

Abiy Ahmed: Ethiopia's prime minister/2018 February

Abiy Ahmed is a clever and astute politician
astonishing development in the region/2018 July



Abiy Ahmed is described as an astute politician

Abiy Ahmed - who took over from Hailemariam Desalegn as Ethiopia's new prime minister after his unexpected resignation in February/2018 - has not rested on his laurels.

He inherited a country that has seen some of the fastest economic growth in the world in recent years, but has also been riven by years of protests by people who feel marginalised.

The previous government was accused by many of human rights violations - including torture and extrajudicial killing of political dissidents.

But in a few short months, Mr Abiy has ended the border war with Eritrea by agreeing to give up disputed territory, in the process normalising relations with the long-time foe.

He has also lifted the state of emergency, ordered the release of thousands of prisoners, condemned brutal treatment of prisoners, calling it "terrorism" and unblocked hundreds of websites and TV channels.

- Is Mr Abiy - praised as an astute politician with impressive academic and military credentials - the man to lead Ethiopia into a peaceful, prosperous and free future?

Mr Abiy's background is crucial to the way people view him. He is the country's first Oromo leader - the ethnic group at the centre of nearly three years of anti-government protests, which have left hundreds of people dead. One of their main complaints is that they have been politically, economically and culturally marginalised for years - despite being the country's largest group. The election of Mr Abiy - who is believed to have huge support among the Oromo youth as well as other ethnic groups - may change that.

He is leader of the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO), one of the four ethnic parties which make up the ruling the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition.

The 42-year-old, who was born in the city of Agaro in Oromia and comes from a mixed Christian-Muslim family, joined the OPDO in the late 1980s. He has served in the military and rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, before becoming the founder and director of the country's Information Network and Security Agency, which is responsible for cyber-security in a country where the government exercises tight control over the internet. After that he became the minister for science and technology.

- **The speed at which he has been changing Ethiopia has been unprecedented but should not be a surprise.**

He laid out his political vision in comments made to the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement's (SEPDM), a constituent party in the ruling coalition, in October 2017:

- "We have only one option and that is to be united, not only cooperating and helping each other but uniting in order to live together. So, our option should be to trust one another, heal our wounds together and work together to develop our country."

Ethiopia's Abiy and Eritrea's Afewerki declare end of war

🕒 9 July 2018

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Ethiopia and Eritrea peace agreement

The leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea have signed a declaration saying that the state of war between the two countries is over.

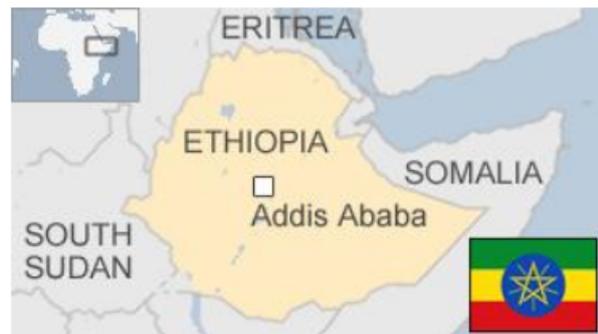
- A peace deal ending the 1998-2000 border conflict has never been fully implemented and there has been tension between the neighbours ever since.
- The countries have also agreed to re-establish trade and diplomatic ties.
- Family members divided by the dispute are now able to telephone each other for the first time since the war.
- The declaration came at a landmark meeting between the two countries' leaders in Eritrea's capital, Asmara.
- The summit between Eritrea's President Isaias Afewerki and Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed marked the first time the neighbours' heads of state had met for nearly two decades.

Ethiopia is Africa's oldest independent country and its second largest in terms of population. Apart from a five-year occupation by Mussolini's Italy, it has never been colonised.

It has a unique cultural heritage, being the home of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church - one of the oldest Christian churches - and a monarchy that ended only in the coup of 1974.

It served as a symbol of African independence throughout the colonial period, and was a founder member of the United Nations and the African base for many international organisations.

Ethiopia has suffered periodic droughts and famines that lead to a long civil conflict in the 20th Century and a border war with Eritrea.



Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Capital: Addis Ababa

Population 102.5 million

Area 1.13 million sq km (437,794 sq miles)

Major languages

Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali

Major religions

Christianity, Islam

Life expectancy 63 years (men), 67 years (women)

Currency Birr



The government hopes that Ethiopia will be a model for development



If Ethiopia gets its economic strategy right will it be a model for the rest of Africa to follow?