

**THE SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATION OF ETHIOPIAN AND ERITRIAN
CONFLICT 1998-2009**

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Abstract

The paper critically looks into the socio-political and economic implications of Ethio-Eritrea conflict that started in 1998. The study argues that the issue of citizenship, mutual intervention, autocracy in both government and the issue of trade contributed immensely to the conflict. Tens of thousand of people were displaced due to the horror that associates with the conflict. However, the conflict devastates the socio-economic activities of the people and also led to separation of families. Politically, many parties in both countries were divided against each other. The research employs historical and interpretative methods. Secondary sources in the form of books and other relevant secondary sources like, journal articles were also used. Internet sources also contributed to the research. Due to the lingering skirmishes that keep on resulting. The research recommends that the two countries should define the issue of citizenship that contributed to the conflict. In other to ensure lasting political stability and economic development, the paper recommends that they should be creative ways to facilitate implementation of the Boundary Commission's decision aimed at preventing conflict which might result from the demarcation process.

Introduction

Before the independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia both countries have been in a strain relationship. Before 1890 Eritrea has been a part of Ethiopia. Eritrea share a common culture, religion and language with Ethiopia. The Eritrean–Ethiopian War broke out in May 1998 and lasted to June 2000. The two countries spent hundreds of millions of dollars on the war and suffered tens of thousands of casualties.¹ It is unfortunate that the two countries are seriously facing economic challenge, yet they went into war. According to a ruling by an international commission in The Hague, Eritrea broke international law and triggered the war by invading Ethiopia.² At the end of the war, Ethiopia held all of the disputed territory and had advanced into Eritrea.³ When the war ended, the Eritrea–Ethiopia Boundary Commission, a body founded by the UN, established that Badme, the disputed territory at the heart of the conflict, belongs to Eritrea.⁴

After a series of armed incidents in which several Eritrean officials were killed near Badme, on 6 May 1998, a large Eritrean mechanized force entered the Badme region along the border of Eritrea and Ethiopia's northern Tigray Region, resulting in a firefight between the Eritrean soldiers and the Tigrayan militia and security police they encountered.⁵ On 13 May 1998 Ethiopia, in what Eritrean radio described as a "total war" policy, mobilized its forces for a full assault against Eritrea.⁶ The Claims Commission found that this was an affirmation of the existence of a state of war between belligerents, not a declaration of war, and that Ethiopia also notified the United Nations Security Council, as required under Article 51 of the UN Charter.⁷

The Background of the Conflict

Eritrea has been fighting war of independence from 1961 to 1991, against Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Civil War began on 12 September 1974 when the Marxist Derg staged a coup d'état against Emperor Haile Selassie. It lasted until 1991 when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)—a coalition of rebel groups led by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) overthrew the Derg government and installed a transitional government in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.⁸ The Derg government had been weakened by their loss of support due to the fall of communism in Eastern Europe.⁹

During the civil war, the groups fighting the Derg government had a common enemy, so the TPLF allied itself with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). In 1991 United Nations-facilitated transition of power to the transitional government, which was agreed that the EPLF should set up an autonomous transitional government in Eritrea and that a referendum would be held in Eritrea to find out if Eritreans wanted to secede from Ethiopia. The referendum was held and the vote was overwhelmingly in favour of independence. In April 1993 independence was achieved and the new state joined the United Nations.¹⁰ Also in the same 1991 the EPLF-backed transitional government of Eritrea and the TPLF-backed transitional government of Ethiopia, agreed to set up a commission to look into any problems that arose between the two former wartime allies over the foreseen independence of Eritrea.¹¹ The commission fail to actualized its aim and during the following years relations between the governments of the two sovereign states deteriorated.¹² However, because of the strain relation between the two state border committee was set up to try to resolve the dispute. After federation and before independence the line of the border had been of minor importance because it was only a demarcation line between federated provinces and initially the two governments tacitly agreed that the border should remain as it had been immediately before independence. However, on independence the border became an international frontier, and the two governments could not agree on the line that the border should take along its entire length, and they looked back to the colonial period treaties between Italy and Ethiopia for a basis in international law for the precise line of the frontier between the states.¹³ Problems then arose because they could not agree on the

interpretation of those agreements and treaties, and it was not clear under international law how binding colonial treaties were on the two states.¹⁴

Jon Abbink however postulates that President Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea, realising that his influence over the government in Ethiopia was slipping and given that "the facts on the ground, in the absence of a concrete border being marked which anyhow lost much of its relevance after 1962 when Eritrea was absorbed by Ethiopia have eminent relevance to any borderline decision of today" calculated that Eritrea could annex Badme.¹⁵ If successful this acquisition could be used to enhance his reputation and help maintain Eritrea's privileged economic relationship with Ethiopia. However, because Badme was in the province of Tigray, the region from which many of the members of the Ethiopian government originate (including Meles Zenawi the former Ethiopian prime minister), the Ethiopian government came under political pressure from within the EPRDF as well as from the wider Ethiopian public to meet force with force.¹⁶

The Causes of the Conflict

The causes of the conflict can be traced to many factors that are ranged from borders issues, authoritarianism, politics of mutual intervention, militarism in Eritrea and question of citizenship. However, this section will be open for analyses of the major causes of the conflict.

Border Question: This remains one of the causes of the conflict. The willingness on the part of the conflicting parties to reopen discussion on how the actual border demarcation could take place or on the implementation of the decisions of the EEBC with no precondition is still unobservable. The two sides seem to be not willing to moderate their positions so far to end the border deadlocks. Hence, the unresolved border issues are at the heart of the existing stalemate. The importance of Badme on which the two sides fought has left arduous consequence in entrenching the prevailing impasse. From Ethiopia's side, the government failed to abide by the ruling of the EEBC because doing so would amount to ignore the memory of the troops who gave their life to regain Badme.¹⁷ There was strong resistance and criticism from key people not to cede Badme to Eritrea. Not only the politicians but also members of the Badme and Irob communities at large vowed not to give a piece of territory to Eritrea and stood against the decision of the Commission.¹⁸ From the Eritrean side, conceding Badme is highly unlikely due to two reasons: their troops shed blood in order to gain Badme and a neutral Boundary Commission awarded the area to them.¹⁹ Therefore, Badme becomes a highly symbolic spot for national prestige on both sides and a major source of the Ethio-Eritrean disparity.²⁰ The inadequate conflict resolution strategy employed by the international community also left another repercussion for the stalemate.²¹ The agreement mandated the EEBC to delimit and demarcate the border based on pertinent colonial treaties (1900, 1902 and 1908) and applicable international law. However, the colonial rulers interpreted the border unilaterally and drew new borderlines, which was subjected to frequent changes leaving them un-demarcated.²² Though not mandated by the agreement, the EEBC decided borders without consulting local peoples and based on the decision, the flash point Badme was awarded to Eritrea. However, as Abbink contends the colonial ruler-Italy- and an independent state-Eritrea- never had any exercise of administration or control over Badme and beyond since this had long been administrated by Ethiopia. Hence, the peace process that neglects the voice of local populations and fluidity of border changes did much harm than good.²³

Not only the flawed conflict resolution strategy employed but also the failures of the international community to influence the two countries to come to terms also impacted on the prevailing situation. It is argued that instead of influencing Ethiopia to accept the ruling and collaborate with the Commission during the demarcation process, the international community particularly the US, was suspected of favouring Ethiopia thereby blocking the operationalization of the Commission's ruling.²⁴ The Eritrean leadership was

thus annoyed and became too suspicious about the importance of various institutions like UN or AU. Due to the limited influence of the international community, the promises of Algiers Agreement remained on paper thereby perpetuating the existing no-war no-peace situation.²⁵

Mutual Intervention: This factors contributed largely as to the cause of the conflict. Ethiopia supported the Sudan People's Liberation Army while the Sudanese government established a strong link with the Eritrean Liberation Front-ELF and later EPLF in their fight against the Ethiopian government.²⁶ Similarly, the Siyad Barre regime of Somalia extended support to the Western Somali Liberation Front in the Ogaden area of Ethiopia while Ethiopia, in return, assisted northern Somalis in what is now Somaliland against the Siyad regime. Sudan and Eritrea were also engaged in destabilizing each other by supporting the Eritrean Islamic Jihad and the Sudanese opposition National Democratic Alliance respectively. Though the Algiers Agreement brought an end to the devastating effects of the war, consensus was not reached on the demarcation of borders and normalization of the relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The ruling of the EEBC had not been implemented as a result of which disagreement about the border remains intact. The unresolved nature of the border disputes led to the escalation of destabilization and proxy engagement. The Ethiopian government accused Eritrea of extending support to different insurgents notably the Oromo and Somali ethno-nationalist groups while Eritrea blamed the Ethiopian regime as well.²⁷ During the crisis in the aftermath of the 2005 Elections, the government of Ethiopia blamed Eritreans of having a hand in the turmoil and in response Ethiopia also assisted the Eritrean Democratic Alliance and other smaller groups, such as the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organisation in their fight against the Eritrean regime.²⁸

The consequence of the act of destabilization is pivotal in exacerbating hostility and perpetuating the impasse. This created deeper antipathy and irreconcilability between the two regimes. Each of the parties to the conflict maintained that peace will not prevail unless the other is annihilated. In the light of this, the ex-Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, repeatedly highlighted that peace in the Horn is "impossible with the present government in Eritrea in place" and stated that the Eritrean government is the enemy of both the Eritreans and Ethiopians as well.²⁹ In response, the government of Eritrea never hesitated from emphatically stating that rapprochement with the present Ethiopian government is unthinkable under any circumstances.³⁰ The very purpose of both governments is, therefore, to destabilize each other with their extended support to respective opposition groups. It is difficult to curtail the impasse and normalize the relations between the two under these circumstances.

The two countries not only delved into destabilizing each other but also the Horn at large. Instead of breaking the stalemate, both countries have been sending troops to neighbouring Somalia in what appears to be a proxy war. Ethiopia backed Transitional Government of Somalia to fight the Islamist and terrorist groups by obtaining support from Ethiopia whereas the Eritrean government supported the Islamist groups and other anti-Ethiopian forces that sprung inside Somalia, which was viewed as a security threat by Ethiopia given their irredentist rhetoric and radicalization agenda.³¹ The Ethio-Eritrean engagement in the Somalia crisis marked the unresolved nature of the war. In this connection, it is stated that the Eritrean engagement in proxy war with Ethiopia is intended to force Ethiopia to accept the EEBC decision.

Indirect Autocracy: The government of Eritrea did not give the public freedom of speech. No body was allowed freely to criticize the government on some decision. The regime in Eritrea failed to open up the political space for the public to engage freely in the political affairs of the country.³² The post-war stalemate provided justifications for Eritrean leaders to suspend the implementation of the 1997 draft constitution by opening up the space for democratization.³³ Preoccupied with the threat coming from intellectuals and other senior liberation war veterans, the regime suspended democracy and election in Eritrea as a result of which the power of the President was consolidated with great vigor through intimidating or arresting opposition groups.³⁴ Government that does not allow freedom of speech and expression is subject to all forms of

negativity and oppression of the public. Open public debates and political pluralism thus rarely flourished in Eritrea.³⁵

According to Ogbazghi, the political space of Eritrea portrayed a sort of “Personal Rule” whereby the state and its apparatus formed a cult of personality of the incumbent strongman.³⁶ Berouk concurs with Ogbazghi stating that the post-1991 Eritrean economic and political life was “hijacked” by a single individual and the issue of transparent and accountable governance system was voided. Willingness from the regime to modify authoritarianism became unlikely and all aspects of the administration were controlled by the sole political organization-PFDJ.³⁷ The military with its hierarchy of regional military commanders is under the direct control and leadership of the President too. The relationship between the state and civil society was characterized by a sort of personal tyranny rendering civil society organisations not to engage in any form of policy activism or advocacy matters. The government was too suspicious about the existence of privately owned media.³⁸ Hence, nowadays, only government owned media operated in the country and the government intervenes at any time to deter the dissemination of “unnecessary material” to the public.³⁹ Compared to its Eritrean counterpart, the regime in Ethiopia is not overtly dictatorial.⁴⁰ As most scholars assert, commitment to establish a mature democracy is still not observed and a stable institutional political structure that will survive the current regime has not yet been put in place.⁴¹ Though the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front -EPRDF-government conducted different rounds of elections, the legitimacy of the election processes still remains a highly contested issue.⁴² This is mainly due to the fact that the state apparatus, which manages the election process, lacks credibility and neutrality in providing level playing field to all the stakeholders.⁴³ Incentives for competitive politics and legitimate electoral process under a multi-party framework and policy choices thus remain minimal and the freedom of opposition political parties to operate have been circumscribed.⁴⁴ Following the 2005 election crisis, the government intimidated and arrested opposition leaders and their supporters.⁴⁵ With regard to the independence of media, state repression against the private media increased dramatically.⁴⁶ Consequently, press freedom and civil society organizations working in different socio-economic and political fields are being manipulated.

The forgoing discussion, thus, indicates that the ruling regimes in both countries rely on military power to restrict civil liberties and retain dominance. Following the Algiers Agreement, both regimes responded to political challenges by repressing dissent and restricting political space and normalization of relations between the two countries remained the exclusive agenda of the politicians entirely.⁴⁷ Opportunities for civil societies and the public to take the initiative in government contributed to the war. When government decision and policy are not open for constructive criticism, the government cannot do well.

Militarism in Eritrea: Eritrea became suspicious of her neighbours after independence. Based on two rationales, the Eritrea government maintained that the international community always acts to the detriment of Eritrean interests: by suppressing the quest of Eritreans for independence after the end of colonial rule, which is accompanied by the unimplemented nature of the Algiers promises. The government also considered neighbouring countries as enemies of Eritrea. Not only the neighbouring states, the government does not trust even its population as a result of which the International Crisis Group in its 2010 Report labeled Eritrea as “siege state” where the government is suspicious of everything. As a result of its siege mentality, the Eritrean government built a militaristic social system and militarized politics, which spilled into its foreign policy whereby around 10 percent of the Eritrean population has been tied up in military service and the defense expenditure constitutes roughly 9 percent of the Gross Domestic Product.⁴⁸ Since the cessation of the military hostility with Ethiopia, thousands of forces have graduated from the ‘Sawa National Service’ camp and the majority of the youth are employed in the army.⁴⁹ Massive remobilization of demobilized fighters and National Military Service conscripts increased drastically.⁵⁰ Increasing air force

training flights and other new trenches along key defensive positions remains intact and now Eritrea has become one of the militarized nations in Africa.

Therefore, militarism and authoritarianism best define the political environs of the Eritrean government. Rather than using conventional diplomacy, the Eritrean government resorts to military adventurism in the form of proxy war to force the Ethiopia government to accept the ruling of the EEBC. Whereas aggression is used as a preferred means to defend any perceived threat to its sovereignty the behaviour of the Eritrean government not only affects its internal development but also its relations with all its neighbours.⁵¹ The militarized policy of Eritrea forced the Ethiopian government to be suspicious and less cooperative. In order to offset the threat coming from militaristic Eritrea, the Ethiopian government is also deeply involved in cultivating its combat forces so far. The two countries continued to re-arm through buying aircraft, armoured vehicles and artillery from Eastern European suppliers and heavy deployments of forces along the common borders still remains intact.⁵²

The two governments holding power in Ethiopia and Eritrea are battle-hardened and, hence, the ethos of militarism is deep-rooted and highly potent in their day to day activities. Their engagement in proxy warfare and destabilization activities best defines the culture of militarism. It is the culture of militarism that disrupts the stability of the region. The thinking here is that, unless the culture of militarism is replaced by new political and diplomatic proficiency, peace will not prevail in the region and the conflict will persist unabated in the years to come. According to Bahru he stated that:

If there is one thing that the two countries and their peoples should learn from history, it is the fact that recourse to arms has not solved any of the outstanding problems.....There is in short no alternative to sober discussion and dialogue in order to achieve the peace and development that the two countries so desperately need.⁵³

Citizenship Issue: This remains a question mark in the two countries. Many in Eritrea became a dual citizenship. Ethiopian government was not comfortable with people that are having two identity card. This trends led to divergent policies of the two parties regarding the issue of nationality. Eritrea recognized the dual citizenship of all its citizens living everywhere else in the world. Eritrea automatically accepts as its citizens, those of Eritrean parentage on both or either side. Nationals of other countries may also be granted Eritrean citizenship by law. Ethiopia does not allow dual citizenship to its nationals; or so it is claimed, for it is hard to believe that all the Ethiopian exiles who have adopted various citizenships are no longer Ethiopian. But, with respect to Eritreans also holding Ethiopian citizenship, the Ethiopian Government had been wavering. On the one hand, the present Ethiopian Government saw them as strong allies in its own struggle against its opposition, but on the other, and for reasons that are becoming clear only after the conflict, it wanted to curb their activities.

Ethiopian Government never took any legal steps to put the matter to rest by either asking its citizens of Eritrean origin to drop their Eritrean citizenship and become only Ethiopian, or by allowing them to choose which citizenship they wanted to adopt. Since this was not done, Ethiopians of Eritrean origin continued to consider themselves also as Ethiopian citizens and the Ethiopian Government continued to accept them as such. The issue raise some problems, especially in the issuance of licenses in both countries. The Ethiopian side felt that Eritreans in Ethiopia were taking a fairer advantage of the free movement, residence and business agreements and demanded reciprocity in Eritrea. Eritrea insisted that those Eritreans were mostly holders of Ethiopian citizenship. Thousands of Eritreans of Ethiopian origin were enjoying the same rights as Eritreans in Eritrea. The latter had, and still has, no problem recognizing them as Eritreans. The reciprocity, therefore, was already there. The problem arose when it came to the issuance of new licenses to citizens of one country only wanting to do business in the other. According to the Eritrean side, equality and reciprocity of treatment was needed here. A great percentage of the tens of

thousands of Eritreans who have been expelled from Ethiopia to date, fall under the first category, i.e., they are Ethiopians of Eritrean origin. No similar measure has been taken on any Ethiopian living in Eritrea. Eritreans of Ethiopian origin have full Eritrean citizenship rights and do not even come into question.

The Issue of Trade: Re-exporting products is a common practice of international trade and Ethiopia was the beneficiary of Eritrean re-exports to Ethiopia. Nevertheless, the Eritreans went along with the restriction. Subsequent agreements in May and November 1994 tried to work around these problems. A memorandum of understanding signed by the two sides on 7 October 1994, indicates that the Ethiopian delegation expressed appreciation for the following measures taken by the Eritrean Government:-

- 1 " Goods and commodities originating from Ethiopia will not be subjected to any customs tariff payment,
- 2 Ethiopian traders who have valid Ethiopian trade licenses will personally, without going through Eritrean traders, purchase goods and commodities from Eritrea, and
- 3 1.5% transit charge was levied on goods and commodities coming through the port of Massawa destined for Ethiopia.
- 4 There will be no hindrance to border trade activities carried out between our two countries."

In this agreement, it was further stipulated that no additional intermediate and local payments were to be imposed on goods and services traded between the two countries. The setting up of a joint customs committee to oversee this was also agreed upon. The request by the Eritrean delegation for exemption from indirect taxes on all locally produced goods and services traded between the two parties was referred by the Ethiopian side for further study. But, both countries agreed that the free movement of goods not be impeded or distracted by the "short supply" limitation. In spite of all these seemingly genuine attempts at moving towards higher levels of trade cooperation, however, the problems persisted. In its meeting of 3-4 April, 1995, the Joint High Ministerial Commission headed by Eritrean Minister Mahmoud Sherifo and Prime Minister Tamrat Layne of Ethiopia also raised the trade issue. The Eritrean side complained that contrary to the letter and spirit of the free trade agreement, Eritrean products were made to pay indirect taxes and intermediate payments of various descriptions in every Ethiopian region or Kelil they entered. To this, the Ethiopian response was as follows:-

"The Ethiopian delegation reiterated its position that Indirect Tax levied in Ethiopia is non-discriminatory and thus cannot be lifted.⁵⁴

The Implication of the Conflict

The conflict adversely affected both countries politically, economically and socially. After the conflict the economy of the two countries was retarded. In fact both countries remains the poorest in the world. However, here are the implications of the conflict that started in 1998.

Social Implication of the Conflict

The conflict devastated the two countries socially. Many lives were lost. Tens of thousands of people became homeless. Eritrea claimed that 19,000 Eritrean soldiers were killed during the conflict, most reports put the total war casualties from both sides as being around 70,000.⁵⁵ All these figures have been contested and other news reports simply state that "tens of thousands" or "as many as 100,000" were killed in the war.⁵⁶ Eritrea accused Ethiopia of using "human waves" to defeat Eritrean trenches. But according to a report by *The Independent*, there were no "human waves" because Ethiopia instead outmaneuvered and overpowered the Eritrean trenches.⁵⁷ The war led to massive internal displacement in both countries as civilians fled the war zone.

Many persons in both countries deported each other. Ethiopia expelled 77,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin, which compounding Eritrea's refugee problem.⁵⁸ The majority of the 77,000 Eritrean and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin were considered well off by the Ethiopian standard of living. They were deported after their belongings had been confiscated.⁵⁹ On the fate of Eritreans in Ethiopia, reports are mixed. In 1998, an estimated 120,000 to over 500,000 persons of Eritrean origin were living in Ethiopia.⁶⁰ The reason for the deportation of Eritreans from Ethiopia was based on two grounds: security risk and the acquirement of Eritrean citizenship by voting in the referendum, which amounted to renunciation of their Ethiopian citizenship.⁶¹ Accordingly, those who had voted in the referendum and remained in Ethiopia were called to register for residence permits, which had to be renewed every six months. Initially, individuals that seemed to be security threats such as members of the military and politicians with links to Eritrea were expelled and those wishing to reside in their new homeland in Eritrea had to provide their former identification documents issued by Ethiopian authorities to be marked as void.⁶²

On the side of Eritrean, about 7,500 Ethiopians living in Eritrea were interned and thousands deported. Thousands of others who were unable to pay the 200 USD relocation fee remained in Eritrea. Ethiopian detainees were subjected to torture and discrimination.⁶⁴ They were detained for days, weeks or months before they were bussed up to the Eritrean border or forced to travel through Djibouti. Overall, Eritrea deported around 70,000 Ethiopians.⁶⁴ As a result of the deportation many families were separated from each other. Men were separated from their wives and children; many missed their beloved neighbors and friends. The separation of families caused psychosocial trauma such as anxiety, depression and suicide.

The internal displacement was intense and occurred predominantly among the people residing in: Humära in the west; Badmä and the Yirga triangle around Šheraro, between the Märäb and the Tākäzze rivers; Tsoräna and Zalem-bässa.⁶⁵ The internal displacement made thousands of peoples homeless and to register for residence permits, which had to be renewed every six months. According to Human Rights Watch, detainees on both sides were subject in some cases to torture, rape, or other degrading treatment.⁶⁶ Many women that were raped psychologically became traumatized.

Economic Implication

The economy of the two countries was poor even before the conflict. But the conflict drained the economy because of the monetary involvement. The economies of both countries were already weak as a result of decades of cold war politics, civil war and drought. The war exacerbated these problems, resulting in food shortages. Prior to the war, much of Eritrea's trade was with Ethiopia, and much of Ethiopia's foreign trade relied on Eritrean roads and ports.⁶⁷

Trade, tourism and investment decreased at an alarming rate due to a heightened sense of risk. Moreover, it introduced tremendous uncertainty into the economic environment by making both public and private investment unsafe. Relatedly, the level of financial and human capital input reduced drastically. Investment in both countries were retarded, because of fear of the conflict. Accordingly, the light of financial and human capital is the basic economic cost of conflict. Government shift of expenditure away from investment towards maintenance and expansion of the military creates a spending deficit and public investment becomes dependent on the government's capability to access international loans. As the government is weakened economically and becomes resource-constrained to run the war, it often turns on the civilian population to increase revenue.

The war was very destructive and two of the world's poorest countries spent hundreds of millions of dollars on the war which was diverted from much needed development projects to military activities and weapon procurement.⁶⁸ Thus, the resources that would have helped build up the poor economies had been squandered on building massive armies and on sophisticated weapons. The diversion of economically active forces and resources to the war fundamentally collapsed the weakly performing

economies of the two countries and generation of development opportunities was halted.⁶⁹ The economies of both countries were also weakened in the aftermath as a result of the drought and the concomitant food insecurity.⁷⁰ The conflict increased famine because prior to the conflict much of Eritrea's trade had been with Ethiopia and much of Ethiopia's foreign trade was dependent on Eritrean outlets. Moreover, the fighting stopped farmers from planting crops and food production dropped by 62%.⁷¹ Agricultural production was also impaired by intensive bombing and heavy military vehicles traveling over farmland. Consequently, the war ended by producing two hungry states, with a 44% and 58% malnourished population in Ethiopia and Eritrea respectively.⁷² This incidence led many farmers jobless because they no longer go to farm because of the devastation wrought by intensive bombing of farm orchards and plantation. Starvation further escalated due to the aid conditionality sought by donors and development agencies that felt that the two states were fighting an unjust war.⁷³ For more than two years, both Ethiopia and Eritrea were denied access to loans from international lending institutions and from the prerogatives of debt cancellations.⁷⁴ The withdrawal of loan from the two countries increased economic recession. As a result citizens have no option than to wallow in sheer poverty and hardship. All these factors culminated in the decline of the GDP and the investment rates of both countries, leading to higher rates of inflation. It also brought about the depreciation of exchange rates, dwindling foreign exchange reserves and increased defense expenditures.⁷⁵

The conflict created a critical shortage of skilled manpower and raw materials. The country suffered from a structural food deficit. After the conflict Eritrea spent much in the development of post-war Warsay Yika'alo programme. Ethiopia's loss of access to ports and the cancellation of air routes affected Ethiopian farmers as well as Eritrean consumers, who depend on imported food. However, Ethiopia turned its eyes towards the ports of its neighbors, i.e., Djibouti, Berbera, Zeila, Mombasa and Port Sudan. The confiscation of about 200,000 tons of emergency food aid and other Ethiopian goods at Eritrean ports created a great hurdle to mitigate the post-war hunger.⁷⁶

Political Impact of the Conflict: Politically the conflict affected the political structure and foundation of the countries. It led to factions and divisions in the major political parties of Ethiopia and Eritrea, the TPLF (Tigrayan Liberation Front) and the PFDJ (People's Front for Democracy and Justice), respectively.⁷⁷ TPLF members who were disgruntled with the secession of Eritrea were determined to achieve total annihilation of soldiers. The rift within the PFDJ with regard to the worth of the conflict resulted in open opposition, and 15 senior officials raised demands for a renewed democracy in Eritrea. There was also rumbles of discontent in the army. However, among the activists, General Sébhat Afram and Major/Gen Tākélay Häbtä Séllassie exposed their own colleagues and had them sent to an underground prison.⁷⁸

Since then, political repression by PFDJ has resulted in a mass exodus of Eritreans from their homelands.⁷⁹ The post-independence promises of peace, development and democracy made by the PFDJ were deferred indefinitely. The failure of peace building between the two states has also led to the continuation of conflicts in the region. In this regard, the Eritrean leadership has been in armed conflict with all its neighbours and the country is a one-man dictatorship. For this reason, Eritrea lost support and acceptance from the international community and diplomatic circles.⁸⁰ This development halted the international community donation and humanitarian services. As a result hunger and starvation became synonymous in the two countries. Compulsory military service, which prescribes every Eritrean citizen between the age of 18 and 40 to be trained in military camps and undertake military service resulted in proliferation of militarization and militarism in the area which in turn caused security problems. Many civilians, and soldiers, took asylum in neighboring countries, detesting the system and the compulsory military service.⁸¹ Reports show that, each year, about 3,000-4,000 Eritreans emigrate to Ethiopia, 5,000-6,000 to Sudan and others to Saudi Arabia and the Yemen.⁸² Free press, the right of association and religious freedom, and the exercise of political and civil rights are still generally banned. The day favours

only individuals belonging to the Yeka'alo military elites, former 'freedom' Fighters.⁸³ The people of Eritrea remain under the repressive and unpredictable regime which is blind to compromise.⁸⁴

Conclusion

The conflict that the two countries witnessed affected the socio-economic and political structure of the countries. For the fact that Eritrea has ceded from Ethiopia and the war ended is not a good sign that further hostilities that may lead to further confrontation might not arise. In the light of this both countries should keep on maintaining peace at all cost. This is because the conflict affected the two countries negatively and the neighbouring countries. The aftermath of the conflict posed an obstacle to the neighbouring countries like Sudan and Djibouti, due to mass displacement of both citizens to these countries.

The international community cannot afford to look away and hope for the best when the drum of another conflict is blowing. Vigorous diplomacy is needed now. While the parties should not be permitted to deviate from implementing a Boundary Commission decision that both agreed would be final and binding. Creative solutions can be found to make implementation more politically acceptable by reducing the security and humanitarian impacts while demarcation proceeds. These diplomatic efforts should not be the prerequisite for implementation. But an early demonstration that the international community is serious about finding ways to soften the losses perceived by both parties would be a positive inducement for constructive action.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will be relevant if both parties strictly adhere to it.

. Since one of the causes of the conflicts can be traced to land dispute. They should be creative ways to facilitate implementation of the Boundary Commission's decision by negotiating parallel initiatives with the help of the U.S., AU and EU aimed at reducing the humanitarian impacts on the populations of the border region and preventing conflict which might result from the demarcation process.

. The issue of dual citizenship in both countries should be well defined. This is because both countries retaliated against each on the issue of deportation. If this is not checkmated they might be further occurrence of hostility and confrontation that is capable of reviving old grievances between the two countries.

. Both countries should embrace peace in order to ensure lasting political stability and economic development. Countries that are lacking peace and tranquility will definitely suffer economic downturn and retardation.

. Since both countries witnessed a level of devastation due to bombing in many conflict ravage areas. The policy of rehabilitation should be placed in high premium. This policy will accelerate the renovation process of many of these cities and villages that were affected by the conflict.

. Finally, international community should create a rapid response verification capability to troubleshoot border and deter those who may want to ignite problem that may bring about another conflict.

ENDNOTES

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