

Tigray's Discourse on Separation of Political Party vs. State Function: Masking the CoHA Agenda, Conspiracy to Obliterate TPLF, an Effort to Create a PP's Variant TPLF.

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This commentary serves as a personal introspection into Tigray's present political strife. In a complex political landscape, the Tigray Interim Regional Administration (IRA) and TPLF have been embroiled in a power struggle, a situation fraught with uncertainty. The basis for disagreement has not been articulated and clearly disclosed but it has become undeniable truth that there exists a political squabble.

In the meantime, the Amhara forces, seemingly with the implicit approval of the Amhara government and tacit consent and in a backdrop of puzzling silence from Mr. Abiy Ahmed's administration, have actively and openly undertaken a troubling campaign to change the demographic composition of Tigray's unlawfully occupied territories. They are accomplishing this by relocating and bringing in hundreds of thousands of non-Tigrayan individuals from distant regions of Ethiopia. Regrettably, both the Tigray Interim Regional Administration (IRA) and the TPLF, a party to the agreement, have chosen to remain mute, failing to voice their concerns on this critical matter.

It is imperative to underline the fact that the opacity surrounding the TPLF's responsibility, apart from the rumors circulating on social media, makes it challenging to discern whether its confrontation with the IRA is rooted in a pursuit of mere power or is guided by unyielding political causes and a commitment to the rule of law. No matter what, the lack of clarity in TPLF's intentions only adds to the overall confusion and suspicion.

It is my belief that the prevailing political arguments in Tigray starkly deviate from the scorching and searing questions that have emerged as a direct consequence of unfulfilled commitments tied to the Pretoria CoHA, which, in my opinion, are exigent issues that demand immediate and resolute action from all stakeholders.

From the very outset of the agreement's signing, it has been my reflection that the Pretoria CoHA was an absolute necessity to end the barbaric genocidal warfare and bring respite to the dire humanitarian catastrophe in Tigray. This CoHA was the beacon of hope that aspired to halt the hostilities, lay the foundation for critical political negotiations, ensure vital humanitarian access, and rectify constitutional violations, all aimed at preventing further mass atrocities and sparing innocent civilian lives from further torment. In a war that had left devastation in its wake, the Pretoria CoHA emerged as the indispensable lifeline for the beleaguered people of Tigray.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to emphasize that despite the profound importance of the CoHA, it has faced significant obstacles in its execution. A fundamental concern has centered around the dearth of transparency regarding crucial aspects of the implementation. Transparency is absolutely vital to guarantee that all parties involved faithfully adhere to the mutually agreed terms. The conspicuous absence of transparency, particularly on the part of Tigray, has given rise to suspicions and hindered the trust-building process. As previously mentioned, the TPLF's stance on this matter has remained frustratingly ambiguous, casting uncertainty on its true commitment to the CoHA's implementation.

When it comes to the Tigray Interim Regional Administration (IRA), which supposedly wields the responsibility and authority to execute the CoHA, it seems obsessively stuck on the idea of separating political parties and state functions, instead of dealing head-on with the actual challenges and demonstrating its commitment to addressing Tigray's burning problems. Judging by the grim reality on the ground, whether you point the finger at the TPLF or the IRA, it's painfully evident that they've both fallen drastically short in carrying out the CoHA. The excuse being bandied about is that the TPLF is obstructing

the IRA's operations. But let's be honest here, it's a stretch to connect the TPLF to the CoHA's breakdown because it's the federal government's solemn duty and responsibility to compel the Eritrean and Amhara forces to withdraw from their stranglehold on Tigray, restore the status quo ante of Tigray's rightful administration, and collaborate with Tigray's IRA to ensure the safe return of IDPs.

While independent investigation and verification should be conducted, if there are any shortcomings on the TPLF's part, they may likely be linked to issues of maladministration, corruption networks, and the people's security concerns within the areas under its administration control. Furthermore, the TPLF's reluctance to openly express its concerns, in writing, to the international community regarding the sluggish implementation of the CoHA has been a blatant failure. Equally, the IRA has fallen short in openly expressing its concerns and providing a status report, demonstrating a lack of transparency. So, one cannot directly blame the other, but in my opinion, the primary blame should be attributed to the IRA because the TPLF, as a political party, lacks the authority. While one cannot directly attribute one to the other, in my view, the primary responsibility should fall on the IRA, as the TPLF, as a party, lacks the necessary authority.

My assumption is that one of the prime drivers of the current political split and the ongoing struggle in Tigray is linked to the broken promise of CoHA implementation and the issues surrounding it, which are serving as sources of anger and frustration. The Tigray IRA has shifted the focus of the agenda, steering it towards the narrative of party versus state function separation and it appears to be intensely fixated on this issue. This fixation, which is far from being justified, constitutes a neglect of the responsibilities entrusted to the IRA: the responsibilities that the people of Tigray have high expectations for. It's becoming increasingly clear that the IRA's obsession with the party versus state function separation is causing division among Tigrayans because it is not concurrent with the pressing humanitarian needs of the suffering Tigrayan population.

As a matter of fact, it is fresh news that several senior TPLF officials have been unilaterally dismissed from their IRA positions on the grounds of separating party and government functions by the IRA President. These measures have left many both surprised and bewildered, as they seem to mirror Abiy Ahmed's maneuvering actions. The intention behind these measures probably appears to be the dismantling of the TPLF's organizational framework, which aligns with Abiy Ahmed's agenda and has raised questions about whether such actions are being orchestrated and conspired by external forces, possibly using Getachew as an accomplice.

Abiy Ahmed's intentions are crystal clear. He is determined to obliterate, or at the very least, weaken the TPLF until it capitulates and joins the Prosperity Party. I firmly believe that the main reason the Ethiopian Election Board refused to recertify the TPLF as a legitimate political party in its current form is tied to this conspiracy. If Getachew maintains his pace, Abiy's vision of reshaping the TPLF in his image could become a frightening reality in no time, placing Tigray under Abiy's absolute grip. Abiy Ahmed is well aware that he can't win over the Tigray people's hearts and minds. He has no chance of winning an election in Tigray under the Prosperity Party (PP). His only shot rests in trying to fashion his own version of the TPLF-PP and vie in the elections to wrest control of Tigray. At this juncture, what remains shrouded in mystery is Getachew's true intentions. I fervently hope he awakens to counter Abiy's scheme.

Otherwise, I wasn't able to identify any valid justification for the abrupt dismissal of TPLF officials without any consultation, criticism, or assessment by the TPLF's central committee members or cadres. His actions have gone against TPLF's established norms and traditions. His approach has also blatantly disregarded the input, plea, and warnings of the central Tigray's representatives during a meeting. ,

It is disheartening to witness these political tumults in Tigray, especially in the aftermath of the barbaric genocidal crimes and unprecedented humanitarian crises. The people of Tigray continue to plead for the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) while tirelessly calling for the withdrawal of the occupying forces that still hold sway over Tigray's unlawfully seized territories. A thorough, independent

investigation into the abhorrent crimes committed is in disarray, and regrettably, the IRA's conspicuous silence only deepens the sense of betrayal felt by the people of Tigray, who are mired in a catastrophic humanitarian crisis.

IRA's lackluster efforts in securing vital humanitarian aid for the starving population further underscores its incompetence and misplaced priorities. The Tigrayan people are suffering, and the IRA and TPLF should have been vigorously championing the people's cause, not getting bogged down in irrelevant political squabbles. The Pretoria CoHA should have been at the heart of their agenda but has been callously disregarded. Instead, they allow suspicions and resentments to fester within Tigrayan communities by failing to address the fundamental issues at hand.

In their unfathomable disconnect from the reality of the Tigray region's current predicament, the IRA and TPLF have lost sight of their duty to their people. Their actions, or lack thereof, demonstrate a glaring lack of understanding of the urgency and gravity of the situation. The glaring disparity between their priorities and the genuine need of Tigray epitomizes their woeful ineptitude and disregard for the suffering masses. It is high time they redirect their focus to what truly matters and start acting in the best interests of the Tigrayan people.

Notably, simply tearing down one network and replacing it with another offers no substantial contribution to resolving Tigray's crises. The IRA's paramount focus should have been, first and foremost, the establishment of a system rooted in transparency, with clear accountabilities and responsibilities, devised in consultation and consensus with all political parties in Tigray.

Understanding Power Separation

The concept of separating party functions from government or state institutions inherently advocates for a clear demarcation and autonomy between political entities and the administrative apparatus of a government. In principle, this idea closely aligns with the concept of the separation of powers, which is part of a democratic system. It underscores the critical importance of maintaining a system where political parties, while integral to the democratic process, do not unduly influence or interfere with the functioning of government bodies, judicial processes, or other state institutions. This separation serves to uphold the integrity, checks and balances, and the impartial execution of governmental duties, ultimately safeguarding the democratic principles of governance.

The principle of delineating party functions from government functions is well-established and widely recognized in theoretical discourse. There appears to be a general consensus on this notion. The central challenge lies in the practical implementation where the critical task revolves around identifying effective methodologies for realizing this in the real world. Understanding the following concepts is of utmost importance when addressing the topic of the separation of powers.

The first issue necessitates acknowledgment of the imperative, despite a prevailing consensus on the principle of separation, that challenges may persist in the execution of requisite alterations. These challenges can encompass a spectrum of complexities, ranging from institutional resistance to ingrained practices, thus demanding a nuanced approach to navigate the terrain of implementation.

The second issue underscores the distinction between the concept of separating party functions from state functions and the actual practice within democratic systems, wherein members of political parties may indeed occupy government positions, either through election or appointment. The critical emphasis in such scenarios lies in the expectation that these party-affiliated individuals will execute their responsibilities impartially, without exhibiting bias in favor of their party's interests. Their primary duty becomes the service of the broader public interest, rather than furthering the agendas of their political affiliations. Fundamental to this framework is the principle of accountability, which necessitates that state officials, regardless of their partisan ties, are answerable for their actions and decisions.

Furthermore, the presence of robust transparency and oversight mechanisms is imperative to forestall any potential abuses of power. It typically means:

- 1) The foundational concept of separation of powers delineates the imperative division of government into three distinct branches, namely, the legislative, the executive, and the judicial, each vested with explicit functions and responsibilities. The legislative branch assumes the role of crafting and modifying laws, the executive branch is tasked with the execution and enforcement of these laws, and the judicial branch is entrusted with the interpretation and application of said laws. This fundamental tenet serves as a safeguard against the concentration of excessive power within a single group or individual, thus mitigating the potential for abuses of authority, which is central to the underpinning principles of democratic governance.
- 2) Neutrality, a pivotal principle, stipulates that a political party must refrain from any form of intrusion or interference in the operations of government institutions, thus warranting that public administration is conducted in an impartial and un-swayed manner, devoid of bias or undue influence. This underlines the necessity for political entities to uphold a posture of non-partisanship, safeguarding the integrity and objectivity of governmental processes, a cornerstone of effective democratic governance.
- 3) Meritocracy, a fundamental principle, is inherently advanced through the demarcation of party and state functions, facilitating the appointment of government officials and civil servants on the basis of their demonstrated merit and qualifications, rather than predicated upon their political affiliations or allegiance to a particular party. This practice serves as a bulwark against nepotism and ensures that individuals are selected for their acumen and expertise, thereby preserving the integrity of the appointment process and prioritizing competence over political connections, ultimately upholding the principles of effective and impartial governance.
- 4) The observance of the rule of law underscores the critical importance of segregating party and state functions, as this dichotomy is vital for the preservation of a just and impartial legal framework. Government institutions are expected to administer the law without any form of political intervention, ensuring that justice is dispensed fairly and without bias. This separation serves as a fundamental pillar for maintaining the integrity of legal processes, safeguarding the principles of equal treatment and accountability in the realm of governance.
- 5) The Existence of accountability and transparency which are paramount in governance, and the clear demarcation of party and state functions enhances the ability to hold government officials responsible for their actions. A high degree of transparency in the execution of government affairs and decision-making processes is indispensable for upholding public trust in the system. The separation of these functions serves as a bedrock for ensuring that officials are answerable for their conduct and that governmental operations are conducted in a manner that fosters credibility and confidence among the public.

Third, in the realm of political governance, it is imperative to recognize the pivotal role that a political party assumes. Operating as a unifying force, a political party gathers individuals who share common objectives with the aim of attaining authority and shaping policies that either align with their individual interests or those of their benefactors, thereby wielding influence throughout the strata of governance, actively directing the trajectory. Fundamentally, a political party engages in the political landscape of a nation, diligently endeavoring to exert influence over governmental policies, public sentiment, and the modus operandi of governance. Serving as the vanguard of a specific segment of the population, a political party acts as an intermediary, effectively bridging the divide between the citizenry and the government, translating the concerns of their constituents into tangible political actions and policy proposals. Furthermore, a political party recruits and identifies individuals for candidacy in diverse elected positions, including the presidency, cabinet members, local, district or zonal administrators,

legislators, mayors, heads of regulatory agencies, members of commissions and boards, special envoys, advisers, and leaders of state-owned enterprises among others. Notably, a political party takes on the responsibility of formulating and championing its policy platforms, articulating its positions on a wide spectrum of issues, encompassing the economy, societal matters, foreign policy, and more. When a political party secures victory in elections and assumes the reins of governance, it is entrusted with the onerous task of governing the nation or region, making determinations, enacting policies, and overseeing the manifold aspects of public affairs.

The Precautions and Phases to be Followed.

Changing a system with a lengthy history of intertwining party and government functions presents a complex and formidable undertaking. Such a system frequently cultivates deeply ingrained practices and structural intricacies that resist change. In such circumstances, the implementation of change necessitates a deliberate and multi-faceted approach. Several procedural steps may be considered and applied as needed to initiate and steer this transformation.

The first, a phased transition toward a more independent and accountable system is often a practical and realistic approach. Maintaining a long-term perspective is crucial when pursuing reforms and implementing incremental changes and adjustments serve as stepping stones to ease the transition and generate momentum for comprehensive reform and can facilitate the reform process. This gradual shift towards greater independence and accountability is particularly prudent in contexts where sudden and radical changes could provoke resistance or disrupt the political landscape. The ultimate goal of achieving a more independent and accountable system justifies the need for patience and persistence and success in a transition depends on cultivating broad support and consensus for reform, while also demonstrating the flexibility to adapt to evolving circumstances.

During this phase a comprehensive assessment and diagnosis of the current state of the political system is vital. This involves evaluating the level of entanglement between political parties and the government. Identifying critical areas for reform, such as financial regulations, government agency independence, and accountability mechanisms, and then prioritizing these areas based on their significance and feasibility is crucial. Assessment of the situation is also important to determine the need for policy and regulatory changes, and even constitutional amendments or the creation of a new constitution. The primary objective is to establish a clear demarcation between the roles of political parties and government functions. This effort entails the development of robust policies and procedures, regulatory frameworks, and foundational principles aimed at curtailing any undue influence exerted by political parties on government institutions. Work on legislative changes when needed and one step at a time. Engage lawmakers to draft, debate, and pass legislation that aligns with the desired reforms and seek cross-party support where possible because bipartisan or multi-partisan cooperation can provide stability and reduce the perception of one party trying to dominate the reform process.

The second phase involves conducting a stakeholder mapping, encompassing the identification of key stakeholders, including political parties, government officials, civil society organizations, and the general public. It also entails initiating a process of consultation and dialogue with these stakeholders to collect input, foster consensus, and find common ground on the need for reform. This dialogue is essential to understand their positions, interests, and concerns. In the broader process of separating party and state functions, emphasizing the cultivation of political will and the establishment of a comprehensive and participatory political consensus is of utmost importance. This stage holds a pivotal role as the linchpin upon which substantial changes and reforms within the political sphere depend. Articulating a consensus among a spectrum of political stakeholders is instrumental in garnering the essential support and unwavering dedication needed to advance the envisioned objectives, ensuring that the transformative efforts are not only enduring but also executed with effectiveness and precision.

The third phase underscores the active involvement of civil society, encouraging organizations such as advocacy groups and watchdog entities to play a proactive role in advancing transparency, accountability, and good governance, particularly within the context of promoting a distinct separation of party and government functions. Civil society engagement encompasses a multifaceted approach, which includes advocacy campaigns aimed at heightening public awareness regarding the significance of a clear delineation between political and governmental roles. This also extends to public education initiatives to inform citizens about their rights and the consequences of blurred separation of powers. Furthermore, civil society groups actively monitor government activities, party engagements, and compile comprehensive reports on any irregularities or violations and disseminate them to both the public and relevant authorities. These organizations can harness public opinion to exert pressure on political leaders and demand necessary reforms, leveraging the potent tool of mass mobilization. Lastly, support for capacity building within civil society organizations is essential to ensure they possess the requisite skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to effectively champion transparency and accountability.

The fourth imperative step in the process of reforming a governance system characterized by the blending of party and government functions is the establishment or reinforcement of independent oversight bodies, tasked with the vigilant monitoring and enforcement of the separation of powers. These entities are pivotal in the investigation and subsequent accountability of individuals who transgress the regulations governing the distinct division between political and governmental realms, thus acting as bulwarks against potential abuses of authority. The enhancement of such independent oversight entities, in conjunction with the promotion of civil society engagement, constitutes vital milestones in the quest for comprehensive reform, ensuring the foundational principles of transparency, accountability, and the unfettered separation of powers. Key measures include the establishment or fortification of ombudsman or inspector general offices, endowed with the autonomy to independently investigate complaints and irregularities in governmental actions, thereby serving as safeguards against potential government abuses.

Furthermore, it is imperative to safeguard judicial independence to enable the judiciary to impartially adjudicate disputes pertaining to the separation of powers, granting the courts the authority to hold both individuals and institutions accountable for any breaches. Equally pivotal is the reinforcement of anti-corruption agencies and commissions, arming them with the capacity to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption, including those involving political parties and government officials. Additionally, empowering parliamentary committees with oversight responsibilities, including members from diverse political affiliations to ensure impartiality, is indispensable in scrutinizing governmental actions for compliance with legal and constitutional standards. Lastly, instituting a system that mandates regular reporting and transparency measures from government agencies, subject to review by independent oversight bodies, is essential to confirm adherence to the principles of separation and ensure a climate of accountability and good governance. Implementing robust anti-corruption measures to prevent the abuse of power is essential. This can include stronger enforcement of finance regulations and whistleblower protection: legal and institutional safeguards put in place to shield individuals who report misconduct, illegal activities, or unethical behavior within an organization or government entity from retaliation or adverse consequences.

The fifth phase should prominently include a crucial focus on education and public awareness, emphasizing the promotion of civic education and the launch of campaigns to enlighten citizens about the pivotal importance of separating party and government functions. This educational and awareness initiative takes on paramount significance as it serves as a foundational way to cultivate an informed and engaged citizenry regarding the fundamental principles of governance. By deepening the understanding of the clear distinction between political and governmental roles, this initiative plays a pivotal role in empowering citizens with knowledge about their rights, responsibilities, and the consequences of maintaining a separation between party and government functions. Public awareness campaigns are

instrumental in involving and empowering individuals to actively participate in the democratic process and advocate for transparency, accountability, and good governance within their political systems. Equally important is the investment in enhancing the capacity of government institutions, oversight bodies, and civil society organizations, which entails providing training, resources, and technical assistance.

In the sixth phase, it is advisable to initiate and consider pilot programs in selected sectors to showcase the advantages of the reforms, thereby garnering public and political support. Additionally, enhancing transparency within government agencies can be achieved by increasing the availability of information, improving public access to government data, and implementing accountability mechanisms.

The seventh phase involves implementing adaptive management, characterized by a flexible approach that is open to adjusting the reform strategy as required, in response to the ever-changing political and social dynamics. This phase also encompasses the establishment of a conflict resolution mechanism, designed to proactively address any potential conflicts or disputes that might emerge throughout the reform process. Such conflicts will be managed through negotiation and conflict resolution mechanisms with the goal of preventing crises.

Hence, if the endeavor to separate party and government functions in Tigray is genuinely driven, it is imperative to acknowledge that change is typically a multifaceted, long-term undertaking that may encounter resistance from deeply entrenched interests. Patience, resilience, and a steadfast commitment to democratic principles are indispensable in pursuing this reform, contingent upon the unique political, social, and cultural context.

Fostering a shared vision for reform is of paramount importance. When there is a widespread consensus regarding the necessity of separating party functions from government functions, it becomes more feasible to garner support and collaboration from a variety of stakeholders, including political parties, civil society, and the public. A unified vision can serve as a potent catalyst for change. The presence of such consensus can signal a heightened level of political determination to implement reforms. Politicians and government officials are more likely to be motivated to enact changes when they recognize broad public support for the reform.

In the reform process, the cooperation of political parties and civil society organizations often proves to be vital. When there is agreement on the need for reform, these stakeholders are more inclined to collaborate in formulating and executing strategies for change. When the public widely concurs on the necessity of separation, they are more inclined to engage in advocacy efforts, demand accountability, and hold political leaders responsible.