

## **Diaspora and the State: the Role of Remittances in Socio-Political Transformation in Eritrea**

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Historic and contemporary migration flows have sparked considerable academic interest in the diverse ways that migrant communities engage and maintain ties with their homelands. Increasing in scale and volume, remittances have become one of the most prevalent and visible ways international migration is reconfiguring countries of origin. Existing migration-development literature has conceptualized remittances in mainly economic terms, overlooking the effects of remittances on state-society and state-diaspora relations, civic engagement and the governance of recipient countries. Being a refugee-producing country and showing no signs of decreased outward migration, Eritrea provides a perfect laboratory case for this inquiry. I trace the continuity of historic remittance-patterns to reveal the role state-directed remittances have played to enhance the authoritative rule of the Eritrean government, militarization of the country and the current mass exodus of its youth. Through a critical analysis of Eritrean state-led transnationalism aimed at coercive rent capture, I interrogate a literature preoccupied with the assumed positive relationship between remittances and development. Instead, I propose a conceptual framework for analysing the relationship between remittances and broader issues of socio-political transformation.

**Keywords:** Remittances, state-led transnationalism, diaspora, civic engagement

