

The Ethiopian-Eritrean Peace Will Lead to a New Era for the Horn of Africa

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The official end of hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea has the chance of ushering in a new era of peace and prosperity for what has up until this point been one of the tensest and most impoverished parts of Africa.

The fast-moving Ethiopian-Eritrean rapprochement culminated in **Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed** visiting **President Isaias Afwerki** and [signing a joint peace agreement](#) to end to their countries' twenty-year-long state of war, the implications of which are literally game-changing for the entire [Horn of Africa](#). It can't be emphasized enough just how important of a development this is in giving the region the chance to usher in a new era of peace and prosperity for what has hitherto been one of the continent's tensest and most impoverished corners.

Eritrea's 1993 secession from Ethiopia following the end of the latter's civil war was agreed to with the new authorities in Addis Ababa but the subsequent security dilemma that soon sprouted up stemming from the distrust that both states had of one another led to the 1998-2000 war that killed around 80,000 people despite pretty much retaining the geostrategic status quo. Both countries became much poorer as a result and forced to overcommit their precious resources to defense in order to prevent a Continuation War over the town of Badme.

Awarded to Eritrea by an international court in 2002, Ethiopia refused to abide by the ruling and therefore kept the tense military state of affairs between the two countries frozen in a seemingly never-ending Cold War that since saw the outbreak of numerous low-intensity proxy conflicts inside of one another's borders and especially Somalia. In fact, it was because of Asmara's alleged assistance to the Al-Shabab terrorist group that it was [placed under UNSC sanctions](#) in 2009 and remains so to this day, drastically holding back its post-war development.

The combination of a controversial military policy of potentially indefinite conscription and rampant underdevelopment paired with stereotypical "socialist" mismanagement and international isolation to produce the "perfect storm" of systemic destabilization inside of Eritrea that has since led to the outflow of tens of thousands of its citizens to Europe. As for Ethiopia, the incessant [Hybrid War](#) challenges posed by Eritrea's patronage of multiple ethno-separatist groups took its toll on the nation and prompted the ruling Ethiopian People's Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPDRF) to impose stringent security measures that hampered economic development.

Both countries recently started moving in opposite geostrategic directions as well, with tiny Eritrea cozying up to the wealthy GCC after allowing its territory to be used in the War on Yemen while Ethiopia struck crucial Silk Road deals with China to become the main African partner for the People's Republic. It even appeared for some time like the two Horn of African states would become a proxy battleground between China and the GCC, but thankfully that [scenario](#) was averted by both extra-regional parties' responsible efforts to improve cooperation between them and preempt this possibility.

The situation largely remained static in the larger sense of the concept until new Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed seemingly came out of nowhere to rapidly rise to power in March following the surprise resignation of his predecessor, which enabled the reformist wing of the EPRDF enter into the position of influence that they'd been patiently waiting for years to obtain. After initiating [wide-ranging socio-economic and political reforms](#) at home, PM Abiy then [unveiled his grandest one](#) last month by announcing that his country will accept the 2002 court ruling to withdraw from Badme.

This move was greeted very positively in Asmara and had the geostrategic effect of shifting the regional dynamics, averting what had up until that moment appeared to be an [Egyptian-Eritrean alliance against Ethiopia](#) that could have pushed the region's military tensions past the threshold into all-out war. PM Abiy walked the walk by proving the sincerity of his intentions by inviting a high-level Eritrean delegation to Addis Ababa, which preceded his own visit to Asmara to meet with President Afwerki and ultimately announce the end of hostilities between these two brotherly nations.

Both formerly united states will now fast-track their comprehensive infrastructural reintegration through the [revival of a Red Sea connectivity corridor](#) that will physically embody the path to peace that Ethiopia and Eritrea have committed to. It can therefore be expected that UNSC sanctions against Asmara might soon be lifted after Addis Ababa reverses its position by campaigning on its neighbor's behalf, something that was utterly unthinkable for Ethiopia to do just a month ago. Equally remarkable is that Eritrea will probably cut off all militant support to its Ethiopian proxies in return.

Somalia might also see some much-needed relief as it will no longer be a theater of competition between both rivals, possibly even allowing Ethiopia and Eritrea to cooperate with one another in stabilizing it via their respective proxy channels. There's still a lot of work that needs to be done in Somalia, and al-Shabaab remains a formidable terrorist force that requires serious and sustained efforts to defeat, but it can't be overlooked just how positive of an impact the Ethiopian-Eritrean peace could have on this country as well.

Analyzed from a regional perspective, Ethiopia's use of Eritrea's port facilities will eventually decrease its existing and near-total dependency on Djibouti and the Chinese-built Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway (DAAR), China's chief Silk Road investment in Africa, and complement the landlocked giant's other recent port deals and related plans to [ambitiously build a navy](#). This will have the effect of diversifying its connectivity potential and thwarting any forthcoming Hybrid War destabilizations [directed against its main Chinese project](#), which altogether positions Ethiopia as the regional integrational core for the Horn of Africa and a rising Great Power in general.

Eritrea will finally receive the development that it deserves and Somalia will be relatively (key word) more stabilized than before. Djibouti's importance as the terminal point of DAAR

and the key facilitator of Ethiopia's trade with the rest of the world will remain, and the entire Horn of Africa will benefit as a result. The positive effects of the Ethiopian-Eritrean peace can also spread beyond the immediate region by creating structural opportunities for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) other members of Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, and Kenya to seize in enhancing their comprehensive integration with one another.

With South Sudan [on the brink of peace](#) following extensive diplomatic efforts by Ethiopia, Sudan, and Uganda, now might be the time for the Greater Horn of Africa region to finally overcome its history of conflict & poverty and collectively work together to forge a new future. The greatest impediment to that happening has just been removed following the Ethiopian-Eritrean peace announcement, so it wouldn't be amiss to suggest that all of those countries might be about to embark on a new and exciting era spearheaded by PM Abiy and his reformist vision.

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