in the southwest Gambella exacerbate ongoing ethnic tensions.⁹ Ongoing human rights abuses and political repression have been reported in the Oromia Region targeting ethnic Oromo, including tight monitoring of civil activity by government bodies, as well as forced attendance at political meetings.
- In 2003 bloody ethnic clashes broke out in Gambella between the Anuak and Nuer, a large population of Sudanese heritage.¹⁰ Ethnic clashes over border lines and resources have also been reported over the last few years in the Southern, as well as the Somali/Oromiya, regions resulting in the deaths of hundreds and the displacement of thousands.¹¹ Local officials have been found guilty of inciting violence between tribes over land.¹²
- *Contested Elections:* The May 2005 elections were marred by allegations of government harassment, killing of opposition supporters,¹³ and electoral fraud.¹⁴ Prime Minister Meles Zenawi accused opposition parties of inciting ethnic hatred.¹⁵ Following the elections, protests against government fraud and abuse were brutally put down, with 36 people killed and more than 3,000 arrested.¹⁶ The electoral board investigated allegations of fraud, while the Prime Minister announced a ban on all demonstrations until final results were announced.¹⁷ The ruling coalition won a majority with 371 out of 547 seats, although the opposition made significant gains.¹⁸ State authorities subsequently brought charges against many editors from Amharic language newspapers covering the aftermath of the May parliamentary elections.¹⁹ The trials of opposition leaders – arrested in the aftermath of the 2005 elections – for genocide and treason are ongoing.²⁰

Militarization

- Clashes and general tension along the Eritrean-Ethiopian border leads to regional instability.
- High military spending diverts funds from other sectors.
- ENDF has been accused of intimidation and human rights violations. There are continued reports of unlawful killings, as well as abductions and arbitrary detainment, particularly in the Oromiya and the Somali Regions.²¹
- There are approximately 2 million landmines in the country, many dating from the war with Eritrea. Reports have been made of new landmines being planted on both sides of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border during 2004.²²

Demographic Stresses

- 43.9% of the population is between 0 and 14, creating youth bulge.²³
- The border war with Eritrea and ethnic clashes have resulted in an estimated 150,000 to 178,000 internally displaced persons.²⁴ Ethiopia also hosts over 93,000 Sudanese and 23,000 Somali refugees.²⁵ These groups are at risk due to scarce resources and strained relief efforts.²⁶ As of May 2005 most of the displaced had been unable to return to their areas of origin due to ethnic tensions, floods, the presence of landmines, lack of resources and their inability to reconstruct their livelihoods in areas of return.²⁷

Population Heterogeneity (See Annex I for composition of religious and ethnic groups)

- Tension has been reported within Muslim communities, particularly with Wahhabi Muslims.
- There were unconfirmed reports that soldiers targeted Oromos for abuse during the year and there are continued incidents of ethnic conflict, particularly in the western, southern, and eastern parts of the country
- Attempts by the government to resolve disputes between ethnic groups, such as the October 2004 referendum in the border areas of the Somali and Oromiya regions led to increased tensions between communities.²⁸

Human Development

- Adult illiteracy rate of about 60%
- Despite enormous amounts of food aid, child stunting in Ethiopia has persisted at alarming rates.²⁹
- Decrease in percentage of the population with access to improved water (from 24% to 22%) and sanitation (from 12% to 6%).³⁰
- 47% of children under 5 are underweight, and 46% of the population is undernourished.

Economy (See Annex 1 for Economic Statistics)

- Ethiopia is one of the world's poorest countries at US\$115 GDP per capita. Half of the population lives in absolute poverty.³¹
- The agricultural sector, which accounts for more than half of GDP and 80% of total employment, suffers from frequent drought and poor cultivation practices. Low prices of coffee, which is a major Ethiopian export, force farmers to switch to the production of local narcotic 'qat' to supplement income.
- Government has become increasingly dependent on aid in supporting its economic activities. Ethiopia remains the single biggest recipient of foreign humanitarian aid in Africa and 70% of the Government's direct budget relies on aid.³² Foreign donors have threatened to withhold aid due to the violence that erupted after the May 2005 elections and Ethiopia's continued defiance of the border commission ruling. In 2005, Britain withheld US \$35 million while other western donors are looking to re-direct \$375 million to other countries due to the political instability.³³
- Development in private sector hampered by lack of skills and capital, weak investment climate, and structural constraints such as market size and geography.
- Acute food shortages caused by drought is the most protracted economic problem and devastates a large portion of the Ethiopian population. Rural communities plagued with crop failures, pests, and extensive livestock losses and become dependent on international food assistance.³⁴
- Regional ethnic conflicts continue to disrupt the work of aid workers.

Environmental Stress:

- Forest clearing for agriculture, population increases, and overgrazing has led to rapid deforestation and degradation of land sources. This has worsened the availability of food, water, and fuel. The current rate of deforestation is estimated at 160,000 to 200,000 hectares per year according to the Ethiopian Agricultural Research Organisation.³⁵ Tree planting and conservation programs have had little success.
- Government program in place to resettle more than 2 million people away from overworked highlands. Scheme may exacerbate household vulnerability and displacement, as lands available for resettlement – mainly along Ethiopia's border with Sudan – are in areas notorious for diseases.³⁶

MAIN ACTORS: INTERNAL

Name	Region	Interest/Grievance
Government; a.k.a., EPRDF	Centre of power is Addis Ababa and major urban centres	Since gaining power in 1993, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has consistently shown willingness to use violence against opposition supporters. Primary interest is to maintain its position of power and suppress rebel groups.
Oromo Liberation Front	Primary in central Ethiopia; HQ in Eritrea	Rejects the form of ethnic federalism presented by the EPRDF. Claims to be fighting for the self-determination right of Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, the Oromo (40% of population). Once part of the Transitional Government, they are currently considered a terrorist organization and have been carrying out attacks against government security forces and the 'Tigrayan regime'. ³⁷
Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)	Primarily in the Southern regions	Like the OLF, this group rejects the current form of ethnic federalism. The ONLF were forced out of state government by an apparent EPRDF sponsored move to merge all Somali parties. Since September 2001, the government has presented this group as a terrorist organization. ³⁸
Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD)	Opposition party	With their leaders jailed, and their request to form an official opposition party with other parties denied by the electoral board, the CUD could galvanize diverse interests who are unhappy with the status quo, across ethnic lines.

MAIN ACTORS: EXTERNAL

Country/Organization	Interest
African Union (AU)	Ethiopia is one of the founding members of the AU. The African Union whitewashed the events of the May 2005. ³⁹
European Union (EU)	Brokered deal to investigate fraud allegations in 2005 elections, and is a major donor to Ethiopia which has recently threatened to withhold aid.

Country/Organization	Interest
Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, Eritrea	<p><i>Sudan:</i> Is a major source of refugees to Ethiopia, while also relying on Ethiopia's support for maintaining regional control over the conflict in Sudan.</p> <p><i>Kenya:</i> Cross-border cattle raids continue to be a source of conflict, as competition over scarce resources increases.⁴⁰</p> <p><i>Somalia:</i> Ethiopia has only an administrative line and no international border with the Oromo region of southern Somalia where it maintains alliances with local clans in opposition to the unrecognized Somali Interim Government in Mogadishu; 'Somaliland' secessionists provide port facilities and trade ties to landlocked Ethiopia.⁴¹</p> <p><i>Eritrea:</i> The border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia has been a source of constant tension, with the latest crisis occurring in January 2005. Eritrea also houses the Oromo Liberation Front.</p>
United Nations (UN)	Currently monitors the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia, under the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE). To date, the UN has not focused on the internal problems in Ethiopia but could have the potential to organize international pressure on the government.
United States of America	Ethiopia has good relations with the US, based on its responses to regional instability and support in the 'war on terror'. ⁴²

WORST CASE: Chaos and Civil War

- Opposition leaders and regional stakeholders incite and help orchestrate violence against state authorities
- Sporadic violence spreads to overwhelm state authorities, triggering a full out civil war
- Continued drought
- As food gets scarcer, local tensions between ethnic groups and displaced peoples can turn into insurrections.
- Tensions over the disputed border with Eritrea could flare up again into war.
- Withdrawal of UN peacekeeping forces removes buffer currently in place between the two countries
- Substantial pull-out of foreign aid
- Ethiopia collapses as a state

BEST CASE: Resolution of Competing Political and Economic Claims

- Release of opposition leaders and other political prisoners, allowing for broad participation in the political process by opposition groups, free of intimidation
- International community and relevant groups focus on the internal tensions in Ethiopia, offering infrastructural support in exchange for appropriate government reforms
- Repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons
- Efficient economic reforms, reducing dependence on foreign aid and pushing forward development
- Redirecting government funds to building infrastructure and social programs rather than to military
- Resolution of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border dispute leading to improved relations as well as resuming use of ports for trade purposes

MOST LIKELY CASE: Unstable Status Quo

- Support from the United States, and the international community's avoidance of Ethiopia's internal struggles, will continue the status quo with the government ruling by suppressing opposition where necessary
- Current political structure will continue to exacerbate ethnic tensions
- Cyclical drought, poverty, and decreasing availability of arable lands will continue to depress Ethiopian development

Annex I

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is a landlocked country in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia borders Sudan to the west, Kenya to the south, and Djibouti and Somalia to the east and southeast. To the north and northeast is the border with Eritrea.

The 1994 Constitution established a federal structure of nine autonomous, ethnically-based “national states” within a federal territory, with Addis Ababa as the capital. The nine autonomous regions, broadly reflecting regional ethnic boundaries, are those of the Afar, Amhara, Benishangul/Gumuz, Gambela, Harari, Oromia, Somalia, Souther and Tigray peoples.⁴³ Although most political parties are ethnically based, the Tigrayans (less than 5% of the population) and Amharas from the northern highlands play a dominant role in Ethiopian politics.⁴⁴

Selected Statistics

Total area: 1,127,127 sq km

Population (est. 2005): 73,053,286⁴⁶

Population growth rate (2002-05): 2.50%

Capital: Addis Ababa

Life expectancy (2002): 45.5 years

Adult Literacy (2002): 41.5%

HIV/AIDS (2003):

Number of people living with: 1,500,000

Adult prevalence rate: 4.4%

Number of deaths annually: 120,000

UN Human Development Index (2004):

170 of 177 countries⁴⁷

Major Religions: Muslim (approx. 40%), Ethiopian Orthodox (approx. 40%), Evangelical/Pentecostal Protestants (approx. 10%), and Catholic/Jewish/Animist/Indigenous (approx. 10%).⁴⁸

Major Ethnic Groups: Oromo (40%), Amhara and Tigray (32%), Sidamo (9%), Shankella (6%), Somali (6%), Afar (4%) Gurage (2%), and Other (1%).⁴⁹

Economic Statistics:

GDP: \$59.9 billion (2005)

GDP real growth rate: 6.5% (2005)

External debt: \$2.9 billion (2001)

Economic aid: \$308 million (2000/2001)

GDP Composition by sector: agriculture: 40.1%, industry: 12.7%, services: 47.2%

Export Partners: Djibouti 13.3%, Germany 10%, Japan 8.4%, Saudi Arabia 5.6%, US 5.2%, UAE 5%, Italy 4.6% (2004)

Import Partners: Saudi Arabia 25.3%, US 15.8%, China 6.6% (2004);⁵⁰

Exports: coffee, qat, gold, leather products, live animals, oilseeds (\$562.8 million)

Imports: food and live animals, petroleum and petro products, chemicals, machinery, motor vehicles, cereals, textiles (\$2.104 billion)

Chronology of Events⁴⁵

1941: Emperor Haile Selassie regains his throne after defeating Italians.

1952: UN federates Eritrea with Ethiopia.

1962: Haile Selassie annexes Eritrea as Ethiopian province

1974: Military coup against Haile Selassie; General Teferi Benti becomes country's leader.

1977: Benti killed; Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam claims power; Somalia invades Ogaden region.

1977-79: Thousands of government opponents killed in Mengistu's 'Red Terror'; war for regional autonomy launched by Tigrayan People's Liberation Front.

1980: Soviet Union and Cuba help defeat Somali forces.

1985: Famine strikes; thousands forcibly resettled from Eritrea and Tigray.

1989: The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of different movements, is formed.

1991: Addis Ababa is captured by Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front and Mengistu flees; Asmara captured by Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and provisional government established in Eritrea.

1993: Eritrea becomes officially independent.

1994: Ethiopia divided into ethnically-based regions.

1995: Meles Zenawi becomes prime minister; Negasso Gidada becomes president.

1998-2000: War breaks out over border dispute with Eritrea.

2000: Ceasefire agreement signed in Algiers; UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) deployed.

2002: Both countries accept border created by an independent commission, but both claim town of Badme.

2003: Independent boundary commission rules that Badme belongs to Eritrea. Ethiopia does not accept ruling. Tensions build along the border.

2004: Ethnic clashes break out in Gambella region.

2005: In May, protests over alleged electoral fraud break out after EPRDF's victory in Ethiopia's third multiparty election; approx.40 people killed in violent protests. Clashes over the elections continue in November where 46 more protestors were killed and thousands were detained by the government.

2006: US mediation team arrives in Ethiopia to try to break the stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea; domestic violence and protests; bombings in Addis Ababa and soldiers deployed.

¹ CIA World Factbook: Ethiopia (2005), available at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/et.html> [*CIA World Factbook*]; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia Multilateral Relations, http://www.mfa.gov.et/Foreign_Policy_And_Relation/Multilateral.php

² CIA World Factbook

³ “Ethiopia” *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2004*, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41603.htm>. [*USDOS Human Rights Report*]

⁴ “Ethiopia: Facts & Figures,” Reuters AlertNet, available at www.alertnet.org.

⁵ World Bank, “Country Brief – Ethiopia”, available at <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/ETHIOPIAEXTN/0,,menuPK:295939~pagePK:141132~piPK:141107~theSitePK:295930,00.html> [*World Bank*]

⁶ World Bank

⁷ “Ethiopia: Home Office Report,” *Country of Origin Information Reports*, Home Office Science and Research Group, October 2005; available at www.homeoffice.gov.uk, Annex A: chronology of events, p. 87-89. [*Home Office Report*]

⁸ USDOS Human Rights Report (2004), p1.

⁹ Human Rights Watch [*HRW*], “Targeting the Anuak: Human Rights Violations and Crimes against Humanity in Ethiopia’s Gambella Region” March 2005, 17:3 (A); ENDF largely shares the same ethnic heritage as the “highlanders” who have been in continued conflict with the native Anuak

¹⁰ HRW (2005) Gambella Report.

¹¹ Norwegian Refugee Council, Profile of Internal Displacement: Ethiopia, 13 May 2005.

¹² USDOS Human Rights Report (2003), p24.

¹³ BBC, “‘Abuses’ in Ethiopia’s campaign”, 27 April 2005.

¹⁴ BBC, “Ethiopian election fraud arrests”, 28 March 2005.

¹⁵ BBC, “Ethiopia PM warns of ‘hate’ poll”, 6 May 2005.

¹⁶ BBC, “Thousands arrested in Ethiopia”, 13 June 2005; 2,700 people were later released following the visit of foreign diplomats to the military camps where they were being held, BBC, “Ethiopia ‘frees poll protesters’”, 24 June 2005.

¹⁷ BBC, “Deal to end Ethiopia poll crises”, 14 June 2005.

¹⁸ African Union, “Report of the African Union Observer Team on the Ethiopian National Elections Complaints Investigation Panels, June 29-July 20, 2005, p6. Citing official results announced by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia on 5 September 2005.

¹⁹ IRIN News, “Ethiopia: Government rejects criticism over media”, 12 July 2005.

²⁰ The country’s first elections in 1995 saw the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front and its allies win a landslide victory, with Meles Zenawi (Chairman of the EPRDF and its dominant element, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front [TPLF]) becoming Prime Minister. Opposition parties boycotted the elections, alleging insufficient access to media, and harassment.²⁰ The May 2000 elections saw the EPRDF win a landslide victory, while opposition parties claimed numerous irregularities had occurred, including physical abuse, intimidation of monitors, vote-rigging, harassment of opposition supporters, and lack of access to media; Home Office Report

²¹ Home Office Report

²² USDOS Human Rights Report (2004)

²³ “Ethiopia,” Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, available at www.internal-displacement.org [*IDMC*]

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ CIA World Factbook

²⁶ IDMC

²⁷ “Ethiopia: Border war and ethnic clashes leave over 150,000 internally displaced,” ReliefWeb, available at www.reliefweb.int [*ReliefWeb*]

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ World Bank.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ CIA – World Factbook

³² IRIN News, “ETHIOPIA: Interview with Berahanu Nega, director of the Ethiopian Economic Association,” 30 May 2003, available at http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=34413&SelectRegion=Horn_of_Africa&SelectCountry=ETHIOPIA; Economist, “When Aid Darlings Lose Their Shine,” Nov 10th 2005

³³ IRIN News, “Ethiopia: Britain Withholds Direct Budget Support,” Jan 19 2006, available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200601190097.html>

³⁴ Home Office Report

³⁵ Yahnnes Ruphael, "Ethiopia Needs Urgent Environment Protection", Panafrican News Agency, <http://www.geocities.com/akababi/article18.html>

³⁶ ReliefWeb

³⁷ Oromo Liberation Front, available at <http://www.oromoliberationfront.org/OLFMission.htm>

³⁸ UNHCR, Protection Information Section, "Ethiopia: a Situation Analysis and Trend Assessment" (January 2004) p30.

³⁹ African Union, "Report of the African Union Observer Team on the Ethiopian National Elections Complaints Investigation Panels, June 29-July 20, 2005.

⁴⁰ BBC, "Cattle raids 'kill 38' in Kenya", 19 January 2006.

⁴¹ CIA World Factbook

⁴² USDOS Country Report (2006), available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2859.htm>

⁴³ Ethiopian Constitution. [http://www.electionsethiopia.org/PDF/Constitution\(LF1\).pdf](http://www.electionsethiopia.org/PDF/Constitution(LF1).pdf)

⁴⁴ USDOS Human Rights Report.

⁴⁵ Adapted from "Timeline: Ethiopia," *BBC Online* (21 December 2005)

⁴⁶ CIA World Factbook

⁴⁷ DFAIT, Sub-Saharan Africa: Countries: Ethiopia: Country Profile.

⁴⁸ "Ethiopia," *International Religious Freedom Report 2005*, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour; Internet; available at www.state.gov.

⁴⁹ CIA – World Factbook

⁵⁰ CIA – World Factbook