

Contributor Profile: Ethiopia

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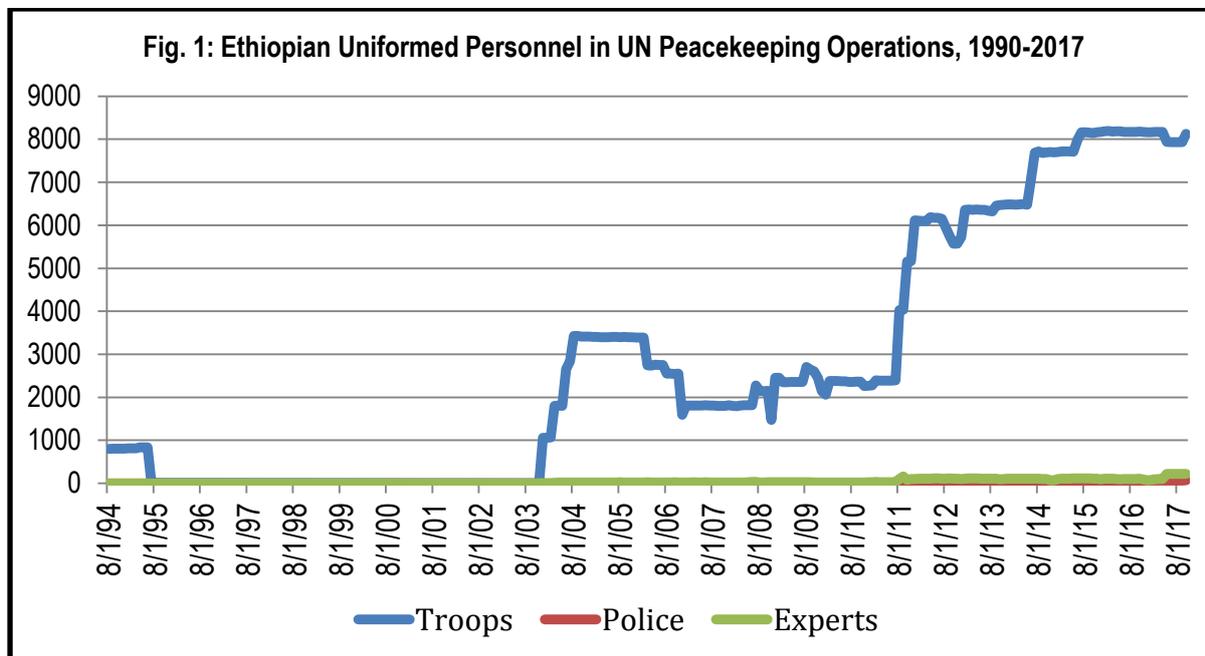
Active Armed Forces ¹	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
138,000	37	2016: US\$451m (0.65% of GDP)	8,409 (642 female) (31 Oct. 2017)	UNAMID 2,456 (2,397 troops, 11 experts, 33 police, 15 SO)	Approx. 4,300 in AMISOM, Somalia.
World Ranking (size): 35	Attack: 18	2015: US\$339m (0.65% of GDP)	Ranking: No.1 Military & Police	UNISFA 4,452 (4,290 troops, 78 experts, 5 police, 79 SO)	
Army: 135,000 Air force: 3,000	Multirole: 7	2014: US\$375m (0.71% of GDP)	Contributor to UN Operations	UNMISS 1,494 (1,436 troops, 11 experts, 25 police, 22 SO)	
	Multirole / Transport: 12	2013: US\$351 (0.76% of GDP)		MINUSTAH 6 police	
		World Ranking (defense spending): 90		MINUSMA 1 SO	
* SO = Staff Officer					
Defense Spending / Active troop: ² US\$3,268 (compared to global average of approx. US\$79,395)					

Part 1: Recent Trends

Ethiopia has a long history of participation in United Nations (UN) peace operations dating back to the 1950s. The country's first major participation in a UN-authorized operation was as part of the UN Command Multinational Force in the Korean War (1950-53). Ethiopian forces were first deployed in a UN-led, blue helmet operation from July 1960 to June 1964 as part of the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC), in which Let. General Kebede Gebre served as Force Commander. Following the overthrow of Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 and the civil war that engulfed the country for the next two decades, Ethiopia did not provide UN peacekeepers, although the period between the 1970s and late 1980s also saw the launch of very few new UN missions. Ethiopia resumed its participation in UN missions in the 1990s, which coincided with the major expansion of UN peacekeeping. Accordingly, Ethiopia deployed a battalion to the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR 2) from August 1994 to July 1995. Since then Ethiopia has deployed its personnel in eight UN peacekeeping operations.³

Since the 1990s, Ethiopia has provided considerable numbers of forces for UN operations in Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Abyei, Darfur and South Sudan, as well as smaller contributions in other missions, including Haiti and Mali.⁴ Most of Ethiopia's recent UN peacekeeping deployments have been in the Sudans: to the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), the UN-AU Hybrid Mission to Darfur (UNAMID), the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). While its deployment to UNAMID has been its largest sustained troop contribution, Ethiopia set a new record for UN peacekeeping operations by supplying almost the entire military component of UNISFA, comprising over 4,400 personnel, as well as the Force Commander and many of the mission's senior leadership. This mission was also notable for Ethiopia's rapid deployment of troops:

within one month of the adoption of the UN Security Council resolution. Now with over 8,400 uniformed personnel serving in UN missions, since 2016, Ethiopia has become the top contributor to UN peacekeeping operations. Ethiopia has also contributed specialized assets and capabilities. For example, since 2010, Ethiopia also contributed five tactical helicopters to UNAMID, although it withdrew them in 2013, apparently for financial reasons (see below).



Outside of the UN, Ethiopia's major significant deployment has been its unilateral deployment to Somalia, where it maintained an unknown number of troops supporting Somali Government and AMISOM forces.⁵ Since January 2014, Ethiopia became one of the troop-contributing countries to AMISOM. The third largest TCC after Uganda and Burundi, Ethiopia currently has about 4,400 uniformed personnel serving in AMISOM.

One of the features of Ethiopia's deployment since the 1990s is that it has only contributed peacekeepers to missions in Africa. With the exception of some police personnel deployed to the MINUSTAH in Haiti, Ethiopia has not responded favourably for requests made for deployment outside of Africa and this stance is unlikely to change in the short-term.⁶ Additionally, Ethiopia's peacekeeping contributions have mainly been limited to UN-led peacekeeping operations, the exception being its participation in the AU Mission to Burundi (AMIB) during 2003 and 2004 where its troops supported the implementation of the country's peace agreement, and AMISOM since 2014. Nevertheless, Ethiopia has pledged contributions for the African Standby Force as part of the East African Standby Force.

In terms of composition, to date, Ethiopia's contributions to peacekeeping have been largely military. Since 2008, Ethiopia has contributed just over 200 police officers, a very small number compared to its troop contributions. Its contribution of police and military experts, which stands at 69 and 217 respectively as at 31 October 2017, is also relatively small. Ethiopia remains [a leading contributor of female peacekeepers](#) to UN missions, but only one served in a senior leadership role. Currently, General Zewd Kiros, a woman, serves as UNISFA's deputy Force Commander. Despite the fact that Ethiopia has become the top UN peacekeeper, its participation in senior and middle level leadership of missions remains very low. Much of the experience of participation of Ethiopians in senior leadership has been in

UNISFA, where so far at least five Ethiopian generals served as Force Commander. Since 2016, a general with experience in UNISFA also served as Force Commander of UNMISS in South Sudan. Addis Ababa also has very low representation within UN DPKO, although since 2016 an Ethiopian has joined DPKO at relatively senior level.

Part 2: Decision-making process

There is no constitutional provision that specifically stipulates the decision-making process for the deployment of Ethiopian personnel to peacekeeping operations. Nor is there any parliamentary legislation governing how decisions are made about Ethiopia's participation in peacekeeping operations. Under the [1994 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution](#), decisions on the deployment of the country's security forces lie with the Prime Minister, who is the Head of Government and the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. Ethiopia's recent experience in peacekeeping also illustrates that the Prime Minister is the leading decision-maker on this issue. Other major actors include the Chief of Defense Staff, the Cabinet, the Ministry of Defence, particularly its Peacekeeping division and the Federal Police Commission. Other role players include the chief of security services and government security advisors. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs leads the political negotiations with the UN on the terms and conditions of Ethiopia's contributions to UN peacekeeping operations. The Ministry's Permanent Mission to the UN follows up logistics support and reimbursements.

Parliament does not ordinarily have an active role in decisions regarding peacekeeping deployments. However, it is important to distinguish between peacekeeping operations and combat operations. Decisions to deploy Ethiopian troops for combat operations based on a declaration of war must be tabled and debated in Parliament. For example, in 2006 Ethiopia's deployment to Somalia was debated in parliament.

Once the strategic decision about deployment has been taken by the Prime Minister in consultation with the other actors, the Ethiopian National Defence Forces, the Chief of Defense Staff, the newly established [Ethiopian International Peacekeeping Training Centre \(EIPKTC\)](#) and the Federal Police Commissioner implement the operational and technical steps, including the selection and training of the personnel to be deployed and the identification and supply of the provisions for the troops including equipment and logistics.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Political Rationales: Ethiopia's recent participation in peacekeeping is driven by several political motivations. [The Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy of Ethiopia \(2002\)](#) acknowledges that the country's development, peace and security is intertwined with the development, peace and security of neighbouring countries and those in Africa. The promotion of regional peace and security is therefore a major political consideration in Ethiopia's provision of peacekeepers, including to the UN. Particular emphasis is given to stability in the [Inter-Governmental Authority on Development \(IGAD\)](#) sub-region, where all of Ethiopia's recent major deployments have taken place. Ethiopia also recognizes that participation in international peacekeeping enhances its regional and international influence. This is articulated as one of the secondary basic principles of the Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy of Ethiopia (2002). Indeed, the role of Ethiopian peacekeepers has been commended by host societies and mandating authority as well as senior leaders of the missions in which they participated.⁷ In the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, for example, UNAMIR's Force Commander Roméo Dallaire noted that despite their lack of equipment, the Ethiopian contingent "were incredibly resourceful. I once

watched them use only long wooden switches to restrain a crowd that was trying to surge across the bridge at Cyangugu into Zaire. The switches were the kind that might have been used to herd cattle. The soldiers also had no compunction about getting into the fields to help local farmers harvest the rarely planted fields.”⁸ Ethiopia also recognizes the diplomatic and foreign relations leverage that peacekeeping contributions bring in pursuing its foreign policy objectives in both bilateral and multilateral frameworks.

Economic Rationales: Economic rationales inform Ethiopia’s participation in peacekeeping in three major ways. First, Ethiopia receives a significant sum of money as compensation for its UN peacekeeping contributions.⁹ Since 2014, this also applies to its forces in AMISOM. Although it is not the most decisive factor, this pecuniary gain is a consideration in the country’s decision to participate and helps explain Ethiopia’s greater willingness to deploy in UN, generally rather than AU missions. Second, peacekeeping contributions also bring opportunities for military support from major donor countries. For example, Ethiopia receives training and other military supports from the United States. This contributes towards supplementing the country’s budget for building the capacity of and modernizing the army. Third, given the emphasis of the Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy (2002) on strengthening regional economic cooperation and integration in order to boost Ethiopia’s economic development, deploying peacekeepers in the IGAD sub-region serves to advance its national economic interests.¹⁰ This is particularly true with respect to Ethiopia’s deployments to the Sudans. Finally, participation in peacekeeping also accrues significant economic benefits at the individual level to the personnel involved, although individual peacekeepers do not keep all the UN’s monthly allowance of now approximately US\$1,400.

Security Rationales: Security rationales are a major factor in Ethiopia’s peacekeeping deployments. Both in policy and praxis, Ethiopia understands from experience that its national security is intertwined with the security of its neighbors and the countries of the region. Given that Ethiopia is the only country that shares borders with all the IGAD member states except Uganda, conflicts and security problems in its neighborhood often have serious repercussions for Ethiopia at home. This has been the major factor behind Ethiopia’s deployments to Somalia (2006-09, and 2011-present) and to Sudan’s Abyei region. In both cases, Ethiopia’s deployment is mainly to prevent these conflicts from undermining its own security and to stem any wider regional security problems that may develop.¹¹ Ethiopia’s integration of troops into AMISOM is in part a response to the increasing terrorist threat alert across the region following the 21 September 2013 attack by *al-Shabaab* on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya.

Institutional Rationales: The Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy (2002) states that Ethiopia wishes to maintain a formidable modern army and national security infrastructure. In this context, it is possible to identify two institutional benefits that participation in peacekeeping brings. First, it enables military and police personnel to gain international experience and knowledge in a wide range of areas. Second, it also serves, albeit in a limited way, as a framework for military supplies and hence contributes to Ethiopia’s modernization endeavours.

Normative Rationales: Several normative factors are relevant to Ethiopia’s participation in peacekeeping. The main one is Ethiopia’s historical commitment to the global collective security system anchored on the UN Charter.¹² Because of its bitter experience from the failure of the League of Nations system, Ethiopia’s historical commitment to the UN’s collective security system is very well established. Its deployment of troops to Korea and the

Congo in the 1950s and 1960s was mainly motivated by its principled commitment to the UN's collective security system. This normative commitment is however constrained by national security considerations and the limited availability of capabilities for contributions. Currently, there is a recognition within the Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy (2002) that Ethiopia should at all times abide by international principles and norms and promote peaceful instruments of regional and international diplomacy and take active roles in global and regional security. Solidarity with the peoples and countries of Africa is also another normative consideration for Ethiopia's peacekeeping contributions. Multilateralism and the contribution to regional peace and security is also viewed as a pillar of enhancing national security and domestic legitimacy.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: Ethiopia is generally disposed to deploying within a UN framework. This is particularly the case where it converges with the country's national security imperatives. A case in point is Ethiopia's deployment to Abyei (UNISFA). Where national security imperatives demand alternative options, Ethiopia has chosen alternative institutional mechanisms such as the AU frameworks (for AMISOM since 2014), or it deploys unilaterally, as in Somalia (2006 and 2011).

Alternative political or strategic priorities: A major factor limiting Ethiopia's peacekeeping contribution to the UN is the demands of internal and regional security threats on its military and police. Internally, concerns relating to armed rebel movements (such as the Ogaden National Liberation Front, Ginbot 7 and the Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front) and the sporadic eruption of civil conflicts or intra-state border conflicts in some parts of the country demand the constant presence or deployment of the army and the police. Regionally, the descent of South Sudan into violent conflict, the lack of breakthrough in the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the security threats emerging from Somalia, and continuing rivalry and strategic tensions over the Nile waters all put pressure on Ethiopia's available military capabilities. Calculations about how peacekeeping operations impact the ability of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) to deal with these issues affects the scale and duration of Ethiopia's peacekeeping contributions.

Resistance in the military: Perhaps surprisingly for the UN's top contributor, peacekeeping is not generally seen as an important task for the army, although it is acknowledged to sometimes be significant in supporting Ethiopia's major foreign policy objectives. While peacekeeping is thought to be of secondary importance it is gradually gaining in significance. Issues around benefits also shape the perception of the personnel towards peacekeeping. Until recently, a major problem witnessed in Ethiopia's deployments has been the discontent expressed by a number of security personnel about [the lack of clear and fair payment of allowances](#) for their participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

Lack of fit with legislative, procurement and operational timelines: The demands of bureaucracy regarding the reimbursement process from the UN and, significantly, the negotiations for the supply of logistics and mission support can sometimes cause frustrations among Ethiopian officials. In some instances, Ethiopia decided that the compensation it received from the UN for its contribution of helicopters was not adequate. This is one of the factors that informed the recent withdrawal of Ethiopian helicopters from UNAMID.¹³

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

The Ethiopian government continues to reiterate its commitment and willingness to make UN

peacekeeping contributions. It is considered to be an important tool for pursuing various foreign policy and national security objectives, notably for stabilizing the sub-region and Africa. One challenge is the ambiguous effect of Ethiopian national security considerations. On the one hand, these considerations facilitate contributions to peacekeeping, especially in the Horn of Africa. On the other hand, they can also limit the ability of the ENDF to deploy to UN peacekeeping operations in greater numbers or beyond Africa.

In addition, the lack of a policy or strategy dedicated to peacekeeping also raises challenges. It limits the possibility of fully exploring Ethiopia's potential for participating in peacekeeping and making full use of the opportunities such participation brings. It also makes discerning and predicting Ethiopia's future contributions difficult.

Ethiopia's peacekeeping contribution is military heavy. A major challenge for increasing police contributions is the problem of language proficiency.¹⁴ Additionally, the country has very low participation in senior and middle level leadership of UN missions and in DPKO despite being one of the top contributing countries. Poor communications skills is said to be one of the main factors for such low levels of representation. Hence improving these skills would enhance Ethiopia's continued contributions to peacekeeping.

While it remains limited, there have been developments in recent years in terms of participation of Ethiopian personnel in senior leadership positions. With respect to police, while there is a police commander who currently serves as Chief of Staff of the UNMISS Police Component, another one also serves in similar position in UNAMID. A third one previously served as chief of training under UNMISS police component.

It is possible that in the light of increasing emphasis on the role of sub-regional organizations (such as IGAD) and the AU, Ethiopia's future contributions to UN peacekeeping will be shaped by the level of convergence between the AU and UN. The establishment of the EIPKTC is also a clear sign that Ethiopia will continue to make contributions and that it will also invest more significantly in peacekeeping training both for national and regional forces.

Part 6: Key champions and opponents

As the key foreign and national policy architect and decision-maker of the country, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was the champion of Ethiopia's participation in all the various peacekeeping operations to date. The current Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, appears to share this disposition and it is fully supported by the Chief of the Defense Forces, General Samora Yunis. Indeed, as noted above, whether Ethiopia provides peacekeepers has generally remained the almost exclusive preserve of the Prime Minister and the military leadership. There are currently no recognizable or public opponents of making larger or better contributions to UN peacekeeping.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

Ethiopia possesses military helicopters that could be hugely valuable assets to several UN peacekeeping operations. Indeed, until they were withdrawn, Ethiopia supplied UNAMID with five tactical helicopters since 2010. In Somalia, Ethiopian helicopters have operated outside of AMISOM. Ethiopia also has other specialized capabilities. For example, Ethiopia has provided UNAMID with a medium transport company, a multi-role logistics company and a number of staff officers. It has also provided a number of staff officers for the AMISOM Force Headquarters in Mogadishu since 2012. Ethiopia's other specialized capacity involves the ability to deploy female personnel. It is currently a leading contributor

of female peacekeepers to UN missions. In part, this is a result of relatively strong representation of women in the army.

Part 8: Further Reading

[Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy](#) (Addis Ababa: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, November 2002).

Haile Araya Amdemichael, [East African Crisis Response: Shaping Ethiopian Peace Force for Better Participation in Future Peace Operations](#) (MA Thesis Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey CA, 2006).

Abiy Hailu, "National Defence Force 21-year journey," [Ethiopian Herald](#), 26 May 2013.

[Helping to Enhance Africa's Peacekeeping Capacity](#) (Addis Ababa: UNDP, 29 July 2013).

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from IISS, *The Military Balance 2017* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2017).

² Armed Forces Spending is a country's annual total defense budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of active armed forces. Using figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2017*.

³ ONUB (Burundi), MINURCAT (Chad and Central African Republic), UNMIL (Liberia), UNOCI (Côte d'Ivoire), UNAMID (Sudan), UNMIS (Sudan), UNMISS (South Sudan), and UNISFA (Abyei, Sudan).

⁴ For summary information on Ethiopia's contribution in these and earlier deployments see Zeray Hailemariam (8 January 2016), [Ethiopia's contribution toward peacekeeping mission](#).

⁵ The author believes the ENDF force to be approximately 2,000 strong. Communication with Ethiopian foreign affairs political office, 8 November 2013.

⁶ Author's communication with Ethiopian diplomat, New York, 14 November 2013.

⁷ For example, "[Ethiopia: Liberians laud Ethiopian peacekeeping contingent](#)," *Ethiopian Herald*, 14 June 2006.

⁸ Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2005), p.444.

⁹ Author's communication with senior Ethiopian Foreign Affairs official, 28 October 2013.

¹⁰ ICG Report, Sudan: Regional Perspectives on the prospect of Southern Sudan Independence, May 2010, 12.

¹¹ Author's communication with senior Ethiopian Foreign Affairs official, Addis Ababa, 28 October 2013.

¹² Statement of Dr Tedros Adhanom, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the FDRE at the Reception Marking the Official Launching of Ethiopia's Bid to a Non-Permanent Seat of the UNSC 2017-2018 (29 February 2015), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Author's communication with an Ethiopian Federal Police Commander with experience in UN peacekeeping operations, Addis Ababa, 2 November 2013.