African Research Review

African Boundary Politics: A Case of Ethiopian-Eritrean Boundary Discord

Aremu, Johnson Olaosebikan
Department of History and International Studies
Faculty of Arts, Nigeria
Ekiti State University, P. M. B. 5363, Ado–Ekiti
E-mail: johnsonolaosebikan@gmail.com

Buhari, Lateef Oluwafemi
Department of History and International Studies
Faculty of Arts, Nigeria
Ekiti State University, P. M. B. 5363, Ado–Ekiti,
E-mail: lateef.buhari@eksu.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper examined the boundary discord between Ethiopia and Eritrea over the region around Badme which started as a result of artificial boundaries created by the Italian imperialists. The study depicts the evolution of Italian colonialism in Ethiopia between 1936 and 1941.it exposes the differentials existing between the Muslim lowlanders and Christian highlanders. This paper further showcased the activities of armed resistance movements that emerged such as Eritrean Liberation Front (EFL) and Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The paper discussed the root causes of the war, unlawful expulsion and destruction of houses of Eritreans. The paper concluded with the quest for peace to bring an end to the border discord between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Key words: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Border Politics, Colonialism, Conflict Resolution.

Background Information on Ethiopian-Eritrean Boundary Dispute

The boundaries of modern African States were the creation of European diplomats who partitioned Africa among themselves with little regards to knowledge of the socio-cultural characteristics of the continent. As a result of the European partition, a typical African boundary may group together many ethnic groups in one state, it may cut across many ethnic

or national boundaries of the past, it may create a state whose physical characteristics hinder political, social, economic stability (Boyd , 1979). This probably inspired Saffu's opinion that, if international boundaries on a map are "the scars of history", then Europe's scars are, at least, self-inflicted (Saffu, 1970).

Everyone knows that African boundaries were drawn by European powers purposely for their own selfish interest. The conflicts which such externally inspired boundaries pose for the continent are only now being discussed since the independence of a considerable part of Africa, and nationalistic pressures on African boundaries came into being. Using 1000 kilometers border line between the Ethiopian and Eritrean, this paper looked into the village of Badme being the centre of the whole conflict and the subsequent negotiations between the conflicting parties and the resulting peace accords. This paper also examined the effects which the boundary discord had on the lives of the people living near it or within the territories.

According to Olomola, a territory is a land under one ruler or government. He stated further that a territory is an area occupied as a home or defended as such or both by an organization or a group of organizations for the purpose of mating, resting, roosting or feeding. Also, territory or land is the immovable ground and sub-soil, as well as, movable objects which either naturally grow or are cultivated and structures erected on the soil (Olomola 1981, p.1).

Origin of Italian Colonialism

Ethiopia is one of the oldest cities/states in the world. Ethiopia's history as an independent and organized polity, with its famous civilization dates back to the first century (Baheru, 2001). Except for the five years of Italian occupation from 1936 to 1941, Ethiopia maintained its independence.

Eritrea, on the other hand, did not exist as a separate entity before 1890. The central highlands of Eritrea were parts and parcel of the civilization of Ethiopia. The Tigrinya speaking people who inhabited these highlands traced their religion; culture and language to Amharic language speakers in Ethiopia call a person from Tygray, "Tygrayan". Those who come from the Tagrinya speaking part of Eritrea are simply identified as Eritreans in this paper. In addition, the western part of Eritrea, inhabited by the Baja tribes, was much closer to Sudan. The Afars who settled in the Eastern and coastal parts have lived on their own, and frequently, resisted attempts to subjugation by Christian – Ethiopia highlanders (Siegried & Shrunice). In 1890, the Italian amalgamated all these separated parts and formed the state of Eritrea named after the Latin name of the red sea-mare erythraeum.

In many ways, Eritrea as a colony was very sufficient to Italy. The land in the temperate highland areas of Eritrea was used to settle landless Italian peasants from southern Italy. The ports were of great use to Italian trade with the rest of Africa. However, Eritrea served as a major source of soldiers for further Italian colonial ventures to Libya and Ethiopia. In 1935, Eritrea was also used as a spring board to invade Ethiopia, and this probably explains why Italians invested greatly in Eritrea. These include construction of roads, schools, railways, etc. This led to a rapid economic growth in Eritrea (Kalewongel, n.d). Italian colonialism lasted half a century and left Eritrea after being defeated by the Joint British and Ethiopian forces in 1941(Sharma1980/81, pp.121-129).

After the exits of the Italians, Eritrea's fate became vague and opened for discussion. There were discussions both inside and outside Eritrea about the future status of Eritrea. Internally, the British permitted the formation of political parties and the parties started to influence the nature of the debate. Political parties with programmes of union with Ethiopia (The Theorist Party), complete independence (The Muslim League) and formation of Tigrayo state comprising the Tigrinya speaking people from both sides (The Liberal progressive party) were established and campaigned for political support. The parties won membership across the major ethnic groups in Eritrea (Sharma 1980/81, p.129).

Outside Eritrean, the four power commission (comprised of the victories' allies), which visited Eritrea in 1947 and 1948, could not reach an agreement on the status of Eritrea. Membership of the commission included Pakistan, Burma, Guatemala, Norway and South Africa, declined or failed to reach communiqué or recommendation.

In 1950, the UN General Assembly decided the Federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian crown but having its own constitution, flag, and parliament. Two members of the commission, Pakistan and Guatemala proposed an independent state of Eritrea after a period of ten years of trusteeship under the auspices of the UN, South Africa and Burma put forward a plan for the federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia while Norway preferred integration of Eritrea with Ethiopia federation as a second choice.

It is interesting to note that great differentials existed between the lowlanders and highlanders. Highlanders are mostly Christians and speakers of Tigrinya, while those living in the lowlands are Muslims, and speak different languages, mainly Arabic and Afar. Also, the consciousness of a common Eritrean identity among those ethnic groups was clearly nonexistent before the advent of Italian colonialism. To this end, Italians deliberately impacted various socio-economic projects to create and nurture a distinct Eritrean identity. They highly invested in the economy of Eritreans in contrast to "backward" Ethiopians (Kalewongel, n.d.).

Conflict Resolution between States

Resolution of disputes between two conflicting states is much easier than resolving intrastate disputes because issues of recognition are absent in inter-state conflicts. In addition, there are internationally recognized norms and principles (such as UN charter) relating to the resolution of interstate disorders.

Wallensteen opined that interstate conflicts involve geo-politic, real-politic, ideal-politic and kata-politic in compatibilities Geopolitic conflicts occurred when 'a particular type of territory is afforded such considerable significance (Ghidey, 1999) by one or more states', this might be a conflict for the control of important areas or locations that give access to the control of a continent or a region of the world. States may also look at a particular territory along the border as theirs for strategic and historical reason (Wallesteen, 2007).

In real politik, conflicting issues of power and power capability take prime importance. State may go to war to gain an upper hand and be regionally dominant. Ideal-politik conflicts, on other hand, are based on issues of ideology and legitimacy.

Interstate conflicts and wars could also be caused because of the ideal purpose of establishing democracy for other people living under dictatorships. For example, US intervention in Iraq (2003) was motivated in order to remove the dictatorial regime in Bagdad. On the other hand, capital conflicts are caused by incompatible economic goals and interests. Because capitalism

is the dominant form of economic organization, economic reasons are seen as fundamental to the formation patterns of conflicts (Wallesteen 2007, p. 29).

However, Federal arrangement created a contradiction between liberal oriented Eritrea and feudal/authoritarian Ethiopia. As a result of its foreign experiences, Eritrea enacted a much more liberal constitution than the one in Ethiopia. The constitution allowed a free press and the right to form associations and trade unions. This greater degree of liberalization in Eritrea was too risky for the Emperor to afford. Soon, the Emperor initiated a series of measures to weaken the federation and include Eritrea into Ethiopia. In 1962, Ethiopia put pressure on the Eritrea parliament to vote for union with Ethiopia, which made Eritrea the fourteenth province in Ethiopia (Wallesteen 2007, p. 90).

Eritrean Nationalism

The main focus here is the concept of a nation. According to Smith, a Nation refers to 'a community of people joined together by a common decent and common culture (Bahru, 2001). While Levins referred to a Nation as homogeneous people sharing common language, religion, historical myths, and common territory (Smith 2005).

Nationalism in Europe is rooted in idea that every nation has the right to government. It was based on the view that a state should be founded in a nation and the nation should be constituted as a state i.e. nation and state should be in harmony (Donald, 1992).

In Africa, the activities of the European powers resulted in the arbitrary division of the nations of the continent across different neighbours (states). African states were artificially created with the arbitrary colonial borders. Nationalism in most African states stirs up conflict on the basis of common territory, common colonial history and common goal for decolonization.

More so, it is also dissimilar to Africa nationalism in the sense that it was articulated by common resistance to Italy the colonial power. Resistance and opposition of Eritreans both in the highland and the lowlands of Eritrean against Italian colonial rule were almost nil. This was because; the Eritrean Muslims harbour hostility against the Ethiopian Christian highlands' gladly received Italian colonialism. Though, the Italians were worried about the potential opposition of the Tigrinyan speaking people of Eritrea that separated from their Ethiopian cousins, the resistance did not come. Instead, Italian colonialism created a sense of ethno-national distinctiveness along each side of the border.

The Struggle for Independence

Emergence of secession movements in disrespect of the federal arrangement by the Emperor Haile Selassie prepared hostility among Eritreans, especially, on the Emperor's moves to officially forbid trade unions which resulted in the decline of support to the imperial government from the working class of Eritrea, many of whom were Christians.

When the Emperor abolished the federal arrangement in 1962, many Eritrean Christians, just like their Muslim counterparts, felt that the regime was acting against their core interests. Meanwhile, armed resistance was already established in 1961 in reaction to the growing violation of the federal arrangement. The first armed resistance movement that emerged was Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) which was formed by the Eritrean exiles living in Cairo. They launched an attack against the Ethiopian forces in 1961.

ELF pursued its resistance in a Pan-Arab mould. It used Islam as a tool of national mobilization. Eritrea defined its goal as achieving independence from the domination of Christian Ethiopia. The main support for the Eritrea Liberation Front came from Syria and Iraq who regarded Eritrea as part of the Arab world while ELF distrusted and considered the Eritrean Christian community as enemies. Regarding military tactics, ELF adopted a strategy of conventional trench war. It followed a military strategy of liberating a territory and maintaining control at any cost.

The Border Tussle

Clashes on the line of the boundary first appeared between Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and ELF over the region up to Sheraro around Badame as part of Eritrea. ELF argued that the people who lived in these areas should be administered by Eritrean Liberation Front. TPLF however rejected the claim but allowed ELF to administer and operate in the disputed areas seeking to gain combat experience from ELF. Consequently, Eritrean Liberation Front established local militia and administered these disputed areas up until the destruction of the ELF in 1981. With the defeat of ELF, the great deals of the disputed areas were transferred into the administration of TPLF (Tekeste and Tronvol: 2008). The border controversy as an issue of discussion resurfaced again in 1983 in the joint meeting of the fronts in Khatoun, EPLF raised the issue and wanted the border to be demarcated on the basis of international treaties and agreements. The two fronts disagreed; TPLF said that it had not made any documentary study on the border. It also added that, as a front, it lacked legitimacy to negotiate on the border. And they should allow the maintenance of the existing administrative units as they were and collection of necessary treaties and documents for the final demarcation of the border in the aftermath of the downfall of Derg regime. EPLF accepted this proposal and the demarcation of the border were postponed.

Although, the two fronts planned to address the border controversy in the aftermath of the downfall of the Derg regime, the border was not given attention by any of the regimes after the Derg was overthrown on 1991. The small scale clashes that appeared between the people on each side were settled by local administrations from both sides.

In July, 1997, Ethiopian armed forces crossed the Eritrea border and entered into Adi Murug, (an Eritrean territory) searching for rebels of the Afar Revolutionary Democratic United Front (ARDUF). In reaction to this, President Issaias of Eritrea wrote two different letters to the Prime Minister Meles Zarawi, expressing his complaint about the crossing of the border by the Ethiopian Armed Forces and dismantling of the local administration. This reaction from the President later resulted to the formation of a joint border commission between the two countries in Badme. But maps of Tigray released by Tigrayan authorities in August 1997 worsen the existing agreements on the border line.

However, actual military clashes occurred on May 6, 1998, just two days before the meeting of their joint border commission. An Eritrea patrolling military unit along the Badme area was approached by Tigrayan militia forces. Eritrea patrols claimed that the Badme area is Eritrea's sovereign territory, while the Tigrayans protested the claims and asked Eritreans to leave their weapons if they wanted to cross over to the Ethiopian territory (*Africa Report September,* 2008).

Also on May 12, 1998, Eritrea mobilized a mechanized army to the border area and established itself in Badme and its surroundings. The following days, the army was also mobilized into other parts of the border, such as in Zalambessa and further east. The

mobilization of the Eritrean army into the border areas marked the transformation of the conflict into a full armed confrontation.

Causes of the War

The root causes of the war could be traced back to the imperialist's policy of great powers of Europe, an International phenomenon during the 19th century. Eritrea, a new entity was created by Italian colonization. As a result of the socio-economic improvements created by the Italian colonial legacy, Eritrea developed a distinct Eritrea identify and a sense of civilization against their counterparts in Ethiopia(Ibid).

In addition, Italy signed three treaties with Ethiopia regarding the border, but none of these treaties were demarcated. Really, Italians interpreted the border unilaterally and drew a new borderline of their own. Therefore, Italian colonization of Ethiopia and the creation of the great Eritrea, combining the Tigrayan speaking provinces of both Eritrea and Ethiopia made the demarcation of the border not important (Levine, 2007).

Structurally, the international system and the role of super powers were factors that led to the border disorder or war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Although, the US acted immediately to mediate the Ethiopian and Eritrean conflict, its role in compelling the two countries from resorting to war was minimal. Sequel to the defeat, its Army suffered in Somalia in early 1990s, the US followed a policy of limited engagement in Africa (Lawrence Paul, 1992). However, US aid (grant and credit) to Ethiopia and Eritrea declined in the late 1990s.

Furthermore, the permitting condition for the war was created by the US with its blessing of millions of dollars of aid provided by the World Bank to Eritrea and Ethiopia throughout the war. This was diverted to secure arms. The failure or limited engagement of the US paved way for other powers, such as China and Russia to provide arms to the conflicting parties.

On the other hand, Berhane points out that the principal cause of the Ethiopia Eritrean border politics was the EPLF's vision to achieve its second objective of transforming (first being independence) and creating a new state of Eritrea on a Singapore model. On this, to achieve national unity was put on top of the agenda of the EPLF; the Eritrean armed clashes and wars that were conducted with Yemen, Sudan, Djibonti and Ethiopia were meant to enhance a unified national Eritrea identity as a prerequisite to establish a prosperous and developed Eritrea stock. Eritrea has more than seven different ethnic groups and most of these ethnic groups have their kins across their borders.

The border dispute with Ethiopia was intended to emphasize the division between highland Eritrea, who are culturally akin to those in Tigray.

Like all colonial divides, the boundary between Eritrea and Ethiopia is at points, an arbitrary line that separated people who once lived together; people related by blood and intermarriage to which international borders meant very little. Problem usually arose when one coveted the other grazing area or places of settlement. Thus, one cannot accuse simple farmers of deliberately crossing boundaries to cause international conflicts and the same with those who rise to defend what they consider their own.

In 1992-1993, Tigrayan authorities in the lower Adiabo area adjourning the Badme sections of Eritrea started to talk about demarcation line. Eritreans who had lived in the area for decades were reported that they were being penalized and their property confiscated for illegal entry". In 1995, Eritrean farmers witnessed wide spread harassment by the Tigran authorities for trespassing into unilaterally demarcated territory. While in 1996 TPLF

officials concentrated their campaigns of harassment and expulsion of Eritreans from border villages; e.g. 7th June 1996, 12 villages of Adimahram (Zibra) were taken into custody. 19th July 1996, six armed TPLF group entered Gheza Sherif and demanded that 34 farmers should leave the village. These people had lived there for over 15-20years. When these farmers refused, a confrontation ensued and this was stopped by the intervention of the Eritrean administrations of the sub-region.

Also, on 8th August, 1996, 16 armed TPLF soldiers entered Gheza Sherif and asked all the inhabitants to move out. When they refused, three representatives, including many women were captured on 17th June, 1996, 24 farmers of Adi Mahrai (Zibra) were ordered not to work on the field already plowed and cultivated, rendering 66 hectares of harvest totally out of use. At this same time, 29 farmers of Denbe Himbity were forced to leave their habitat by similar orders of TPLF armed administrators and gun men (*Africa Report, No.141, June*, 2008).

When the expulsion and destruction of houses of Eritreans continued deep into the first quarter of 1997, a joint meeting of high administrative officials was held in Shire, Tigrai, with the aim of finding temporary solution to the problem. The meeting, which was presided over by the Vice President of the Tigrai region, Ato Tzegai Berhe and the Deputy Administrator of the Gash-Barka Region of Eritrea, Ato Tesfa Michael G. Medium lasted for two days, 20-21 April, 1997, and included all the major officials of the corresponding border districts (www.globalissues.org/article/89/ Conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea).

The representatives of Eritrea expressed opposition and misgivings about the series of unilateral demarcations effected by the Tigrai administration inside Eritrean territory. Eritreans pointed out that the demarcations were neither known nor acceptable to Eritrean government. Eritreans also demanded that the arbitrary expulsion of Eritrean nationals should stop immediately. On the contrary, however, the representatives from Tigrai argued that the demarcation had been laid down since 1986-1987, during the struggle, and that EPLF had known about these. After much arguments and exchange of views, it was resolved that a sub-committee from adjacent districts should be set up to study the matter on ground and see if some immediate solutions could be found (Natalie, Klein, 1998, pp.1-35). The designated sub-committee met from 22-27, 1997 and decided to make a tour to see the demarcations, but the representative of Tegrai argued that the purpose of the meeting and the tour was for Eritrean side to visit and accept the line as demarcated by the Tigraiyans. Eritreans rejected this move. During the armed struggle, many EPLF figures had seen or known about a map of larger Tigrai that included parts of Eritrean territory. After independence, the two governments were on very friendly terms, most of the border incidents were consistently being down played by Eritrea, as the excesses of some border officials. Now, the Badme border demarcation started to bring the issue to the fore. As a border where Eritreans formed the clear majority on both sides for decades, the location of the border and what belonged to whom was never a question.

The Eritrean sub-committee consequently supported that since matters affecting the border should not be decided by border and district officials and the issue should be very seriously taken up and quickly settled at central government level. Tigrayans were urged to stop further moves of harassing and expelling Eritreans. Tigrayan representatives also demanded that no armed Eritrean enter the line of demarcation. It ordered that Eritrean farmers should not plough fields or build houses or sheds beyond the line and that the inhabitants of the two villages of Gheza Sherif and Enda Tichi be evacuated (Alemsged, 2013).

Elements of Border Politics/Conflicts

In July, 1997, there was harassment of Eritrean inhabitant in the whole unilaterally demarcated areas which was later intensified in the exchange of letters between the Eritrean Administrator Shambuko and his counterparts in Sheraw, Tigrai, Eritrean appealed for restraint on the part of Tigrai authorities and police, as tensions, unwarranted expulsions from land. They had developed over lifetime. His counterpart from Tigrai replied that Eritrean administrator should warn his people in the event of any wars, since; as he put it "the incursions into our demarcated territory are being carried out with your full knowledge (Klein 1998, pp.1-35).

On the 18th July, 1997, three truckloads of Ethiopia with planted radio communication equipments were reported to have entered the Badme area. Some Toyota pick-ups were equally reported to be bringing in light and medium arms. Eritrean territory inside the unilaterally demarcated areas was put under patrol. Eritrean families that had lived in Gheza Sherif for at least 30years each were evacuated and sent across what TPLF now determined was the new Ethio-Eritrean border (Klein 1998, p. 35). It was noted, however, that the source of the problem was Eritrean administrators who were continuously instigating their farmers to cross demarcated lines.

The border conflict is senseless; neither party did not gained from its contamination. It has its root in TPLF's persistent incursions into Eritrean territory, an act that can only be explained in term of the expansionist tendencies of that front's leadership (Kalewongel 2008, pp. 31-32).

At this juncture, the chance for peace lies in the immediate cessation of hostilities, direct talks, demilitarization and demarcation of the whole border in accordance with existing international treaties or as a final resort, adjudication by international court. War will only further complicate a simple problem.

The Quest for Peace

The peace process has been carried out to bring an end to the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrean but it has been realized that the conflicting parties declined to achieve peace over Badme. (Alemseged, 2003).

There were four-point peace proposals demanding the withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Badme and their redeployment to positions. They were held before May 1998 and reconstitution of the civilian administration. Similarly, the OAU framework of agreement, presented to the parties on 7 and 8 of November 1998, contained the same provision. The four point peace proposals also called the parties (Ethiopia and Eritrea) to be committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. It therefore provided for the deployment of smaller observer mission around Badme and investigation of the origins of the armed conflict. Also, it suffered both parties to agree for swift and binding delimitation of the border on the basis of colonial treaties and applicable international law, and called on the delimitation of the entire border area (Internally Displacement Monitoring Centre, P.13, available on www.refword.org).

The OAU framework agreement, also called the parties to commit them to use the service of the UN cartographic unit and other experts for the delimitation and demarcation of the border, investigation of the origins the armed conflicts and humane treatment of the Nationals of the border country. Ethiopia claimed that Eritrea should first and foremost withdraw from the newly occupied territories and the civilian administration should be re-established (African Conflict Resolution Act Interagency, Progress Report for Fiscal Years, 1999/2000, pp. 16-17).

Consequently, the peace proposals were easily accepted by the Ethiopia, while Eritrea on the other hand was unwilling to permit the status quo ante balloon. It was reluctant to withdraw its forces from Badme and its surrounding areas. Eritrea argued that the signing of the cessation of hostilities agreement was fair enough to the delimitation and demarcation of the border (Alemseged, Part II & III).

The OAU framework agreement was followed by two other documents, the modalities for implementation and the technical arrangements. These documents were produced after Eritrea accepted the OAU framework agreement with the view to implement the principle in the framework agreement. When Eritrea accepted the framework agreement, Ethiopia began to defy the OAU peace efforts. Ethiopia labeled the technical arrangements to the implementation of the OAU framework agreement unacceptable, and delivered a list of question demanding clarification (International Group Crisis, 2003).

Ethiopia later suspected the true intentions of Eritrea in accepting the peace proposals. Eritrea's acceptance of the OAU framework agreement was understood by Ethiopia as a strategy to buy time, reorganize its army and launch counter-attacks on Badme (Horn *of Africa: Monthly Review*, 2-3/99).

In 2000, Ethiopia launched major attacks in multiple fronts. After bitter fighting, Ethiopia penetrated deep inside the Eritrea territory, and occupied areas that were not even in its administration or list of claimed territories. The overall military offence of the Ethiopia forces and the penetration of the army deep inside the territories of Eritrea ignited renewed diplomatic efforts for mediation. Mediators shuttled between the capitals of two countries and finally succeeded to arrange an agreement on cessation of hostilities, signed on 18th June, 2000 and the border discord between Ethiopia and Eritrea ended in December, 2000.

Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities

The pillar of the agreement on cessation of hostilities was the deployment of peace keeping forces and the creation of a 25 kilometers buffer zone inside the territory of Eritrea. The agreement called on Ethiopia to withdraw its troop from the positions it occupied after February, 2008 which were not under the Ethiopian administration, while Eritrea agreed to settle its troops 25 kilometres away from the Ethiopian settlements. This treaty also envisaged the formation of a military coordination commission to facilitate the settlement of a peace keeping mission to monitor the implementation of the agreement. At the Algeria peace agreement, in December 2000, the two parties signed a comprehensive peace agreement under the auspices of the government of Algeria, as the Chairman of OAU at the time (Herbert Lewis, *Africa Report September-October 1991).*

Representatives of the UN, European Union and the US witnessed the signing of the agreement. In the preamble of the agreement, parties reaffirmed their acceptance of the OAU framework of agreement and its modalities of implementation, as well as, the agreement of the cessation of hostilities. The agreement was divided into six articles:

The Agreement Aimed at Bringing an End to the Conflict

The two parties agreed to "permanently terminate military hostilities between themselves and "refrain from the threat or the use of force against the other.

The other item deals with the prisoners of war, persons under custody in connection with the armed conflict and the treatment of the Nationals of other states. While fulfilling the obligation, they owed under International Humanitarian law and the 1949 Geneva Convention, both parties agreed to release all prisoners of war in cooperation with the International Committee of Red Cross. They also agreed

to release, repatriate and return all those persons who were detained as a result of the armed conflict and extend humane treatment to the nationals of the other state residing in their territories.

However, for over seven years (2000-2008), the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) has effectively served as buffer separating hundreds of thousands of soldiers settled along the border. UNMEE's role of separating the armies of the two countries was curtailed by the cutting of logistic supplies to the peace keeping force by Eritrea. With the standing of the virtual demarcation of the border as of January 2008, Eritrea announced that it would not accommodate UNMEE focused on its territories anymore. Eritrean Government by cutting down fuel and food supplies UNMEE. Despite the request from the Secretary General to urgently address the logistic supplies, Eritrea continued to deny UNMEE diesel and food supply. As a result, UN was forced to pull out UNMEE forces from Eritrea and relocate them in Ethiopia as of February 2008.

Tekeste and Tronroll point out that Ethiopia is suspected of having an army of around 450,000 while Eritrea may have 350,000 soldiers along the border. (see UNMEE's website), US later threatened by putting Eritrea on its list of rogues or terrorists simply because of Eritrea's open support for the Islamic court union on Somalia (a group allegedly having link with Al-Qaida), (Tekeste, Negash and Kjetil, 2000, p. 30).

Enforcement Mechanism

Though, the Algeria agreement foresaw the delimitation decision to be final and binding, it actually lacked provisions that made the decision binding. The agreement made no mention of the diplomatic consequences or the punitive measures that would be taken against the party, which would defy the decision. The measures that could take to enforce compliance to the final decision of the border commission were not also provided (www.globalissues.org/article/89/conflict).

Conclusion

The border between Ethiopia and Eritrea was finally demarcated. However, Ethiopia's reluctance to abide by the newly demarcated border intensified the impasse/deadlock that was created as a result of the disagreement in the implementation of the delimitation decision. As long as Ethiopia is not willing to respect the virtually demarcated border, withdraw its troops from the territories awarded the Eritrea and deliver the territories, the border issue will continue to be area of contention while Eritrea has been calling for the application of the first option (i.e. the two parties agreed to permanently terminate military hostilities between themselves and refrain from the threat or use of force against each other), while Ethiopia argued for the use of second option. In reality, both options have not yet been tried. Eritrea's call for putting pressure and imposing sanction on Ethiopia was not endorsed by the International community. Ethiopia's call for dialogue, on the other hand, was rejected by Eritrea.

The shortcoming of this mediation was that the peace process left the deep seated economic and political sources of the conflict untouched and focused on the border incompatibility. It was observed that the border was not the main cause of the war and the parties used the border disagreement as pretext to the war that was rather caused as a result of deep seated economic and political grievances. The people living in Badme area feel ignored not only by their government but also by Ethiopia-Eritrea Border Commission (EEBC). Consequently, they treat the EEBC decision as an imposition and reject it vehemently and also threatened to resist any attempt for the forceful implementation of the decision. Prospective resistance from the people could undermine the possibilities of consensual and lasting peace on this border conflict. Currently, both parties claim absolute sovereignty on the key symbolic village of Badme.

References

African Conflict Resolution Act Interagency, Progress Report for Fiscal Years, 1999/2000.

African Report (2008). Beyond the fragile peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Advertising new war. *Africa Report*, No.141, June 2008.

African Report (2008). Ethiopia and Eritrea: Stopping the Stride to War", *Africa Report No.45 September*, 2008. Available online www.globalissues.org/article/89/ Conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Alemseged, T. (2003). The Causes of the Eritrean – Ethiopian Border Conflict, Part II and III. International Group Crisis, 2003.

Alemsged, T. (2013). The cause of the Eritrea – Ethiopian border conflict, Eritrean – Ethiopian conflict resolution. Eritrean Centre for Strategic Studies, available on www.ecss.com.

Baheru, U. Z. (2001). *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1955-1991,* Addis Ababa University Press, Addis Ababa.

Boyd, B. J. (1979). African boundary conflict: An empirical study. *African Studies Review*, Vol. 23, No.2.

Davidson, D. (1992). *The Black man's burden: African and the curse of the nation state.* London.

Ghidey, Z. (1999). The ideological and political causes of the Ethio-Eritrean war: An invaders view. A paper for the international conference on the Ethio-Eritrean crisis, Amsterdam.

Kalewongel, G. (2008). Ethiopia and Eritrea: The quest for peace and normalizations centre for peace studies.

Kalewongel, M. G., *Ethiopia and Eritrea: The Quest for Peace and Normalization*. MPCT 2006 - 2008, University of Tromso, Norway II.

Klein, N. S. (1998). Mass Expulsion from Ethiopia; report on the deportation of Eritrean and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin from Ethiopia, June-August.

Lawrence Paul, (*1992*), Nationalism: History and Theory: Harlow and the curse of the Nation State, London.

Levine, A. (2007). Political key words: A Guide for student, Activists and everyone base, Malden, Black Publishing.

Lewis, H. (1991). Ethiopia; Beginning again: Africa report September-October.

Norwegian Council (n.d.) Ethiopia: Government Recognition of Conflict IDPs crucial to addressing plight, A Profile of the Internal Displacement Situation, Internally Displacement. Switzerland: Monitoring Centre, Norwegian Council. Available on www.refword.org

Olomola, I. (1981). *The Yoruba concept of territorial sovereignty*. Unpublished Papers in the Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife.

Pause, W. S. & Shrunice (1993). The Referendum on Independence for Eritrea. Retrieved from www.ethnoembassy.org.uk/news/press%20rele7.)

Richard, S. (1980). The rise of Eritrean naturalism. *Journal of Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 213, No. 3/1, 1980/81.

Saffu, E. O. (1970). The Ghana-Ivory Coast boundary. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Volume 5, No.2. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

Smith, A. D. (2005). Nationalism: Theory, ideology, history. Cambridge: Cambridge Printing Press.

Tekeste & Tronvol et al., (2008). Brothers at war: Making sense of the Eritrea and Ethiopian war. Oxford: jqmes Curry Press.

Tekeste, Negash & Kjetil, T. (2000). Brothers at war: Making sense of the Eritrean Ethiopia war. Oxford: James Cury Press. www.globalissues.org/article/89/conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

University of Pennsylvana (1999). Update on the Ethiopian – Eritrean conflict, horn of Africa: monthly review, 2-3/99, University of Pennsylvana: African Studies Centres.

Wallesteen, P. (2007). *Understanding Conflict Resolution,* Second Edition, London Safe Publication.