

Hopeful Signs Moving Toward Resolution of the Eritrean–Ethiopian Conflict

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Looking back at the origin of the conflict, the Eritrean–Ethiopian War, it was one of several conflicts in the horn of Africa region, which took place between the two countries from May 1998 to June 2000. Thereafter, they entered into a state of cold war. The disputed border region named Badme overlaps northern Eritrea and southern Ethiopia. The story behind Badme region seems complicated to comprehend. The point is that the population of the region, called Tigrinyas, are living on both sides of the borderline and both nations claim Badme and its inhabitants.

From a political viewpoint, some people had begun to compare Eritrea with North Korea because of their rather closed political regime. However, in his boldest move since coming to power last April, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, prime minister of Ethiopia, offered in June to make peace with Eritrea after twenty years of conflict in which an estimated eighty thousand people have died. The conflict separated a great number of families— parents and children, brothers and sisters, and relatives divided as occurred with the two Koreas.

In fact, Eritrea and Ethiopia have the same culture and the same religions and speak the same languages since long ago in history, to the extent that they are bound together through marriage ties. Unfortunately, just because of a borderline issue, many families found themselves disconnected on either side of the border, not even able to communicate with one another due to all means of communication being completely cut between the two countries.

The Ethiopian side launched several peace initiatives within those twenty years but always in vain. However, Dr. Abiy's attempt was such a surprise this time. No one could believe it until the moment Isaias Afwerki, the president of Eritrea, dispatched a delegation to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital city, and the African Union also began to understand Dr. Abiy's intent more clearly.

A family reunion

The Eritrean delegation that came to Addis Ababa was met with a great welcome. Just a few days later, Dr. Abiy went to Asmara, capital of Eritrea, where the prime minister and his delegation received such a welcome that according to Mr. Estifanos, the Eritrean ambassador to Japan, "No other head of state had been welcomed in such a way in Eritrea."

Eritreans lined Asmara's streets with Ethiopian flags to welcome Abiy with a deeply heartfelt warmth, some shedding tears, wanting even to embrace the prime minister in their arms. Ethiopians could watch the arrival of Prime Minister Abiy in Asmara on local TV news.

At the end of the visit, the two leaders signed a five-point agreement ending twenty-year war and restoring relations between them. The summaries read as follows: 1) The state of war has come to an end. 2) The two nations will forge close political, economic, social, cultural and security cooperation; 3) Trade and economic and diplomatic ties will resume. 4) The boundary decision will be implemented. 5) Both nations will work on regional peace.

"The state of war that existed between the two countries has come to an end," Eritrea's information minister, Yemane Gebremeskel, wrote on Twitter. Hence, in the second phase of this peace agreement, President Afwerki arrived in Ethiopia for a historic visit to cement peace on July 15, which was less than a week after both nations declared peace. For their part, Ethiopians were lining the main road from the airport to the city, dressed in white traditional clothes and waving palm fronds. During his three-day visit to Ethiopia -- a horse, a shield and a spear -- the prized possessions of an Oromo traditional warrior, were gifts handed to the visiting Eritrean leader Isaias Afwerki.

Parallels to the Koreas

This deeply emotional reunion between the two countries has seen residents able to communicate to each other via telephone for the first time in twenty years as lines of communication reopened. Furthermore, Direct flights resumed within the same week. It's always touching and moving to see families reunited after a lengthy separation during which no one knows whether the other was still alive or not.

Both the African Union and the European Union agreed that the normalization of relations between the two countries is a boost for peace and security in the Horn of Africa region and on the whole continent. On July 9 in Addis Ababa, the chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Moussa Faki

Mahamat, stated, "The ongoing normalization process between Eritrea and Ethiopia is a milestone in Africa's efforts to silence the guns by 2020."

It's interesting to notice that the situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia is quite similar to that between North Korea and South Korea, whether it be the polarized political systems, the populations, the borderline issue, the war followed by the state of cold war, the total separation of families and no-communication between the two countries, or Ethiopia's rapid economic development. All this seems quite comparable to the situation on the Korean peninsula. Needless to say, this is quite attention-grabbing.



The key figures leading the way out of the dim past and toward a brighter future: Left: Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed; Right: Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki

Momentum is building

To conclude with my viewpoint, I would like to recall that we have been witnessing many events and miracles just within this year, such as the successful Africa Summit in Dakar, Senegal, and the Summit in Europe the meeting between Kim Jong-un Moon Jae-in of South Korea as well as with Donald Trump. We also heard some good reports that North Korea would grant freedom of faith. Many other events occurred and others are still happening.

As I see it, these are not happening accidentally. They are all thanks to True Parents' hyojeong. True Mother never stops praying and offering devotions for us all and for humanity. Furthermore, we often hear True Mother say that if we unite with her, we will see miracles will happen. Despite our weaknesses toward becoming True Parents' filial children, we can still see signs of Heavenly Parent's and True Parents' handiwork in restoring the world. Many Ethiopians have already testified on local television news that they see this peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea as something from Heaven, saying, "This is definitely God's work and God is using Dr. Abiy to make this peace happen." John 14: 12 says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father."

Even though True Father went to the spirit world and is with our Heavenly Parent, Jesus, all the saints and all the founders of the nations of the world, we have to remain confident that True Father is always standing next to True Mother and guiding her toward the fulfillment of Cheon Il Guk on earth and in heaven.

It's truly a blessing that we have with us True Parents on earth at this crucial time. They are guiding and leading us to the fulfillment of Cheon Il Guk. Therefore, if we deeply believe in our hearts and act accordingly, if we unite all together in attending our True Parents, surely we will do even greater things than these, as Jesus said. Even the unification of the Koreas, which we have been longing for since we joined our movement will surely come true, very soon, before 2020.