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Mini
Negotiation
Simulation

An aerial photograph of a cityscape at dusk or dawn. In the foreground, a river flows through a construction site with several red trucks and a yellow excavator. The middle ground shows a mix of modern high-rise buildings and older, lower-rise structures. The background features a city skyline with more skyscrapers under a cloudy sky with soft light.

ANATOMY OF A PEACE PROCESS: ETHIOPIAN- AMHARA CONFLICT

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LAWYERING PEACE

Anatomy of a Peace Process: Ethiopian-Amhara Conflict Resolution

This negotiation simulation aims to identify the challenges involved in setting up and carrying out a peace negotiation to end the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia. This negotiation has one primary objective: to negotiate the *design* of a peace process. A secondary objective is to determine the substantive issues that will arise during the peace negotiations.

Parties are encouraged to explore potential points of agreement or disagreement among the key negotiating parties. Through the simulation, participants will debate their positions, learn negotiation techniques, identify points of conflict, and discuss potential solutions.

The Ethiopian-Amhara conflict is rooted in a complex web of historical grievances, ethnic tensions, and political dynamics. Land disputes and political marginalization have led to the formation of militia groups, like the Fano militia. While these groups initially supported the federal government against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), following the [2022 Pretoria Agreement](#) (between the Ethiopian government and the TPLF), the government attempted to disband and integrate these groups into the national army, leading to widespread protests and clashes. Protestors argued that the dissolution of regional armed forces would leave the region defenseless from potential attacks from Tigray and Oromia.

Parties

- Government of Ethiopia
- Amhara Delegation
- International Mediator

Time Allotted: 45 minutes

Instructions: Prior to negotiations, each delegation will meet for 5 minutes to discuss negotiation strategies and their positions with respect to the creation of a peace process between the Ethiopian government and the Amhara and the inclusion of the TPLF in negotiations. You may assume that other issues are on the agenda for a later session and will be addressed in subsequent negotiations.

Agenda

- Individual Delegation Meetings (5 minutes)
- Plenary (15 minutes)
- Individual Delegation (5 minutes)
- Plenary (20 minutes)

Conflict Background

In November 2022, the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) signed a peace agreement, marking a cessation of hostilities in the Tigray region after two years of war. During this conflict, Amhara militia groups, including the Fano, significantly supported the Ethiopian government. However, the dynamics changed post-agreement, leading to a realignment of alliances and a sense of marginalization among the Amhara groups. Since August 2023, the Fano militia group has become more structured and centralized, controlling several towns and forcing the ruling regional government into exile. The federal government has responded by declaring a state of emergency and launching several military operations.

The situation has been compounded by accusations of government repression, including arrests and internet blackouts. The conflict has led to civilian casualties, internal displacement, and fears of broader regional instability. The conflict is exacerbated by the Amhara's demand for greater political representation and security guarantees. Additionally, the ambiguous stance of the TPLF, shifting from opposition to an uneasy alliance with the government, adds complexity to the peace process. International and regional actors are deeply concerned about the escalating violence and its implications for regional stability. Resolving this conflict requires addressing the diverse and deeply entrenched interests of all parties involved.

- *Regional Instability:* The conflict has escalated tensions in the Horn of Africa. In a region that is already highly unstable—with conflict in Sudan, South Sudan, and Somalia—there is concern that this conflict will only further exacerbate the problem and lead to increased refugee flows and cross-border conflicts.
- *Human Rights Concerns:* Reports indicate widespread human rights abuses, including civilian casualties, arbitrary arrests, and suppression of freedoms. These actions have drawn international condemnation and increased scrutiny of Ethiopia's human rights record.
- *Political & Ethnic Dynamics:* The TPLF's changing alliances and its historical rivalry with the Amhara significantly influence Ethiopia's political landscape. This dynamic is crucial in understanding the conflict and strategizing peace efforts. Ethnic divisions between Amhara, Tigray, and other groups in Ethiopia are deeply entrenched. These tensions contribute to the conflict and complicate efforts towards national unity and reconciliation. It is important to note that all parties have been accused of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- *Humanitarian Impact:* The conflict has led to displacement and a humanitarian crisis, with many people lacking access to basic needs like food, water, and healthcare. The situation is exacerbated in conflict zones, where aid delivery is challenging.

Issues for Negotiation

The central issue to be negotiated is the creation of a peace process to secure a ceasefire between the government of Ethiopia and Amhara militia groups. The parties must decide whether the peace process is connected to the ongoing negotiations in Pretoria, South Africa regarding the Tigray conflict or if it should be an entirely new and separate process. Additionally, the parties will need to determine whether or not the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) is included in the peace process. The parties may also consider what substantive issues will be included on the agenda, such as constitutional reform, the structure of a transitional government, security sector reform, etc.

Party Positions

For the Government of Ethiopia

- The government advocates for integrating the Amhara issue into the Pretoria talks, arguing this approach ensures a cohesive national strategy and avoids fragmenting the peace process. They emphasize the importance of efficiency and national unity in the peace process. They argue that establishing a new forum would be financially burdensome and could prolong the conflict due to the time needed to select a suitable venue and agree on a date. This approach is framed as a practical consideration, aiming to avoid unnecessary delays and costs in resolving the conflict.
- The Ethiopian government advocates for the inclusion of TPLF, viewing it as crucial for a comprehensive peace deal. Argues that TPLF's participation could facilitate broader regional stability and national reconciliation. Additionally, they assert that stability and peace cannot be achieved unless all parties are fairly and adequately represented. This inclusion is seen as a strategic move to ensure that the peace deal addresses the complex dynamics of Ethiopia's regional conflicts, thereby fostering a more sustainable resolution.
- The Ethiopian government aims to focus the current negotiation solely on establishing a ceasefire and initiating peace talks, rather than setting a detailed agenda for these discussions. They contend that specific substantive issues should be reserved for later, once the peace talks are underway, emphasizing the priority of first securing a ceasefire and starting the peace process.

For the Amhara Delegation

- The Amhara Delegation demands an independent negotiation track, highlighting unique Amhara concerns like security, political representation, and historical grievances, which they feel are not adequately addressed in the Pretoria talks. They state that the Pretoria Agreement stems from an entirely different conflict and that it cannot appropriately address the concerns of all parties involved.
- Consequently, they argue for a tailored approach in their peace process to ensure their specific issues are comprehensively addressed. While they seek an independent approach to ensure thorough attention to their issues, they acknowledge the potential value of drawing insights from or building upon the Pretoria Agreement. This nuanced stance reflects their recognition of the

broader conflict dynamics while emphasizing the need for focused solutions to Amhara-specific challenges.

- The Amhara Delegation is firmly against including the TPLF in the negotiations. They point to historical conflicts and a deep-seated mistrust, voicing concerns that TPLF's participation could sideline Amhara interests or lead to compromises that disadvantage them. Furthermore, they raise concerns about the imbalance of power, especially given the TPLF's recent alliance with the Ethiopian government, which they believe could further weaken their position in the negotiations.
- The Amhara Delegation is likely to insist on discussing the agenda for the peace process, including specific substantive issues, from the onset. They would argue that securing a ceasefire, while important, is insufficient without addressing the root causes of the conflict. For the Amhara, issues like political representation, security guarantees, and historical grievances are critical and need to be part of the initial peace talks framework to ensure their concerns are not sidelined.

For the Mediator

- The mediator proposes a balanced, hybrid approach to negotiations, advocating for a unified forum to discuss overarching regional issues while also establishing separate talks for specific concerns of each group. This strategy aims to address broad issues collectively while giving focused attention to individual group needs, thus appealing to all parties involved.
- The mediator may advocate for the broad inclusion of actors to ensure comprehensive peace, but with structured conditions to address specific party concerns. They may even suggest mechanisms to ensure that the TPLF's participation is constructive and does not exacerbate tensions or create unfair power dynamics.
- The mediators would likely advocate for a balanced approach regarding an agenda, recognizing the importance of both securing a ceasefire and addressing substantive issues early in the peace process. They would understand the Ethiopian government's focus on initiating peace talks but also acknowledge the Amhara Delegation's concerns about ensuring their key issues are not overlooked. They would attempt to facilitate a framework that acknowledges immediate needs for peace and longer-term concerns,

aiming to create a roadmap that satisfies both parties and sets a foundation for constructive dialogue.

Additional Resources - Not Required Reading

Wilson Center: [A Reflection on the Conflict in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia](#)

Human Rights Watch: [Deepening Crisis in Ethiopia's Amhara Region](#)

International Crisis Group: [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#)

Reuters: [Conflict in Ethiopia's Amhara kills dozens, rights body says](#)

Aljazeera: ['Collective punishment': Ethiopia drone strikes target civilians in Amhara](#)

London School of Economics: [A conflict between the Amhara Fano and the government is the latest challenge to Ethiopia](#)

The Economist: [Ethiopia risks sliding into another civil war](#)

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner: [Ethiopia: Violence in Amhara region](#)

Institute for Security Studies: [Africa must stand together to end Ethiopia's conflict](#)

ACLED: [Fact Sheet: Crisis in Ethiopia's Amhara Region](#)