



# The Failures of Peacekeeping on the Ethiopian-Eritrean Border

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea and their recent effort in 2018 to bring peace and stability into the region. The entire globe celebrated this Peace Deal between the two nations in 2018 believing that it would bring forth sustainable peace. It has been two years later and the diplomatic relations between the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea have continued to be strong, but if these relations have been maintained, why have the terms of the peace deal not been fulfilled and some gains of the deal become reversed? This paper argues that the lack of a bottom-up approach that failed to include all major stakeholders resulted in the failure of this deal. It also argues that the lack of transparency, political instability, and institutional weaknesses within the region resulted in the lack of sustainable peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2018, Ethiopians excitedly dialed random phone numbers in the neighboring country of Eritrea just to hear the voices of strangers from the country for the first time in decades (Schemm, 2018). It was a time that marked the end of hostilities between the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea as brothers, mothers, sisters, and children who hadn't seen nor heard each other's voices were reunited as a result of the 2018 Ethiopian-Eritrean peace deal. However, this deal which brought forth a new era of hope and joy in the Horn of Africa was short-lived as all gains of the peace deal quickly shattered.

Prior to the Peace Deal, there was hostility that led to the militarization of the Ethiopia-Eritrea border situated along the Tigray region. Communication, trade, and travel was closed off between the two countries, and those living in the region were alienated from their families and friends as borders were created around them. However, this all changed when Abiy Ahmed Ali was appointed as the prime minister of Ethiopia in 2018 and he began creating reforms in the region, most notably signing a peace deal granting Eritrea the town of Badme. This deal demilitarized the borders and reunited Eritreans and Ethiopians, but shortly fell through after 2019. However, the diplomatic relations between the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea have continued to be strong since Ethiopia agreed to ratify the 2000 peace deal which ended the war between the two countries. If these relations have been maintained, why have the terms of the peace deal not been fulfilled and some gains of the deal become reversed?



Figure 1. The leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea

## Arguments

My argument is that this peace deal failed even though the offices of Prime Minister Ahmed Ali and President Isais Afewrki of Eritrea maintain strong bonds because there was no accountability or peace domestically within both countries and the deal did not include all major stakeholders. I make this argument by first discussing the top-down approach that failed to include TPLF in the peace deal. I then go on to make the argument that there was a lack of transparency within the deal and eventually go on to argue that the political instability and lack of institutional support within both countries caused the deal to falter. I finally end the paper by synthesizing these points that are providing suggestions on how to create peace between both nations.



Figure 2. Map of the Horn of Africa



Figure 3. Debretsion Gebremichael, leader of TPLF

## CONCLUSIONS

My argument analyzes the political dynamic between all stakeholders and looks at the current political dynamics of both countries to better situate and understand this Peace Deal, which is a new contribution to the field. As a policy proposal, I propose an international dialogue that brings together Prime Minister Ahmed Ali, the TPLF, and President Afwerki, and civilians in the Tigray region. This dialogue should be focused on ending the war, discussing the future of people caught up between the Ethiopian and Eritrean border, and concessions from all parties involved. A dialogue is necessary because there needs to be immediate deescalation of the political situation in Ethiopia before the violence becomes uncontrollable. This dialogue is also centered on the idea of a bottom-up approach. Finally, I propose that both nations begin democratic reforms by freeing political prisoners and allowing independent media to exist. This policy seems unattainable given the authoritative nature of both leaders, but the international community should come together to demand these reforms. If there is not stability, peace, and democracy within both countries, there will not be peace made across international borders. Through these policies, Ethiopia and Eritrea can bring forth a genuine era of peace and stability in the Horn of Africa that is not short lived.

## REFERENCES

1. ASIEDU, Michael. *DIPLOMACY, THE ERITREA-ETHIOPIA PEACE DEAL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS*. Global Political Trends Center (GPoT), 2019, [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep19344](https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep19344).
2. Al Jazeera. "Ethiopia, Eritrea Sign Peace Deal at Saudi Arabia Summit," September 17, 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/9/17/ethiopia-eritrea-sign-peace-deal-at-saudi-arabia-summit>. readable up to 3 feet away in a 24x48 poster, and up to 6 feet away in a 48x96 poster (file printed at 200%).