

# Persistent Challenges to Entirely Normalize Ethio-Eritrean Diplomatic Relations

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**Abstract:** After Eritrea became officially independent from Ethiopia on 24 May 1993, the diplomatic relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea was mainly a friendly and gentle one. Nevertheless, such harmonized honey moon relation was hampered by the 1998-2000 war and followed by 'no peace no war scenario' until 2018 rapprochement. Despite, to cover this study the researcher employed qualitative methodology. In so doing, purposive and snow ball sampling method was employed with exploratory design to collect the data. However, the rapprochement changed the gear of threat to the countries relationship and determined the 'no peace no war scenario' to 'yes peace no war scenario' road map. Yet, there is challenge which emanated from internal and external factors to abort the re-established relation which come with relief and prospect to both Ethiopia and Eritrea as well region of the Horn in whole. If the rapprochement is not carefully handled, there may be dynamic radical shift from the previous 'no peace no war frying pan to fire of another devastating war' in the volatile region of Horn (in Amharic 'keditu wode matu!') That is why the whole process has to be approached carefully, with due conscientiousness to compensate for and repair the political, economic, diplomatic and social fault-lines that exist at overall ends.

**Keywords:** Persistent Challenge, Diplomatic Relations, Cordial Relation, Rapprochement, Yes Peace No War, Keditu Wode Matu

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## 1. Introduction

The Ethio-Eritrean relation began at the state level after the official declaration of the independence of Eritrea on 24 May 1993. Following this, the newly established government in Eritrea, began practicing cordial relations with Ethiopia as a close partner. This was followed by the signing of the 1993 Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation that later formalized the relations between the two countries [1].

However, the relations between the two countries dramatically deteriorated in 1997 and in May 1998, the two years border war flared up around the Badme area, with small scale clashes between Ethiopian militia and the patrols of the Eritrean army [2]. However, this honey moon relationship didn't last long. The fighting ended in June 2000 after Ethiopian forces dislodged Eritrean forces from border positions. Despite the Algiers Agreement of December 2000, Ethiopia and Eritrea relation can be described as neither in peace nor in war for decades [3].

Ethiopia has had a history of both friendship and hostile

relation with the surrounding countries of the Horn of Africa, and there is a risk of being guided by emotion in assessing the value of our neighbors. From among Ethiopians neighbors, the closest historical and cultural ties they have are with Eritrea. Ethiopian foreign policy with Eritrea should take into consideration our medium- and long-term development strategies and basic national interests [4].

In Ethiopia, the government has survived the potential reputational damage of its failure to comply with the 2002 Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) ruling. However, the communities along the border region have been divided, cutting long-standing economic and familial linkages and increasing vulnerability for some populations. In Eritrea, the loss of access to Ethiopian markets has been compounded with an insular economic policy framework, leading to a period of economic stagnation [5]. Economically it is obvious that both states and their respective people especially those living near the borders are so impacted by the situation to the extent that they cannot even imagine their previous trade relations to be returned. Despite, especially

borders areas of both countries were harmed and face stagnant economy followed by migration of the young for work [6].

It is undeniable hence that, the absence of interdependence and cooperative relation between the two countries largely was affected economic and political development of the countries [1].

Remarkably, the political reform which formed in Ethiopia not only changed the platform for political arena but also came with new policy bearing towards Eritrea which antagonizing the former Ethiopian strategic and security foreign policy towards Eritrea. The Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed and the Eritrean president Isayas Afwerki they signed “Joint Deceleration of Peace and Friendship” at Asmara on July 8, 2018 [7].

However, for two former antagonistic states to become friends and reach peace to extend the peace, they not only need to overcome security dilemma, but also to go through a process of reconciliation. In recent years, reconciliation and normalization has emerged as an important area of inquiry in international relations [8]. As reference [9] stated, rapprochement between these two states can give them a chance of fighting their overwhelming economic and political problems. In fact, the problems are still there, and yet, there are unsolved problems of political, social, cultural and economic problems of un-institutionalized and legalized practice for booming the two countries relation.

Therefore, this study emphasized to examine the challenges to the contemporary diplomatic relation between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Hence, the general objective of this study is to assess the firing challenges which hindering to make stable and sustainable diplomatic relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The general objective of this study is to assess the persistent challenges to entirely normalize diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The study was employed qualitative research methodology. Along this line, the exploratory research approach was employed to cover the absence or rarity of earlier studies. While, the researcher determined the sample size by using purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques were used in this study. The rationale of using purposive sampling is to reasonably identify which key informants have closer connection and knowledge to the issue under the study. Despite, snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is used by researchers to identify potential subjects in studies until obtaining sufficient number of subjects where hard to locate.

Accordingly, the researcher purposively selected the informants who are the known experience, knowledge in the issue and closeness to the problem from the total population of the study area. Hence, the respondents purposively have chosen from the total population of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA),

Ethiopian Foreign Relations and Strategic Studies Institute (EFRSSI) and Ethiopian Maritime Authority Affairs (EMAA). Therefore, the researcher conducted in-depth interview purposively with selected officials from MoFA one, one from EFRSSI and two from EMAA respectively. However, the total numbers of higher official interviewed were accounted four.

In addition, snowball sampling technique was used to collect the data through indicating the key informant experts that have closer connection and knowledge to the issue under the study was selected from Ministry of Trade (MoT), Ethiopian Culture, Tourism and Sport Minister (ECTSM), Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC), and from Wazema Promotion and Event Organizer (this chosen purposely because they are working to socialize the peace process by using media and advocacy diplomacy) were the selected one. However, the researcher conducted the key-informant interview with one expert from MoT, one expert from ECTSM and one expert from EIC and one from Wazema Promotion and Event organizer. Further, extra interview was held with one academicians and researcher on the issue from Center for Dialogue and Research Center (CDRC) totally five in number informants interviewed through snow ball sampling technique. All the samples were selected purposively and snow ball technique method, in which the researcher identified respondents who were believed to be an appropriate person to provide reliable information. Generally, total key informant interviews held with nine selected informants from total population of selected eight institutions.

As a typical feature, the researcher used both primary and secondary sources of data to conduct this study. Primary data is empirical data gathered and collected by the researchers himself, whereas secondary data is a data that has been collected from previous studies by others in the academic literature. Moreover, the researcher analyzed data according to thematic area, content, and crosschecked and triangulated data which obtained from interviewees by secondary sources.

## 3. Result and Discussion

This analysis and discussion parts deals with the re-established Ethio- Eritrean diplomatic relation mainly discussing on the issues of the challenges to sustainable normalization of the relation and overviewing the challenging factors to make sustainable normalized diplomatic relationship. However, analyses in this section are supported by data collected through key informant interviews and document analysis in the triangulation form.

### 3.1. Challenges to Sustainable Normalization of Diplomatic Relation

According to Abebe Aynete Research Director at EFRSSI argued about the challenge as:

*Solving the problem and forgiving the problem are not the same. Therefore, without solving of the entire problem to their relation from the base, there is no guaranty to what thing happen is uncertain (March 21, 2019). Additionally, the*

*perspective of the problem at the level of either government or people of both Eritrea and Ethiopia is not the same. This means the stance and attitude of the people who live at Badme and or citizen live at every corner of the country is not the same and every citizen should have to come to the same consideration of the problem was solved Abebe said.*

As such Fikru stated about the challenge as the following:

*There is high level ministerial commission which established to normalize the relationship but, yet what they did and what they are going to do is unknown and there is also transparency problem in the process of normalization (interview March 11, 2019).*

However, there is no doubt that Ethiopia deserves the bulk of the credit for initiating the accord with Eritrea [10]. But definitely, there are many challenges that both Ethiopia and Eritrea face which must be resolved to the promises of the rapprochement are come accurate. There are three dimensions of challenges to the rapprochement which the researcher finds out. The first challenge could come from domestic challenge within Ethiopia and Eritrea, while the second could stem from the relation between Ethiopia and Eritrea itself and the third one is the challenge face from external actors.

### **3.2. Domestic Challenges**

#### **3.2.1. Unstable National Political Situation in Ethiopia**

Do the first things first! The domestic situation of both countries requires that both countries fulfill their obligations, first and foremost in ensuring peace and security between the two countries [11]. Because, Ethiopia's foreign relations policy has come about with due consideration of the impact on internal problems and the risks it has posed to their national security and well-being [4].

Therefore, in terms of the domestic challenge, Ethiopia needs to address its internal conflicts. Despite the change of leadership, there was rest and anticipation of a national settlement, but unrest continued under the new Prime Minister again. There are several reasons for this. First, young people leading protests wanted to see rapid change in many areas. In this regard, they were unsure of how determined the new Prime Minister was and how far he was able to push for change, so keeping pressure was one way to ensure the continued progress of the reforms. Second, within the ruling party, there is no consensus on how to deal with the world there are many challenges. Teams within and outside the EPRDF disagree on how much power should be devolved to state districts and, as Abiy avoids taking office, regional leaders compete for greater independence, often under pressure from ethnic hardliners [12].

Reference [13] argued the current situation in Ethiopia and their non-collaboration of ruling parties as:

*The former forces that losing the power because of the changes are still determined to show last-ditch resistance and seem they are provoking and exploiting inter-ethnic cleavages. Nonetheless, the TPLF tried to exploit the continuation of the unrest saying it is the outcome of lawlessness, violation of the constitution and dislocation of*

*national institutions. The TPLF accused the Federal government of violation of constitution in sending the federal army to the regional disturbance of the security situation in the Somalia region briefly. The four coalition parties of the EPRDF convened their respective congress as a prelude to the EPRDF 11<sup>th</sup> Congress. While the three introduced fundamental changes with regard to their programme, policy, leadership, even changing names, the TPLF did not demonstrate any inclination of introducing meaningful changes. As long as the rift is not settled, bringing either internal unity or going separate ways, the ruling party will remain instable, which constitutes a challenge to the rapprochement.*

Thirdly, many Ethiopians are intolerant of change. Social violence is spreading at an unprecedented rate in the last quarter-century. Race troops are increasing. There was chaos and death in all parts of the world [12]. As mentioned in [11], there are also new emerging challenges regarding the rise of populism, and these have emphasized racial diversity. Relations between the Amhara and Tigray regions are at an all-time high, and the Union Government, which in any case has made relations difficult with the latter, has not been instrumental in reducing tensions. In this regard, the situation in Ethiopia has continued to cause some concern. More people have been expelled since the change of leadership than ever before as a result of racially motivated conflicts, and Ethiopia now has a negative impact on holding more IDPs than any other country in the world (ibid).

Fourthly, relations between the State Government and certain provinces have been strained, and if not handled properly, they could easily jeopardize national stability. The ruling party, the EPRDF, looks weak, and it is unclear how realistic it would be to find a new foundation to hold the country together. Undoubtedly the new world leadership is very popular and could serve the country well for a while. But this will only have long-term benefits if it leads to the establishment of a world government.

Abebe further argued that:

*There is no game of rule to govern the militant and unregistered political party who entered from exile by the invitation of the government, but they conspiring the current situation of the country explicitly to succeed on their motive. In general, the people intention for justice, equitable national benefit and the identity and administrative questions which come after following the reform in Ethiopia challenging the federal government in one way or another (March 21, 2019).*

Still, peace is always a factor in all situations. Moreover, as stated in [10], Eritrea's intentions for peace remain equally skeptical about Ethiopia, as it can be said to contribute to the ongoing domestic instability in Ethiopia. Whatever the excuse, if the ongoing peace process in any way conflicts with the political changes in Ethiopia, the costs can be huge. Ethiopia must first renovate its home and approach any attempt at peace in harmony of common sense and ideology, first for the sake of the nation and then for the small region, thus completely. All of this, therefore, has put the government system under tremendous pressure. There is a lot

of work to be expected in the new leadership, with great public support, despite Ethiopia's foreign policy which is always embedded in the country's internal driving environment.

### 3.2.2. Lack of Legal Framework and Institutionalization

According to the argument of [14, 15], many people are cautioning that the post-independence experience should not be repeated. As noted in chapter three, even though, after independence the state to state relations were formalized with the signing of a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation on 13 July 1993. Since then, various ministerial meetings were held and around 25 protocol agreements were concluded to regulate their bilateral relations and to harmonize their economies and seemingly maintain peace and stability in the Horn of Africa [16].

However, [16] stated about the lack of legality and institutional basement as:

*Post-secession Ethio-Eritrean relations declined due to the fact that the agreements signed and relations formed between the two countries were not well institutionalized and the willingness to act accordingly was non-existent and the other reasons that the post-independence relation between Eritrea and Ethiopia collapsed is because it was based on the interest of individual leaders (2014: 32).*

Reference [13] shared this idea and argued as:

*It was not anchored on institutions, open and transparent principles and guideline. In order not to repeat the same mistakes in implementing the current agreements the modalities of application should be based on national institutions (legislative, judiciary), popular awareness and participation, as well as principles of transparency, accountability, jurisdiction and conventionality. Personally, based relations and applications in the past contributed to the disastrous war of 1998-2000.*

Furthermore, Belete and Abebe shared this idea and stated that:

*All recent agreements of rapprochement will abort unless lack of political commitment and strong legal framework and institution were formulated that take care of the agreement in this dynamic HoA region. Despite, the relationship between the governments was not institutionalized yet and they have to sign the agreements immediately with full implementation programme (interview March 19, 2019).*

Unless concrete institutional frameworks are put in place, the immediate future will continue to be full of hurdles, with the grave possibility of another round of tension. Both Ethiopia and Eritrea should recognize that they are in this together sink or swim and hence it remains incumbent on both governments to understand the issues that create misunderstandings and protect these from being used by others to sow seeds of discord [17].

In a striking parallel, the current process of intimacy is dominated by a public discourse in Ethiopia that emphasizes certain cords based on emotional appeal, a reference to cultural and historical bonds, and the stories of a common future. As happened in July 1993, the lack of clear clouds in

the recent agreement [10].

Although stated in [18], in the delay of signing and applying upon agreements:

*Due to the lack of work of the formal structure and concerns of alleged illegal activities, the border of the entire Zalambessa-Serihe, Humera-Omhajiran, Dibaiyisma-Bure and Adihuwala-Rama corridors was closed. Since the closure of the border, no one from the Ethiopian side has been allowed to enter Eritrea and similarly, the Eritrean government does not grant its citizens permits to cross the border into Ethiopia there to cross the border for anyone who has applied for an official Certificate. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the reopening of the board has resulted in a maximum number of refugees entering Ethiopia daily from 53 to 390 people and as of September 27, 500 Eritreans have been registered at the Ndabagun Reception Center. and Afar Region and others seeking asylum.*

### 3.2.3. The Border People Perspective and Stance Both at Ethiopia and Eritrea

Since [10] Bulletin narrative, when (and if) the boundary is demarcated, this could lead to further disputes because some communities will be divided as the Irob community near Alitena opposing the hope of becoming Eritreans, and in contrast to the Saho people living near Tsorona who oppose and the hope of being Ethiopia. It should be possible to find democratic solutions, for example by local referendums (ibid). People who thought they were citizens of one country might find themselves in another country. This may result in a strong reaction, unless both sides show flexibility and sensitivity [19].

As discussed in Chapter Three, ever since the EEBC approved Badme's decision in Eritrea, Ethiopia has struggled and anticipated a ceasefire on the grounds that Ethiopia opposed the commission's decision that its embarrassment stemmed from local authenticity, people and place. Even though Ethiopia has now agreed to accept the full implementation of the EEBC decision, Ethiopia stated that for a long time the commission's decision did not take into account the person's personal and physical condition and that the decision was wrong and illegal [20].

Based on this fact Ojige and Abebe argued that,

*The Irob people claiming government for the change of its former stance and showing their opposition by the demonstration of 'we are Ethiopians not Eritreans' again 'Badme is for Ethiopia not for Eritrea' according to (interview with, March 21, 2019). The negotiation should be based on the interest of the people of the two countries. "Since this is a national issue particularly the re-adjustment of border and territories would directly affect people who are using those territories and should be consulted as well as part of the process," (interview with March 21, 2018).*

Eritrea's opposition political parties, therefore, argued that, the closeness does not involve public consultation or involvement that involves questioning the legitimacy of the peace process. Those living along the border should be

involved [10].

### 3.2.4. The Implementation Approach of Border Commission Decision

Perhaps most importantly, the border would be divided. This will not be an easy task [19]. Belete stated that: “without demarcation of the boundaries which was the great question for the countries enmity, considering of the countries fully restored diplomatic relations will be under questions?” This was in fact an offer which was on the table for some time, but which was difficult to implement perhaps because there was a critical element missing trust (interview March 19, 2019).

According to Abebe, before solving the cause for the enmity between the two countries of Badme and boundary issue, striving to the other economic and political integration can describe in Amharic as *‘kim yizo tselot sal yizo sirqot ayihonim’* the meaning is ‘it’s impossible to pray with disappointment and stealing with cough!’ (Interview March 21, 2019). Therefore, the problem must have first of all solved! Badme’s future and the prospects of other specific localities soon became argumentative points, delaying implementation of the Algiers Agreement. So even now, implementing the Boundary Commission’s decision is not going to be easy, though not impossible given the determination of the new Ethiopian leadership, and the demands of the people living alongside the common border according to [17].

However, the TPLF stands in stark contrast to Ethiopia and Eritrea. They hold to their traditional position that the boundary issue can only be resolved through negotiations between local people affected by the border design. The challenge is great as long as the TPLF continues to refuse the implementation of the boundary decision according to [13].

Instead of signing and declaring a joint peace and friendship agreement the two leaders did not discuss any details about the border design process [10]. However, as noted in Chapter 3, the EEBC awarded Eritrea Badme. The Claims Commission on the other hand has designated Eritrea as the perpetrator who started the border conflict by attacking Ethiopia in Badme, which was controlled by Ethiopia. The findings of both Commissions are, in fact, contradictory. However, the decision of the claims commission has not been implemented and this dispute will have raised its controversy at the time of implementation.

### 3.2.5. The Assertive Foreign Policy Framework of Ethiopia Towards Eritrea

As stated at the Reporter News:

*The foreign policy of Ethiopia was introduced after the war with Eritrea. Because of this the document clearly states about the negative role of Eritrean government and some positive scenario of cooperation between the two countries. After mentioning positive scenarios, the policy document concludes its statement saying “the maximal policy we will pursue regarding Eritrea will come into play where the regime or its policies have been changed...this scenario [positive scenario] can only see the light of day if fundamental change comes to Eritrea”. This policy of*

*Ethiopia is not a proactive policy. Rather it is reactive, and goes in accordance with the regime in Asmara. Now, with the change in the government of Ethiopia, the new Prime Minister of Ethiopia came with new action which opposes the written policy regarding Eritrea and he also suggesting the policy should be proactive towards Eritrea. This may be a novel concept regarding Eritrea and it affords to change the policy (May 10, 2019).*

However, the decreed and working policy framework of Ethiopia has not changed yet, practically based on legal policy amendment procedure which arguing of Eritrea regime as a challenge to normalize relation, but the approach of government in Ethiopia were changed towards Eritrea explicitly (interview with Ojige, 17 March 2019).

In view of all of this and as some of the fundamental ideas on which the 2002 foreign policy document was based, there is a need for a comprehensive review of this document and a new look at what is stated in this document on Ethiopian relations. and many countries, including Eritrea, Egypt, Sudan and a number of other countries. As we now focus only on Eritrea, that interaction continues in an acceptable manner, but with a little consideration in the context in which the relationship is to be governed and the institutional and legal basis for this unique yet interdependent two states. may be influenced by the concept of inter-provincial relations [21].

As noted in Chapter Two, the changes in Ethiopia are a major factor, and their experiences have an impact on Ethiopia. Ethiopia is closed, while all neighbors have ports that can provide services. Ethiopia needs to consider strong ties with our neighbors and articulate appropriate policy for them [4]. However, in contrast, Ethiopia's foreign policy stated that at the moment, neighboring countries do not have a positive or negative impact on our economic development. They do not value the port service and the single danger that would arise if they could work together to prevent Ethiopia from using their ports or if they would reduce the efficiency of ports (ibid: 58-59).

Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter Two, Eritrea-based policy is emotional and discriminatory rather than co-operative and regional integration. Ethiopian Strategic Foreign Policy has identified the Eritrean ruling party for decades as a barrier to friendly relations and operations to seek employment and hold others hostage. The imposition of a complaint and a critical comment on the Eritrean-based policy framework served as an Ethiopian foreign policy in relation to Eritrea itself created ambiguity and inconsistency with its approach to Eritrea. That is clearly demonstrated by FDRE Foreign Affairs and the National Security Policy and Strategy as a means of integrating and opposing international relations. Although it disputes the Eritrean market impact on the Ethiopian economy it is small, at least in the near future. The same is true of investment and finance. However, Eritrean ports are more suitable for Ethiopia, especially in the northern and central parts of the country, than other ports (ibid: 64). Although foreign policy differs in some respects on the importance of relations, on the other hand it implies an inappropriate way of questioning the peer of the state due to

hostility. All in all, it is necessary to review the Ethiopian foreign policy framework towards Eritrea.

### **3.2.6. The Continual Grievance of People Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) and Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF)**

According to a statement [19], the TPLF, which was strong in Ethiopian politics until the election of Prime Minister Abiy in February, has been set aside. It was their conflict with the Eritrean government that led to the 1998-2000 border war. Eritrean authorities are pleased with the outcome. "From this day forward, the TPLF as a political party is dead," said the official website, describing the organization as a "zombie" whose soul was imprisoned in hell ". Such a complaint is not appropriate if the dispute is resolved. Therefore, the President of Eritrea said, "The game is over!" what you say and what it means is obvious due to the long-running complaint with the TPLF and the situation analysis as it has changed (interview with Yaregal, March 13, 2019).

As Abebe and Belete argued that,

*When Eritrea public diplomacy team came to Ethiopia as we saw, the effort to normalize the people to people diplomacy by jumping the near and neighbor people making diplomacy with peoples whom live far at Hawassa, Adama, Bahirdar and Addis Ababa have implicit implication of grievance as continued. As the saying of 'Keruki wodaji Yekirbi Gorebet Yishalal' in Amharic which means 'from the far relative the nearest neighbor is better!' but the truth is reverse. However, the current deal involves a "three-player game" between not just Eritrea and Ethiopia but also Ethiopia's federal government and the Tigray regional state. That region borders Eritrea, and some of its residents and political representatives feel they have been excluded from the process that's unfolding (interview March 19, 2019).*

### **3.2.7. Eritrea's Internal Risks and Dividends**

According to the statement [11], the domestic situation in Eritrea is very tense. It is no secret that the country is still building institutions. Its internal conditions have not been adjusted. That it has management problems is obvious. So it's hard to risk guessing what might happen as we move forward. One thing is certain: Eritrea needs to be more careful so that peace and stability in the country do not endanger it.

According to the 2019 Human Rights Watch report, all 18-year-olds are registered for national service. National service is not the only reason why thousands, including unaccompanied minors, flee Eritrea every month but it remains a major factor. About 15 percent of the population have fled since the 1998 war. After the opening of the Eritrean-Ethiopian border, the number of Eritrean refugees, especially minority migrants, increased dramatically, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [22]. The state of affairs in Eritrea was tense, with little progress in the economic and political spheres. Internal crises, too, have caused tremendous losses of the population, especially the youth, in the process of changing the country's constitution [17].

As Abebe argued, Eritrea's political development stalled, the people still faced all kinds of poverty and the ruling government strongly opposed reforms and reforms (March 21, 2019). One of the most important factors in achieving lasting peace will be the implementation of a comprehensive list of political and economic changes. The countless human rights abuses committed in Eritrea over the past 27 years are unforgettable as a result of the peace agreement, and those responsible must be held accountable [10].

But so far there is no indication that the constitution drafted in 1997 could be passed. While the Eritrean government can now set aside the common good of the people that peace has finally come to avoid a real deal, failure to create responsive government bodies will not correct the deterioration in relations between the majority of Eritreans and Eritreans. world leadership. Without such internal reforms, the high migration rates of the Eritrean people are less likely to decline, and its border and security will remain high on the agenda from the Eritrean side (ibid: 25). Although, Eritrea still has to hold elections in the country at the local or national level and end the arrests caused by the conflict with Ethiopia. These omissions will affect the way Ethiopia and Eritrea engage [17].

Therefore, maintaining strong peace and friendship between Eritrea and Ethiopia will require democratic regime in Eritrea as well. Peaceful and friendly relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia will pave the way and create an enabling environment for both the people and the people of Eritrea, in particular, to focus on the complex challenges of domestic governance: the immediate implementation of the Constitution. 1997 Constitution is ratified; the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and detained citizens; the restoration of the terms and conditions of the national service in accordance with the 1995 Declaration; the opening of the political, economic and social sphere of the country etc. [23].

### **3.2.8. The Stance of Opposition Parties in Eritrea**

According to Belete, the Eritrean opposition party claiming Badme claimed 'we fought for Badme and Ethiopia' as opposed to another internal conflict (interview March 19, 2019). On the other hand, members of the Eritrean opposition party and opponents of the government as a whole seem surprised and have so far reacted reluctantly or even expressed a negative attitude towards the peace agreement between Asmara and Addis Ababa. This is a bit surprising, because the closeness between the two countries will reduce the ineffective policies in Eritrea such as national services, postponing national elections and non-compliance with the constitution [10]. However, it seems that the opposition figures and opponents of the government generally do not expect positive changes from the recent developments due to the arguments that:

First: The current government in Eritrea as an unelected government has no obligation to make peace. Intimacy does not include public consultation or involvement that casts doubt on the legitimacy of the peace process. Those living

along the border should be involved, but so far, the two leaders have not yet discussed details about the design of the border. A related dispute questions the effectiveness of the proximity as Eritrean opposition parties and civil society organizations in the Diaspora have not participated and / or have not been contacted about the process.

Second: The current closeness could lead to Eritrea's national interests and monarchy being severely tarnished in the form of treaties pertaining to Eritrea's use of Eritrean ports of Assab and Massawa and statements referring to both nations as 'one people', disrespecting national heritage, martyrs for the liberation struggle.

Third: Peace will strengthen government in politics, economics and communications. Things will not change inside Eritrea peacefully and people will not benefit. Sawa [the infamous military training camp] is still alive and well. The current government in Eritrea will benefit economically, as has happened in the Bisha mine; money does not go to people.

Fourth: Conflict border design is also associated with the risk that open borders may allow uncontrolled entry of immigrants from Ethiopia, while many Eritreans leave their country.

Fifth: Some Eritrean Scattered People also claim that the most important basis for the current closeness is the temporary political exploitation to weaken the common enemy of the Eritrean government and the administration of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy through the TPLF and Tigray state status. However, the potential failure of compulsory management over medium to long distances jeopardizes the stability of intimacy. Either Eritrea must bring about a radical change in all aspects of the governance and human rights index or in some way delay the implementation of the peace agreement with Ethiopia (ibid: 38).

### ***3.3. The Challenges Which Innate from the Relation of Ethiopia and Eritrea***

As mentioned [19], in the Isayas government in Eritrea, a change brought about is also a threat. Peace will mean eliminating any threat to national security in order to postpone the implementation of fundamental freedoms. If tens of thousands of recruited people, trapped in a permanent national service, are allowed to return home, what jobs await them? When will the country be a viable constitution, free elections, independent media and judges? Many political prisoners have been detained for years without a trace. Will they now be released?

He therefore [13] asserted that, as the Ethiopian-Eritrean war the Eritrean government reorganized the conflict situation with Ethiopia and other neighboring countries. Now that the dispute has been resolved, the government urgently needs to deal with domestic problems. The most prominent of these domestic issues that need to be addressed urgently are: national work, prisoners, the national constitution, national elections, the functioning of the legislature and the people inside Eritrea will demand an end to the system of forced labor that has existed since 2002. there are no longer

endless excuses for these basic questions. Unless these problems are resolved quickly, the outcome of the relationship between the two regions could be detrimental. Another challenge is the huge economic asymmetry and demographics. Ethiopian rule over Eritrea twenty times in tandem with the huge economic gap is a real change in economic integration unless it is properly controlled (ibid).

The challenge of intimacy is likely to stem from economic policy differences between the two provinces. In the papers they have signed so far, they have expressed their desire to integrate the economy. In the Peace, Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement, Phase Three, it states that 'Both countries will develop Joint Investment Projects, including the establishment of Special Economic Zones' (17 September 2018). However, the biggest challenges they will face are differences of opinion. There is a clear trend in the Ethiopian government that it is following the neoliberal economic policy of secrecy of key state-owned economic institutions and the establishment of industries such as Ethiopian Airlines. Eritrean government policy, on the other hand, is often described as a socialist and is guided by the idea of national liberation where shared interest, equitable distribution of resources, economic policy based on justice and equality, closing the gap between rural and urban areas are given priority. It is also accompanied by integrated ownership of essential economic resources. These two economic divisions of government require reconciliation [13]. In fact, once they start implementing economic agreements, they will face complete challenges. However, political freedoms and remedial measures taken in Ethiopia will also hamper relations.

Those who hope that the recent peace will lead to some form of democracy within Eritrea may be disappointed. Although some minor steps have been taken by the Eritrean side in liberating mainly prisoners of religion and national service [10]. But human beings need absolute economic, social, political, democratic and human rights. Eritrean activists and opposition groups argued that although the July proclamation contained anything that sounded unacceptable to Eritrea's future democratically elected government, it was important that the two countries' peace be accompanied by internal change (ibid: 32).

### ***3.4. External Factor***

#### ***3.4.1. Unplugged Regional States Destabilization***

Mekonen asserted that international and regional dynamics affect positive or negative regional stability (March 12, 2019). However, the political situation, peace and security in the Horn of Africa is yet to be resolved. Surprisingly, given the development in the region, no province in the Province can claim that their peace and security is guaranteed in a sustainable manner. Of the eight IGAD member states, those that could be considered as part of the Horn of Africa are Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. Of these six countries half, i.e., three (Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia) are at different levels of stress and persistent levels of difficulty [11]. As Kewi notes, if the regional



political situation is not secure, foreign investors will not come to invest (interview March 08, 2019).

In the context of [11], it is not yet clear whether the foundation for lasting peace and security is laid on the Horn of Africa. This is in part due to the magnitude of the security challenges that the region has faced. The situation in Somalia must take some time before it can stabilize. The Somali-based Al-Shabaab group demonstrates its power to create chaos in the country and beyond. Regionally, the disturbing impact from across the Red Sea has continued to be a hindrance to the recovery process in Somalia. South Sudan, on the other hand, will still be fully restored. And it is difficult to predict the outcome of the ongoing protests in Sudan, highlighting how fragile the Horn of Africa is. After the ouster of the President of Sudan, an emergency was declared but countries were required to see firsthand the outcome of the transition period to complete peace (ibid: 9).

The regional impacts of Ethiopia-Eritrea diplomatic thaw also need serious consideration. Feelings have been instilled in Djibouti, Sudan and Egypt. One has to point out that the Djibouti-Eritrea border dispute is still unresolved rather than both countries' willingness to resolve it, the Great Lakes Rebuilding of Ethiopia, the ongoing border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan, to name just a few points with regional implications. [10]. Therefore, the situation in South Sudan requires special vigilance.

#### **3.4.2. The Stance of IGAD and Weak Implementation Power**

Restoring Eritrea to the region is helpful. However, the situation in Eritrea, for the most part, has contributed to the current situation of IGAD and a re-examination of the challenges will successfully resolve one of the regional organizational barriers. Unfortunately, no concrete action has been taken to reunite Eritrea with Eritrea, while Eritrea and IGAD. Is this because member states are unwilling to reinstate Eritrea as a member or because Eritrea has no interest in repatriation? It is expected that IGAD will decide whether Eritrea will rejoin the club has not been confirmed, and no talks were scheduled during the last extraordinary meeting of the IGAD Council of Ministers in Addis Ababa. Instead, the emphasis was on three-way meetings between the leaders of Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. But the challenge is that Eritrea may not be interested in joining IGAD at the moment. That is why it should be carefully considered in the assessment of the situation associated with the current realities of the sub-region [17].

According to Belete, the vision of IGAD does not work after the Eritrean war with Ethiopia and now calls for the work of all party members in solidarity and standing (interview March 19, 2019). However, the credibility, importance and effectiveness of IGAD should be further enhanced by the continued restoration of Eritrea but the inevitable, which is expected to be announced at the 33<sup>rd</sup> IGAD provincial heads of state and government meeting in Addis Ababa [24].

The challenges in the sub-region are reflected in the

implementation of IGAD, which is strong. A promising regional business with great potential for promoting and organizing international peace, development and co-operative efforts has been weakened, leaving a shell that can pick up fragments and build a co-operative framework. IGAD has become a platform where member states engage in non-essential activities for sustainable peace, security and regional integration but instead limited efforts to address non-essential issues driven by funding and donor agendas. Fear, inefficiency and the laissez-faire approach to sensitive issues have become a relatively new phenomenon [17].

#### **3.4.3. The Contest of Super Powers Rivalry Around the Red Sea and Their Interest in the Region**

The Horn Region finds itself in the midst of an international competition, with positive implications for all. This race obviously creates challenges as well as opportunities. Creating bilateral programs to address challenges and improve opportunities is the task of leadership in Addis Ababa and Asmara [17]. As Secretary General Guterres recently stated:

The challenge is compounded by the tensions that we have seen around the world, and the global conflict is far more serious than the conflicts between the superpowers during the Cold War. With regard to the current tensions, one may speak further on the South China Sea. Also, Djibouti's presence in both US and China imports may have already caused some controversy, and largely because of the United States' view of threatening its own interests [11].

The impact of this, unless handled carefully, will be major security issues. It is very difficult to predict how and when suspicion can develop into a disagreement or confrontation.

According to [25], the military incitement of the Horn region and south of the Red Sea has already affected commercial trade and threatened freedom of movement as many states established competing military positions. Russia and China are also increasing their influence in the Horn of Africa, and the merger of Ethiopia and Eritrea will likely accelerate this trend. Eritrea, emerging from secession, will seek to establish strategic alliances with regions that will not compromise its mandate. It recently approved the construction of a Russian naval base, as part of Russia's broader effort to establish strategic military bases in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

However, Ethiopia did not declare a side to the Gulf crisis. Instead, it recently developed relations with Doha, and Al-Jazeera reopened an office in Addis Ababa. It is not clear whether Ethiopia wants to get involved in that crisis. Therefore, an important indication that the Emirati-led regional security mandate is emerging would be a clear signal from Ethiopia to join the alliance, and to reduce ties with Doha. Turkey is one of the most important investors in Ethiopia, which also opposes such an outcome [10].

However, the seemingly superior Saudis and Emiratis are protected from regional conflicts by the Turkish and Qatari interests, with similar interests and stakes (ibid: 39). The effects of the Qatari crisis have had far-reaching economic



and financial implications for the provinces in the Horn of Africa, where we have seen an impact tournament between the Gulf States and Turkey. Saudi Arabia and the UAE see the Horn of Africa as a good opportunity to develop their skills in the Gulf of Aden to support operations in Yemen. Turkey separates Saudi Arabia and the UAE from priorities in the Horn of Africa: instead of expanding its military presence in the region, Turkey's strategy includes a combination of large investments and trade agreements, with the hope of improving its regional economic competitiveness. Qatar is closely associated with Turkey and prioritizes the humanitarian response to the Somali drought. In the long run, all four countries are looking to fight Iran's goal of expanding its military capabilities in the region [26].

These modern statistics for the struggle for Africa are intensifying. Significant increases in the expansion of foreign troops in the African Province coincided with the growth of economic competitiveness in the region in 2017. China,

Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates have opened war bases everywhere over the past two years. The region is important for these provinces for a variety of reasons: to protect the naval routes in the Bab al Mandab Strait, to draw closer to the ongoing conflict in Yemen, and the desire to unite forces in the region with rivals including the United States. Djibouti is popular for a number of reasons, including its proximity to major naval routes across the Bab al Mandab Strait and the Suez Canal. In addition, the new Chinese presence in Djibouti and major Western powers such as the United States, France, Spain, and Italy demonstrates its goal of maintaining military power by reaching out to the rest of the world. The Emirati operation in Yemen depends on the Djibouti base. The UAE has invested heavily in Eritrea since mid-2015. Emirati troops are now operating from the Assab base in Eritrea and small outlying areas on the Yemeni islands of Socatra and Perim [26].

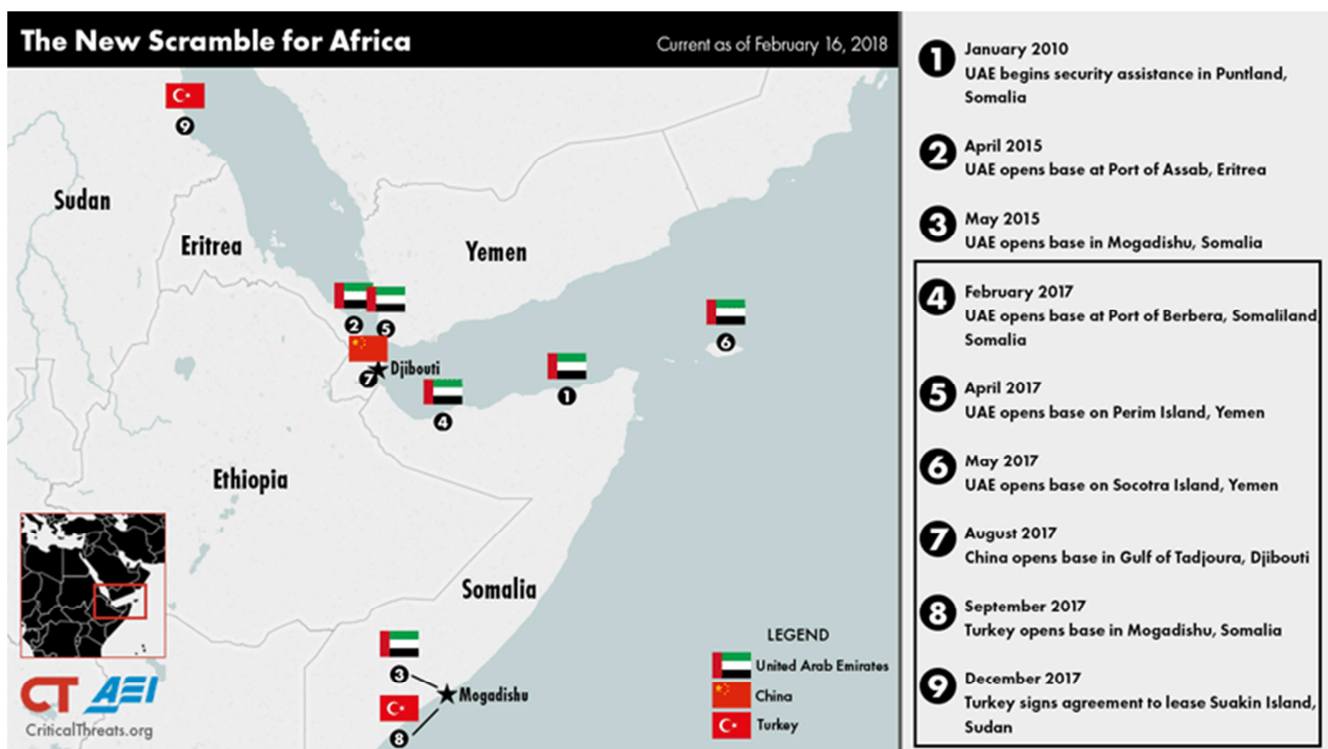


Figure 1. The super powers scramble to the Horn of Africa [27].

However, it is not yet clear whether the Eritrean-Ethiopian alliance fits in well with this pattern. Eritrea - along with other coastal provinces in the Province - has actually partnered with the Saudi-Emirati regional security alliance, and the Emirati military base established in Assab, as part of operations in Yemen. Asmara also cut ties with Doha (by influencing the withdrawal of Qatari troops from the disputed Eritrea-Djibouti border) [10]. Strange as it may seem, though, this scenario may provide a clue to what the future holds. Although, anything that happens between the two US states and China is lacking in what could destroy the region in different ways. Lessons from the 1977-1978 war between Ethiopia and Somalia are important here (ibid: 2).

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The people of Ethiopia and Eritrea will not only mean that they are historically close, but also share demographics, culture, language, lifestyle, governance, economic and ancestral roots among each other. However, the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea have suffered greatly as a result of the Ethiopian-Eritrean war and the state of 'peace without war'. The determination of the two countries to redouble their conflict after a quarter of a century that did not succeed in the international community's efforts to manage common conflicts and solutions to the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict was

good news for a region known for war and conflict. However, successful negotiations have eliminated the dark animosity that has sealed the two countries' relations over the past 25 years.

Undoubtedly, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea played a major role in the strained relations between the provinces, while now their reconciliation as a major source of regional integration and reconciliation. However, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea not only arises from the hopes of the countries affected by the unrest, there is no conflict in the province and a region known for conflict, war and security but also a challenge that can disrupt normal relations. If we are treated carefully and this situation creates a different situation in the future. However, ongoing dialogue at the leadership level is the key to reconciliation because of the context played by leaders such as warlords or peacemakers.

However, the unconnected internal situation of both countries and the fierce regional and international competition of the Horn of Africa Dynamism make the state of intimacy under question a certainty for the future of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Therefore, the whole issue involves a careful review of the benefits of intimacy and peace, both long-term and short-term, in both Ethiopia and Eritrea. Although, there is no doubt that there are gray areas that still need to be screened. However, the challenge that can affect bilateral relations is not just a border issue and a global issue, but a political and economic crisis driving its relations. Therefore, before any future economic and political integration takes place between the two countries, the regions should primarily focus on solving the political problem and the boundaries that lead to both countries gathering and developing people and cultural dialogue.

Thus, the political and security situation in the dynamic Province of Africa was changed by the re-established relations of Ethiopia and Eritrea. However, the recent tensions between Eritrean and Ethiopia have shocked many experienced observers of geopolitical dynamics in Horn. However, working relationships have not been well established and the challenges of normal working relationships have not been completely resolved.

The researcher forwarded some recommendation for the general re-established relation between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

- a. To sustainable relationship of Ethiopia and Eritrea, the normalization process is not only be politicized but it must have be socialized with public and cultural diplomacy work!
- b. The governments of both countries of Ethiopia and Eritrea must have use soft power political diplomacy and discussion around the table for remained challengeable homework's. This is not optional issue but it's the only way to live and develop together! Furthermore, the governments should have tried to integrate the two people bondage through infrastructure development work, culture and trade and investment.
- c. To put on the ground the normalization process, public diplomacy work is expected. To expand this public diplomacy work the key elements are advocacy and media diplomacy work are essential. In here endorsement by media, private promoter plc, diplomats, individuals, merchants, scholars, and religious leaders should have strengthen to play its own part through film work, drama, documentary film, internet, radio, poet and painting.
- d. In states diplomatic relation, the government most of the time giving focus to economic diplomacy but not to cultural diplomacy. However, cultural diplomacy playing a great role in normalizing the process of rapprochement whose people were have numerous communality of culture, value, language, history, the way of every social life and ancestral roots. Accordingly, cultural diplomacy of exchanging and sharing one culture with the other should have to be strengthen and expand through by preparing cultural festival, sport champion, music concert, religion conference and trade and endemic product expo/ bazar by famous artists, designers, poets, painter, religious leader and sports professionals'.
- e. There should have also exchange diplomacy of people work expected by advancing free scholarship, opening the Ethiopian national language training center at Eritrea, giving of the citizenship right by law through special consideration for those who deprived during the time of deportation from both countries, giving the chance to those Eritrean/ Ethiopian to live, to invest and to property right at each other countries.
- f. Support and strengthen cultural exchanges in order to enhance people-to-people interaction, particularly between Ethiopians and Eritreans, as a strategy and model should have to expand for regional reconciliation in the Horn of Africa.
- g. The international community encouragements are expected to towards reliable sustainable normalization of mutual cooperation of the two countries of Ethiopia and Eritrea and strong regional integration rather than scrambling to protect their interest only at the region of the Horn and Red Sea.
- h. The reactive foreign policy framework and political values which can hinder the diplomatic relation of the two countries must have to revise. The 2002 foreign policy of Ethiopia was introduced after the war with Eritrea while now the policy should have to change with the situation changed and should have to be proactive.
- i. In the time of implementation of EEBC decision, the village of Badme case under control of Ethiopia should have to consider the community around the border of both countries and, it should have to give a chance for referendum to decide over their future.
- j. The rapprochement between the two countries should be based on some fundamental values of legal framework and institution that go beyond shared convictions about facing a common difficulty currently with the stance of never repeating the previous mistake.
- k. The relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea should have to base on the international law, with special care

and transparently. While, whatever problem when solve, in the way of shouldn't pass to the next generation!

1. The Ethiopia-Eritrea rapprochement is not carefully handled the challenges which can hinder the relation and all angles are properly covered, there is dynamic radical shift from the previous 'no peace no war fire to

frying pan of another devastating war' in the volatile region of HoA (in Amharic '*keditu wode matu!*') That is why the whole process has to be approached carefully, with due conscientiousness to compensate for and repair the political, economic, diplomatic and social fault-lines that exist at overall ends.

## Appendix

*Table 1. List of Key Informants.*

No.	Key informants name	Date of interview	Organization	Position in organization
1.	Ojige Osso	March 15, 2019	Minister of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)	The FDRE MoFA Eritrea Affairs Minister Counselor II
2.	Abebe Aynete	March 21, 2019	Ethiopian Foreign Relation Strategic Study Institute (EFRSSI)	Research Director
3.	Kewi Jarso	March 08, 2019	Ethiopia Investment Commission (EIC)	Data and Information Technology Expert
4.	Belete Belachew (PhD)	March 19, 2019	Center for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation (CDRC)	Senior Researcher
5.	Yaregal Emiru	March 13, 2019	Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sports (MCTS)	Bilateral Coordinator
6.	Fikiru Tadesse	March 11, 2019	Ministry of Trade (MoT)	Bilateral and Regional Trade Relation and Negotiation Directorate director
7.	Mekonen Abera	March 12, 2019	Ethiopian Maritime Affairs Authority (EMAA)	Director General
8.	Yalewu Tesfaye	March 12, 2019	Ethiopian Maritime Affairs Authority	Import Goods Transit Logistics Team Leader

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