



## Ethiopia Finally Accepts Border Demarcation, But Will a Strong Peace with Eritrea Follow?

**OE Watch Commentary:** When the Eritrean-Ethiopian War ended in 2000 after two years of fighting, there were hopes that a lasting peace could be found between these countries (two of the world's poorest) after suffering tens of thousands of casualties and spending hundreds of millions of dollars on the conflict. The Algiers Agreement, which ended this costly war, included among its provisions that a commission would make the final decision regarding their border. Both countries agreed to accept this demarcation decision as binding. Ethiopia was unhappy though, when the town of Badme was awarded to Eritrea, and as a result was unwilling to fully implement the Algiers Agreement; that is, as noted in the accompanying excerpted article from the *Ethiopian Herald* newspaper, until now.



The Algiers Agreement, signed in 2000, led to the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea being demarcated.  
Source: Skilla1st/modified, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eritrean-Ethiopian\\_War\\_Map\\_1998.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eritrean-Ethiopian_War_Map_1998.png), CC BY-SA 3.0.

Such a move by Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali is being welcomed by many within the country as well as the international community. Since Ali (a former army officer) assumed office just a few months ago, he has implemented several other initiatives, including releasing thousands of political prisoners, holding reconciliation talks with the opposition, and lifting the nation's state of emergency, that as the accompanying article relates, is shaking up the country's political landscape.

Ethiopia must now withdraw from Badme, but as one analyst said, it was not just border issues that led to war with Eritrea, there were also historical, economic and regional military interests. Thus, while considered a positive step, it is uncertain that lasting peace will be achieved by the Ethiopian Prime Minister. One factor greatly complicating the situation is Eritrea's President, Isaias Afwerq, whose repression has been noted as so severe that the country has earned the moniker "Africa's North Korea." Although Eritrea uses its longstanding adversarial relationship with Ethiopia to help justify its repression in the name of security, Ethiopia relinquishing Badme is not certain to result in Eritrean regime change. Thus, while Ethiopia is moving forward on many fronts with reforms, its necessary partner in this situation remains at odds.

At the time this commentary was written, Eritrea had still not responded to Ethiopia's outstretched hand. However, there is, as the article points out, hope, or at least incentives. Both nations could eventually benefit from an agreement, and not just from a reduction in military spending. Back when Ethiopia and Eritrea were united as a federation, landlocked Ethiopia used Eritrean ports, and while Ethiopia has found ports in other countries to use since the federation dissolved, Eritrean ones would be particularly convenient for some Ethiopian exports and imports.

The expectation is that there will be discussions between the countries before full implementation of the Algiers Agreement would occur. Eritrea, in having Badme returned, would be seen as an early winner in the process, but Afwerq, who is starting to see cracks in the hold he has on his country as young people recently and bravely began to protest, is still viewed as a wildcard. His regime survived in part because he painted Ethiopia as unwilling to make peace, but that unwillingness no longer appears to be the case. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“But the readiness of the Ethiopian government alone is not sufficient for the successful implementation of the peace accord. In addition, the basic causes of war are still unsolved.”*

**Source:** Tsegaye Talahun and Haftu Gebrezgabihier, “Ethiopia’s Call for Implementation of the Algier’s Agreement,” *The Ethiopian Herald*, 7 June 2018. <http://www.ethpress.gov.et/herald/index.php/news/national-news/item/12048-ethiopia-s-call-for-implementation-of-algiers-agreement>

*But the readiness of the Ethiopian government alone is not sufficient for the successful implementation of the peace Accord. In addition, the basic causes of war are still unsolved. There are basic practical challenges to implement the agreement.*

*“Hence, the Eritrean government wants to use the conflict as a survival strategy. Giving away Badime (the disputed area) would not change the behavior of the Asmara region.*

*By its nature [the] Eritrean government is not ready to accept Ethiopia’s call as it does not want to see a strong state in the region, Bekele [a lecturer at Addis Ababa University] notes.*