

The Willful Misrepresentation of Eritrean History

Articles written about Eritrea by supposed analysts who present themselves as experts on Horn of Africa matters are fraught with misrepresentation of facts and at times go as far as presenting blatant lies in an attempt to justify wild claims and views. Anyone with basic knowledge of the history of the region, especially Eritrea, and with the most rudimentary understanding of current events can almost immediately spot packaged analyses deliberately peddled to further a specific agenda that is far from promoting regional peace and stability. That Western mainstream media would push these articles is not surprising. What is, however, surprising and disappointing is when these articles appear in supposedly African newspapers and media outlets that claim to present alternative views on Africa. A case in point is the recent article entitled, *Famine in Ethiopia - The Roots Lie in Eritrea's Long-Running Feud with Tigrayans*, which has appeared on several African websites.

When it comes to Africa, Westerners and Western-backed African media, reduce the continent's affairs down to ethnic cleavages and deliberately oversimplify complex politics into childlike concepts. The title of the article would like us to believe that Eritrea, as a nation, has some sort of feud with Tigrayans as a people. The article dangerously equates the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) with the entire people of the Tigray region and uses the Tigray people as synonym for the TPLF — a political organisation that represents a very narrow section of the people of the region. The article glosses over the important fact that it was the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), provided substantial support to the TPLF when it was first formed in the mid-1970s.

Trying to portray the current political situation in the Horn of Africa as some sort of personal vendetta by Eritrea's Head of State against the TPLF, is an attempt to whitewash the political folly of the TPLF. The root cause of the situation in the Tigray region and the apparent instability in Ethiopia is none other than the TPLF. It is the grave political miscalculation of the TPLF — just as in the early 1980s — that has brought us where we are today. The EPLF, and subsequently the Government of Eritrea have had an unwavering commitment to create a prosperous region in the Horn of Africa where all the people — not just a small minority — can benefit from.

The Eritrean government has consistently and tirelessly worked to bring about peace to the region. Despite the best efforts of the Eritrean Government, the TPLF has worked hard to plunge the region in permanent chaos. The after effects of the disastrous decision of the TPLF led Ethiopian government to launch war against Eritrea in 1998, where tens of thousands of lives were lost in pursuit of the TPLF's policy, can still be felt. The TPLF's decision when in power to hold peace ransom for the best part of twenty years by refusing to implement the Algiers Agreement of 2000 and the FINAL and BINDING decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopian Border Commission (EEBC) of April 2002,, is testament to the organisation's contempt for peace and the rule of law. Even when Eritrea and Ethiopia finally signed the Peace and Friendship Agreement in July of 2018 — the leaders of the TPLF chose to resort to various subterfuges to undermine and scuttle the peace process. The Eritrean Government had opened its borders in September of 2018 with Ethiopia and had allowed unrestricted access to Eritrea — even though the TPLF was still refusing to evacuate from sovereign Eritrean territories which it had illegally occupied for over twenty years, Despite the goodwill gesture of the Eritrean government, the TPLF tried to exploit the unrestricted access to Eritrea — it had undeservedly been given — by engaging in illicit and illegal acts designed to undermine Eritrea.

Perhaps what is most telling of its author's bias is the fact that the above mentioned article makes no mention of the attack on Ethiopian army barracks by the TPLF in the early hours of 4th November 2020 which was the trigger for the current conflict in Ethiopia. The brutal and barbaric attack on sleeping Ethiopian soldiers which killed and injured thousands, was euphemistically called a blitzkrieg by the TPLF. There is also no mention of the boastful claims made on their own TV by high ranking TPLF officials about how, in less than an hour, they had taken “full control” of the Ethiopian army and that they were now the predominantly most powerful military force in the entire East Africa. The rocket attacks by the TPLF on the Eritrean capital is also conveniently swept under the carpet in a bid to make the TPLF seem to be an innocent bystander in the recent developments in the region.

What is undeniable and never mentioned by the western propagandists that are desperate to revive the fortunes of the TPLF, is that the sole responsibility for what has befallen the people of Tigray lies squarely with the TPLF itself. It is neither the Eritrean government nor the Ethiopian government that commandeered aid sent in hundreds of lorries to deliver food to the Tigray region to be used as military transport — putting in jeopardy the delivery of much needed food aid to the Tigray region. It is also to be recalled that in the early 2000s, when the hostilities between Eritrea and Ethiopia had ceased but there still existed a state of war, the Eritrean government had offered the use of its ports to deliver vital food aid to those starving

in Ethiopia. However, Eritrea's goodwill gesture was turned down by Melese Zenawi, TPLF's leader and Ethiopia's Prime Minister at the time, because he did not want "Eritrea to benefit" — as he put it. He was willing to let his people die of hunger rather than use Eritrean ports and he had famously made the rather ignorant remark about how the Eritreans can use their ports as "drinking stations for their camels".

The undeniable fact here is that, back then much like now, the TPLF uses its people as pawns in a game of its own making. The TPLF had squandered every chance for peace over the last couple of decades, and as it lies on its death bed, its backers and beneficiaries of its decades of unbridled looting and embezzlement of the Ethiopian economy, would want us to believe that it had no part in the misery that lurks in the region. Until such time that a spade is called a spade and the TPLF is held accountable for its actions, any effort to place responsibility on other innocent parties is doomed to fail.

The TPLF continues to push a policy of duality – on the one hand there is its brazen, decades-long in the making, territorial aggrandizement by incorporating adjacent territories within Ethiopia through administrative subterfuges and illegally occupying sovereign Eritrean lands to enlarge the originally small Tigray region's land mass; and on the other hand it dangles the option of an independent Tigray that incorporates most of Eritrea's highlands and eastern lowlands with access to the Red Sea. This remains the key toxic policy of perpetual conflict that poses grave danger to regional peace and security.