



HSC: Historical Security Council

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Issue: The Badme War (1998-2000)

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## I. Introduction

The Badme War, also known as the Eritrean-Ethiopian War, was a significant armed conflict that erupted on May 13, 1998, following a territorial dispute over the village of Badme, which had been administered by Ethiopia. The origins of the war can be traced back to tensions and border disagreements that had persisted since Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia in 1993. Diplomatic efforts, including the establishment of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Joint Border Commission, failed to prevent the escalation of hostilities after skirmishes broke out in early 1998. Eritrea and Ethiopia both spent a considerable amount of their revenue and wealth on the armament ahead of the war and reportedly suffered between 70,000–300,000 deaths combined as a direct consequence thereof, excluding an indeterminate number of refugees, over the span of a mere two years.

Ethiopia's military actions, perceived by many as excessive in response to Eritrea's initial territorial assertions, resulted in numerous losses from both sides in addition to widespread devastation. The conflict attracted global attention, prompting calls for ceasefires and diplomatic solutions from many entities, the United Nations and the United States being some of them. Despite these initiatives, the war continued until 2000, when a series of negotiations led to a cease-fire and the signing of a peace agreement that effectively ended the conflict.

The Badme war shed light on deeper issues related to national identity and postcolonial challenges in the region. The fighting left lasting scars on both countries, complicating the path to lasting peace and stability, and mutual understanding in the area.

## II. Key Vocabulary

**Asmara:** The capital of Eritrea

**Badme:** A town in the Gash-Barka region of Eritrea. The region that started the war.

**Buffer Zone:** A buffer zone is a neutral area that lies between two or more bodies of land, usually between countries. Buffer zones have various purposes, politically or otherwise. They can be set up for a multitude of reasons, such as to prevent violence, protect the environment, shield residential and commercial zones from industrial accidents or natural disasters, or even isolate prisons (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica).



**Demarcate:** The marking of the limits or boundaries of a certain area. Before the war officially broke out, Eritrean president Isaias Afewerki urged the Ethiopian prime minister to withdraw from Eritrean territory and work toward common border demarcation.

**Delimitation:** The process of drawing electoral boundaries of electoral precincts, such as states, counties, or other municipalities (Delimitation).

**Internally Displaced People (IDPs):** Internally displaced people (IDPs) have been forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, persecution, or disasters; however, unlike refugees, they remain within their own country (UNHCR).

**Mekele:** The capital city of the Tigray region, in northern Ethiopia.

**Moratorium:** A temporary prohibition of an activity. The United States arranged a moratorium on air strikes between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

**Prisoners of War (POW):** any person captured or interned by a belligerent power during war. In the strictest sense, it is applied only to members of regularly organized armed forces, but by a broader definition, it has also included guerrillas, civilians who take up arms against an enemy openly, or noncombatants associated with a military force (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica).

**Sovereignty:** The power of a country to control its own government and have the ultimate authority over other people and to change existing laws (Sovereignty). The dispute over Badme lies in the inability of the two nations to decide which one is sovereign over Badme.

**The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF):** An armed liberation movement, which was a key entity in the Eritrean path to independence from Ethiopia.

**Trench warfare:** Warfare in which opposing armed forces attack, counterattack, and defend from relatively permanent systems of trenches dug into the ground. It was used by the Eritrean army to defend their territorial acquisitions.

### III. Involved Countries and Organizations

#### Algeria

Algeria was also involved thoroughly in the peacemaking process as it assumed the rotating leadership in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1999. The Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika made the Ethiopian-Eritrean crisis the OAU's top priority and appointed an envoy, the prime minister at the



time, Ahmed Ouyahia to explore ways of ending the war. As part of the mediation operation, Algeria also organized indirect talks between Ethiopia and Eritrea in Algiers.

## Eritrea

Following a series of border skirmishes that escalated when Ethiopian troops occupied the Eritrean village Adi Murug, the president, Isaias Afewerki, urged Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to reverse the incursion. After the prime minister's response, stating that Adi Murug and Badme were Ethiopian territories. According to Eritrea, Ethiopian forces tried to disarm Eritrean border guards. Gunfire exchange resulted in Eritrean casualties, and the nation reacted by occupying Badme. Eritrea argued that Badme was legally part of its territory. The nation rejected the U.S.-Rwanda Peace Plan when it was first proposed in June 1998, as it held onto the notion of defending Badme's sovereignty, only to accept it in February 1999 after crumbling under Ethiopian assault ("Eritrean-Ethiopian War | Research Starters | EBSCO Research").

## Ethiopia

For Ethiopia, the root cause of the war was Eritrea's occupation of territories previously administered by Ethiopia, like Badme. The parliament declared war on Eritrea after the nation refused to withdraw from the occupied regions. In the first phase of the war, Ethiopia remained flexible about dispute settlements, even accepting the U.S.-Rwanda Peace Plan in June 1998. However, it continued to strengthen its fighting power, and as the war progressed, it launched more aggressive attacks on Eritrean forces, changing its objective from "pushing Eritrea out of lands previously administered by Ethiopia to 'degrading' Eritrea's armed forces" ("Eritrean-Ethiopian War | Research Starters | EBSCO Research").

## Rwanda

Rwanda was alarmed by the conflict and the spillovers that could ensue in the Horn region. One official stated, "The Horn of Africa is a very strategic region, on the Red Sea and close to the Persian Gulf. If the war continues, it will mean not only a huge loss of life but also a complete destabilization of the region. We can bear Sudan and Somalia [at war], but we can't live with Ethiopia and Eritrea fighting on top of that" (Hamilton). Rwanda joined the US in its mediation efforts, and together, they developed the U.S.-Rwanda Peace Plan. Unfortunately, this document failed to put a stop to the war.

## The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF)

The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), which led the 30-year war for independence, has controlled the country since it defeated Ethiopian armed forces in 1991; its leader, Isaias Afwerki, serves as



the President. The People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), the core of the former EPLF, which split off from the Government in 1994, is the sole political party.

### The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)

In 1975, the Tigray (Tigrayan) People's Liberation Front began a protracted rebellion against the military government. The conflict aggravated a disastrous drought and famine between 1984 and 1985, which the government tried to ameliorate by forcibly relocating hundreds of thousands of peasants to well-watered regions in the south and west. Tigray forces liberated the region in 1989 and supported the overthrow of the Ethiopian national government in 1991. Their victory resulted in the replacement of an Amhara-dominated government with one led by Tigray leaders, a source of continuing conflict throughout the 1990s. It was classified as a terrorist organization by the Ethiopian government during the Tigray War until its removal from the list in 2023. Their leader, Meles Zenawi, became the president of Ethiopia from 1991 to 1995, and the prime minister from 1995 to 2012.

### The Organization of African Unity (OAU)

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established on May 25, 1963, with the aim of promoting unity and cooperation among African nations. Formed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the OAU emerged from a historical context of resistance to colonialism and foreign domination, influenced by both African nations and the African diaspora, which advocated for pan-Africanism. It was a key entity in ending the war and proposing solutions, including the treaty that ended the conflict.

### United States of America

The United States played a key role in aiding the restoration of order and security. The Governments of the United States and Rwanda had been engaged in intensive efforts to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and so they created the American-Rwandan peace plan. Having excellent relations with the Governments of both Eritrea and Ethiopia, the United States and Rwanda had sought to encourage both parties to end the conflict. It also halted the air raids temporarily. "The United States has significant interests in ending the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea as soon as possible. The current conflict threatens regional stability and threatens to reverse Ethiopian and Eritrean progress in economic and political development." Susan E. Rice, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs.

## IV. Focused Overview of the Issue

### 1. Leading up to the war



The colony of Eritrea was formally established by Italy in 1890, and was ruled by the nation until Italy was defeated by the British in World War 2, 1941. The Treaty of Peace with the Allied Powers of 1947 stipulated in its Article 23 that Italy renounced “all rights and title to the Italian possessions in Africa.” In 1950, UN General Assembly Resolution 390A(V) determined that “Eritrea shall constitute an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown,” and that, despite being federated to Ethiopia, it should maintain a certain amount of autonomy over its constitution and elected government. However, Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie violated the rights of Eritreans. Starting by banning political parties in 1955 and trade unions in 1958, the Emperor officially dissolved the Eritrean parliament and annexed Eritrea to Ethiopia as its 14th province in 1962 (Rodriguez).

Since 1971, the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) had fought against the Soviet-backed regime of Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam. In 1975, the EPLF joined forces with an emerging national movement in the neighbouring Ethiopian province of Tigray: the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). Together, they fought a decades-long war of insurgency against the Mengistu government. Meles Zenawi, leading the TPLF, and Isaias Afewerki, leading the EPLF, marched triumphantly together into Addis Ababa in May 1991. It is crucial to note that the EPLF marched into Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, three days before Addis Ababa fell to the TPLF. Meles assumed the interim position as Ethiopia’s Prime Minister in Addis Ababa and, through subsequent elections, held on to the post. After their victory, the EPLF and the TPLF cemented an agreement under which Eritrea held a referendum on independence, and the Provisional Government of Eritrea was established in Asmara. (Rodriguez). Two years later, Isaias became the first president of an independent Eritrea.

However, the borders between Ethiopia and Eritrea had never been clearly marked.

The unclear border situation fueled conflicts between 1995 and 1998. Eritrea expelled Ethiopians of Tigrayan descent and alleged that Ethiopian battalions had invaded Dada and Badme in 1997. Both sides redrew administrative decisions relating to the undefined border. For instance, Ethiopia published a redrawn map of Tigray, which Eritrea viewed as a colonist expansionism policy. As retaliation, Eritrea introduced the Nacfa, a new currency. In turn, Ethiopia required hard currency for trade transactions in an attempt to undermine it (ACCORD).

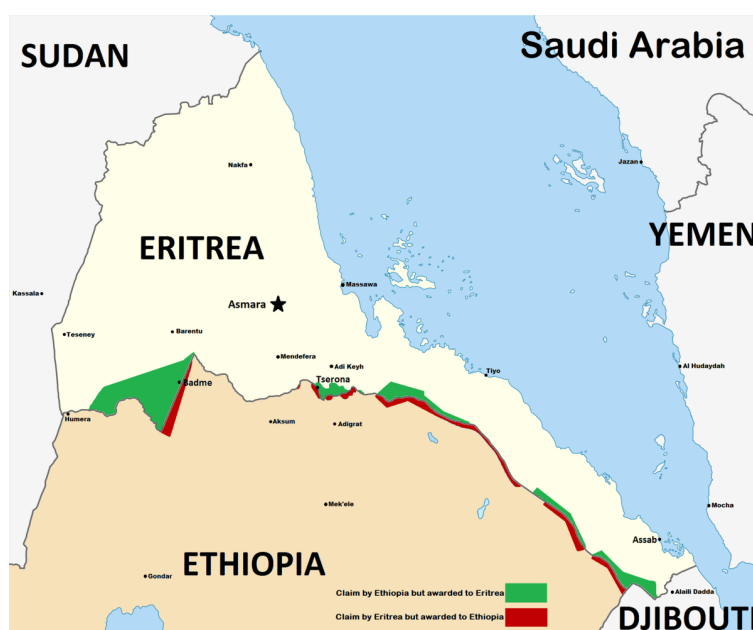


Image 1: Map of the Eritrean-Ethiopian Border



Between November 1997 and the outbreak of hostilities in May 1998, a hastily created Eritrea-Ethiopia Joint Border Commission (EEJC) met three times to try to resolve border disagreements. This seemed unnecessary because Eritrea's borders had been clearly demarcated since the 1940s. As early as 1945, the first British military administrator of Eritrea, Stephen H. Longrigg, noted that Eritrea's "borders with Sudan and Ethiopia were in detail delimited." The EEJC failed to recognize this and allowed a small skirmish at Badme to escalate to an open war. Potentially explosive border disputes that had been boiling below the surface climaxed into open warfare on May 6, 1998, when Eritrea captured the border village of Badme, which had been under Ethiopian administrative rule.

## 2. Economic Causes

The economy was a factor that greatly influenced Eritrean-Ethiopian tensions. Previously, the two countries were economically integrated till 1998, starting from Eritrea's independence in 1991. During these years of economic cooperation, the two countries have strengthened their ties through a number of trade agreements. This includes the 1995 free trade agreement and the 1991 agreement on the use of a common currency, the Ethiopian Birr, used by Eritrea until it adopted its own currency. Significantly, in the 1991 agreement, Eritrea formally granted Ethiopia free access to use the port in Assab and Massawa port for an "insignificant transit charge" of 1.5 percent. The agreement also allowed Ethiopia to run and maintain the Eritrea-based Assab oil refinery, necessary for providing its citizens with refined oil (Eyes on the Prize).

When Eritrea introduced its own currency, the nakfa, in 1997, it showed a strong symbol of independent statehood (Fielding). This created a problem in Ethiopian access to Eritrea's ports. Now landlocked, Ethiopia started a campaign to annex these ports, claiming that they had always been part of Ethiopian territory (Rodriguez). Ethiopia redirected its trade from Eritrea to neighboring country Djibouti, causing Eritrea economic loss and even problems with food imports. Close to the border, Ethiopian authorities began to be unwelcoming to foreigners, increasing tensions.

## 3. The conflict

On May 13, 1998, Ethiopia declared war against its former province, Eritrea. According to the Eritrean version of events, hostilities began in the summer of 1997, when Ethiopian troops penetrated Eritrean territory in hot pursuit of Ethiopian insurgents and occupied the Eritrean village of Adi Murug. Eritrean president Isaias Afewerki expressed his "grave concern" to Ethiopian prime minister Meles Zenawi, urging him to reverse the incursion and for both to work for common border demarcation. Zenawi agreed that border demarcation was critical. However, he stated that Ethiopian border guards in Adi Murug and Badme were in Ethiopian territories. Subsequent border clashes at the western front, according to Eritrea,



were caused when Ethiopian forces tried to disarm Eritrean border guards. Gunfire was exchanged, causing Eritrean casualties that included a high-ranking military officer. Eritrea responded by occupying Badme.

According to Ethiopia, the root cause of the war was Eritrea's occupation of territories, such as Badme, previously administered by Ethiopia. Resisted by border guards, Eritrean troops opened fire, killing Ethiopian militia members. Ethiopian forces returned fire, inflicting casualties on Eritrean troops. On May 6, 1998, Eritrea sent troop reinforcements and occupied Badme and its environs. Zenawi sent several letters between May 6 and May 13, 1998, in an attempt to persuade Eritrea to withdraw from the territories it occupied. When Eritrea refused, the Ethiopian parliament declared war.

It had neither oil nor diamonds, but it did not matter: both Eritrea and Ethiopia wanted it on their side of the border. The war was described as "two bald men fighting over a comb". As the war spread, so did the massive displacement of communities.

After taking a few miles of Ethiopian territory, the Eritrean army dug in and began to use trench warfare to defend their territorial acquisitions. In response, the Ethiopian army used the time-honored method for combating trench warfare—rushing the trenches in human waves in order to capture the enemy. This method of fighting has led to a large and mounting death toll on both sides. Though the numbers are disputed, it is estimated that seventy thousand soldiers from both sides have died. The rest of the world had been stunned by methods of fighting that had not been used for such an extended period of time since World War I. In addition to the staggering death toll, this war has also been characterized by the use of land mines against both combatants and civilians. When the Eritrean army retreated from the territory it had captured initially, it left fields and scrubland filled with landmines, making farming impossible and a re-establishment of the Ethiopian administration difficult.

The war alarmed international observers because of the scant economic and strategic value of the contested territory. The United Nations, the United States, and the European Union called for an immediate cease-fire. U.S. President Bill Clinton dispatched the U.S. assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Susan E. Rice, to the region to explore diplomatic solutions. On June 3, 1998, the United States and Rwanda presented the U.S.-Rwanda Peace Plan to the warring countries. Ethiopia accepted the plan on June 4, but Eritrea rejected it because the plan recommended unconditional withdrawal from the territories Eritrea occupied after May 13.

A day after it accepted the U.S.-Rwanda Peace Plan, Ethiopia launched air raids on Eritrea's capital, Asmara. Ethiopia also took a series of economic measures designed to weaken Eritrea's ability to fight. The new measures included mass deportation of more than seventy thousand Eritreans, confiscation of Eritreans' property in Ethiopia, and revocation of Ethiopian citizenship, and subsequent expulsion to Eritrea, of Ethiopians with Eritrean ancestry. While the expulsion of citizens has primarily affected Eritreans, an



estimated three hundred fifty thousand Ethiopians have been moved from the Tigray region of Ethiopia, where most of the fighting has occurred. During the first year of the war, the Eritrean army bombed towns in Tigray and terrorized the local population. The Ethiopian air force also bombed civilian areas. The on-again, off-again nature of the fighting discouraged Ethiopians from returning to their homes. The failure of peace talks and the development of new fronts in the fighting had also discouraged local residents from returning to the areas under dispute or near the disputed areas.

Ethiopia also imposed complete air and land blockades on Eritrea. Throughout the first phase of the war, Ethiopia followed a strategy of accepting peace proposals while escalating the conflict. Eritrea's strategy was to try to de-escalate the conflict, conserve its limited human resources, and defend its sovereignty from destruction by Ethiopia's seemingly limitless fighting forces.

A month after the start of the war, when the Ethiopian air force conducted air raids on Asmara, the Asmara International Airport was hit, resulting in civilian casualties. The same day, Eritrea retaliated and attacked Mekele, the provincial capital of Tigray in northern Ethiopia, inflicting civilian casualties. A week later, on June 12, Eritrea attacked the Ethiopian airbase Adi Grat. Two days later, both countries accepted a U.S.-brokered moratorium on air attacks.

On June 18, a high-level delegation representing the Organization of African Unity (OAU) arrived in the region to build on the U.S.-Rwanda Peace Plan and to emphasize OAU's serious concern over the crisis. On July 12, 1999, the delegation presented the Modalities for Implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement. Another document, the Technical Arrangement for the Implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement, designed to firm up the proposals as binding and unamendable, was presented to the two countries on August 5, 1998. As the year ended, the two countries engaged in periodic skirmishes while the international community attempted to prevent escalation.

On January 1, 1999, the United States issued a travel warning for Eritrea, sensing an impending Ethiopian attack. On February 2, the U.N. envoy to Ethiopia and Eritrea, Mohamed Sahnoun, visited the capitals of the two countries. His visit had little impact on Ethiopia's hardening position.

On February 5, 1999, Ethiopia breached the air-strike agreement mediated by the United States and started massive air and land campaigns on all fronts that continued until February 28. Eritrean western defensive lines, previously steadfast and unyielding, crumbled under the continuous Ethiopian assault. Eritrea abandoned its western defense lines, including the village of Badme, where the crisis had begun. Eritrea then sued for a cease-fire and accepted the U.S.-Rwanda Peace Plan and the OAU framework agreement and technical arrangements. Ethiopia refused the cease-fire, claiming that the OAU agreement and accompanying proposals needed further modification in view of the new military situation.



As one would expect, many families were damaged, whether it be from the death of loved ones or the borders that separated towns and the intertwined communities. In addition, the economic impact on the border trading communities was significant too.

"The active commercial activities that we used to see before the war no longer take place," says Kiflom Gebremedhin, from a border village on the Eritrean side.

In August 1999, Algeria assumed the rotating OAU leadership. Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika made the Ethiopian-Eritrean crisis the OAU's priority. He appointed former Algerian prime minister Ahmed Ouyahia as envoy to explore ways of ending the war. Ethiopia, emboldened by its military gains, refused to negotiate in hopes of extracting further concessions from Eritrea. It launched massive air and ground attacks on the eastern border and on the central front. Ethiopia's objective changed from pushing Eritrea out of lands previously administered by Ethiopia to "degrading" Eritrea's armed forces. On April 29, 2000, indirect talks mediated by Algeria, the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations began in Algiers, Algeria. Eritrean foreign minister Haile Woldetensae and Ethiopian foreign minister Seyoum Mesfin headed their respective delegations. Meanwhile, Zenawi stated, "We will fight and negotiate."

In May, Ethiopia continued its massive assault on all fronts. Ethiopia added new conditions, informing Bouteflika of its desire to see redeployment of Eritrean forces to no closer than 25 kilometers of the countries' common border. On May 23, Eritrea's defensive positions were overrun on all fronts. Two days later, Eritrea accepted all of Ethiopia's terms and completed its withdrawal to the buffer zone 25 kilometers away from the two countries' recognized common border.

#### 4. Humanitarian Issues and War Repercussions:

The border conflict was exacerbated by Ethiopia's deportation of 55,000 people with Eritrean connections. After the conflict erupted in June 1998, large numbers of people of Eritrean descent, even those who were Ethiopian nationals, were rounded up and deposited near the border. Although the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, and Amnesty International gave verbal warnings, the international community remained mostly quiet about the humanitarian abuse (Fielding).

At the beginning of 2000, there were 34 internally displaced person (IDP) camps in Eritrea with a population of over 150,000 people. These camps were established after June 1998, the majority of them created in the first quarter of 1999 to accommodate people displaced by the eruption of hostilities ("ICC Briefing No. 1: Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) Camps in Eritrea - Eritrea"). In addition to IDPs, Jeje and Hutsatat camps accommodated 10,000 rural deportees from Ethiopia. There were also a number of IDPs in host communities, bringing the total number to nearly 300,000. In cooperation with the Red Cross Society of Eritrea (RCSE), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) carries out assessments in the



displacement camps. In Ethiopia, assessments by the ICRC of the possible needs of displaced civilians are not possible at the moment since the ICRC has not been given access to the affected region (“Fact Sheet: ICRC in Ethiopia-Eritrea International Conflict - Eritrea”). In regard to prisoners of war (POWs), regular visits could be made in Ethiopia to Eritrean prisoners. However, throughout the conflict, Eritrea refused to grant the ICRC access to POWs (Clinic).

The war has brought significant humanitarian casualties to both sides. According to the UN Report of the US Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, “Tens of thousands of lives have been lost and thousands more have been maimed.” Furthermore, the war has severely damaged the economies of both Eritrea and Ethiopia. As mentioned before, Ethiopia’s cut off from Eritrean ports disrupted its trade economy. In Eritrea, the war caused millions of dollars in property damage and livestock. Overall, the economic growth of both countries was terribly crippled (Rodriguez).

## V. Important Events & Chronology

| Date (Day/Month/Year) | Event                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1869 to 1941          | Eritrea was colonized by Italy                                                                                               |
| August 14, 1945       | Italy was defeated in WWII, Eritrea became part of Ethiopia by an order from the UN; however, it still held some sovereignty |
| February 10, 1947     | The Treaty of Peace with the Allied Powers is signed, and Italy hands over Eritrea to the British.                           |
| December 2, 1950      | The UN General Assembly Resolution 390A was passed, declaring Eritrea an autonomous territory.                               |
| 1961                  | Ethiopia removed Eritrea's independence, and it became an Ethiopian province.                                                |
| 1971 to 1991          | The EPLF had fought against Mengistu Haile Mariam                                                                            |
| 1975                  | The EPLF joined forces with the TPLF                                                                                         |
| May 1991              | The EPLF and the TPLF were victorious against the Mengistu government                                                        |



|                                       |                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| April 1993                            | In an internationally supervised referendum, 99.8 percent of the Eritrean people voted for independence.                             |
| May 24, 1993                          | Independence was officially declared and Isaias Afewerki became the first president of Eritrea                                       |
| 1997                                  | Ethiopian troops penetrated Eritrean territory in hot pursuit of Ethiopian insurgents and occupied the Eritrean village of Adi Murug |
| November 15, 1997                     | The Eritrean nakfa replaced the birr at par as the official currency.                                                                |
| Between November, 1997, and May, 1998 | The EEJC met 3 times to try to resolve the issue                                                                                     |
| May 6, 1998                           | Eritrea captured the village of Badme                                                                                                |
| May 13, 1998                          | Ethiopia declared war against its former province, Eritrea                                                                           |
| June 3, 1998                          | The United States and Rwanda presented the U.S.-Rwanda Peace Plan to the warring countries                                           |
| June 4, 1998                          | Ethiopia accepted the plan, but Eritrea rejected it                                                                                  |
| June 5, 1998                          | Ethiopia launched air raids on Asmara, Eritrea attacked Mekele                                                                       |
| June 12, 1998                         | Eritrea attacked the Ethiopian airbase Adi Grat                                                                                      |
| June 14, 1998                         | Ethiopia and Eritrea accepted a U.S.-brokered moratorium on air attacks                                                              |
| June 18, 1998                         | High-level delegation representing the Organization of African Unity (OAU) arrived in the region                                     |
| August 5, 1998                        | The Technical Arrangement for the Implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement was presented to the two countries                   |
| January 1, 1999                       | The United States issued a travel warning for Eritrea                                                                                |



|                                 |                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| February 2, 1999                | The U.N. envoy to Ethiopia and Eritrea, Mohamed Sahnoun, visited the capitals of the two countries                                |
| February 5 to February 28, 1999 | Ethiopia breached the air-strike agreement mediated by the United States and started massive air and land campaigns on all fronts |
| July 12, 1999                   | The delegation presented the Modalities for Implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement                                         |
| August, 1999                    | Algeria assumed the rotating OAU leadership                                                                                       |

## VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

- The Treaty of Peace with the Allied Powers of 1947:

During the period of Italian control over Eritrea between 1890 and 1941, Ethiopia and Italy concluded three boundary agreements that together addressed the entire common boundary of the Colony of Eritrea and the Empire of Ethiopia. Following World War II, the Treaty of Peace with the Allied Powers of 1947 stipulated in its Article 23 that Italy renounced “all rights and title to the Italian possessions in Africa”, and agreed that “pending their final disposal, the said possessions shall continue under their present (British) administration” (Rodriguez).

- The UN General Assembly Resolution 390A:

In 1950, the United Nations General Assembly, by its resolution 390A(V), recommended that “Eritrea shall constitute an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown.” The UN also determined that Eritrea should be federated to Ethiopia, but maintain a certain amount of autonomy, such as its own constitution and elected government.

- [The U.S.-Rwanda Peace Plan](#):

This was the first treaty created to mediate the conflict, and the plan Ethiopia agreed to and Eritrea denied primarily. Eritrea agreed to it as well later on, but at that point, Ethiopia refused. Initially, Eritrea did not accept it because it required them to withdraw from certain territories. Ethiopia denied it afterwards, claiming it needed modification.



- [UNSCR Resolution 1177](#):

Passed on 26 June 1998, this resolution was passed unanimously to address the conflict, calling for a ceasefire and peaceful resolution. The document called on the parties to fully cooperate with the OAU. It also requested the Secretary-General to provide technical support to assist with eventual delimitation and demarcation of the common border and establish a Trust Fund with the help of Member States for this purpose. While both parties seemingly welcomed the resolution, it was ultimately ineffective.

## VII. Failed Solution Attempts

The U.S.-Rwanda peace plan was not successful because it failed to satisfy both nations at the same time, as mentioned above. In addition, Diplomatic interventions initiated by the Ethiopian Prime Minister and driven by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as well as the forming of the Joint Eritrea/Ethiopia Commission and the taking of other measures sought to address the specific concerns of the parties and to investigate alleged incidents, but failed to deal with deep-seated historical continuities and tensions behind the observable symptoms. All these attempts, therefore, failed to prevent or stop the war.

Efforts carried out by the OAU also failed. On June 18, 1998, a high-level delegation representing the Organization of African Unity (OAU) arrived in the region to build on the U.S.-Rwanda Peace Plan and to emphasize OAU's serious concern over the crisis. On July 12, 1999, the delegation presented the Modalities for Implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement. This document demanded a return to positions before 6 May 1998 and for the parties to affirm their commitment to the non-use of force to settle disputes. Another document, the Technical Arrangement for the Implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement, designed to firm up the proposals as binding and unamendable, was presented to the two countries on August 5, 1998 ("Eritrean-Ethiopian War | Research Starters | EBSCO Research").

Ethiopia's efforts to halt the conflict by launching a military offensive in order to recapture Badme did more harm than good, seeing as it just renewed the conflict, causing devastating consequences.

International mediation attempts continued: in January 1999, the US issued a travel warning for Eritrea. On February 2, the UN envoy to Ethiopia and Eritrea, Mohamed Sahnoun, visited the capitals of the two countries, but his visit failed to ease tensions. An airstrike agreement that was mediated by the United States was also discussed but ultimately breached by Ethiopia on February 5, 1999.

Finally, international peacekeeping missions deployed at the borders to monitor the war failed because of the lack of cooperation of Eritrea due to restrictions placed on them.



## VIII. Possible Solutions

What the solutions should primarily target is the underlying issues and hostilities between the nations, seeing that resolving them is the main component of long-lasting peace. This was not addressed at the time, and that is why there is constant tension between Ethiopia and Eritrea to this day. In order to resolve the conflict sustainably, delegates must consider a combination of diplomatic, humanitarian, and territorial solutions.

### 1. End to Hostilities

To avoid further economic and humanitarian casualties, an end to armed conflict should be the delegates' first step in lasting peace. A ceasefire brokered by observing neutral states or international organizations (like the OAU) is vital to bring both parties into future structured negotiations. Delegates can learn from past failed peace plans to figure out more effective solutions to stop military action. In line with ending the armed conflict, demilitarization could be considered. International mediation to secure the disputed territory, not only to end the armed conflict but to ensure the safety of civilians within the warzone, is crucial.

### 2. Border Reconciliation

The sovereignty issue of the disputed territory must be resolved. Delegates should propose solutions relating to the governance of Badme, as well as come up with a way to reach a final territorial ruling. This could be done by creating a temporary administration in Badme, ideally under the oversight of a border commission managed by a neutral organization like the UN. This border commission should endeavor to examine the territorial claims of both countries, evaluating historical treaties and maps as well as other documents. This border commission should also ensure the protection of the land and a peaceful acceptance on both sides regarding the sovereignty decision. If the problem continues, a referral to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is not out of the question.

### 3. Humanitarian Aid

The war has created a massive humanitarian crisis regarding internally displaced people. Delegates should work to ensure the safety of the warzone to allow access for humanitarian aid, possibly working with international organizations. The delivery of urgent aid is essential, as well as determining the state of IDP camps. Ensuring full cooperation with the ICRC on both sides could be a useful attempt. The large number of prisoners of war and their release must also be discussed under humanitarian law.

### 4. National Reconstruction



As both nations have suffered great economic losses from the war, delegates must also find ways to remedy the poor financial conditions of the states to ease the peace processes. The economic foundations of this war should not be ignored, and delegates should consider economic cooperation and rebuilding trust between Eritrea and Ethiopia. A few ways to do that could be through infrastructure rehabilitation and joint projects, and renewed trade discussions. The two nations must find closure on the topic trade routes and port access.

## IX. Useful Links

[Ethiopia and Eritrea: Border War](#)

[Beyond the Border War: The Ethiopian-Eritrean Conflict and International Mediation Efforts](#)

[The Eritrea-Ethiopia border war of 1998-2000 revisited – Martin Plaut](#)

[The Eritrean-Ethiopian War \(1998-2000\)](#)

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