**The End of TPLF Reign Finalized**

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On May of 2012, I wrote an article called, “The End of TPLF.” The basic premise of the article was that Meles Zenawi has sold-out the cause that brought him to power, the people of Tigray, and the very organization he rode to power, the TPLF. I opined that Meles Zenawi was focused more on his and his wife’s power, the agendas of the US and other powers while ignoring the people of Tigray and the TPLF. I opined that Meles put the people of Tigray in bad position because the crimes he committed were in the name of Tigray. What I opined then has been realized and the TPLF has seen its best days and faces a future of uncertainty and certainly one that will pin the people of Tigray in an awkward position for a long time.

It was incredible to witness the mourning Meles Zenawi was accorded. It was neither warranted nor traditional and, it was unsettling in many ways for it ignored the crimes his criminal regime committed against innocent Ethiopians in the Ogaden, Gambella, and Oromo etc… It ignored the slaughters and the genocides. It ignored the hundreds of thousands that perished in a senseless war against the people of the Horn. It ignored the tens of thousands displaced needlessly. It ignored the failed leadership that gone awry creating ethnic fault-lines, a recipe for breakup of a nation. It ignored the flippant two timing personality that he took to the grave.

It is understandable for those that believed in his leadership, those that benefited from his days in power and those that supported him, to grieve in a manner they choose. However, the whole charade was a reach and certainly one for the history books.

As it unfolded, I was thinking and asking questions like, what are they truly feeling as they cry. I asked do they know what tomorrow will bring.  Do they truly believe that Meles has done well by them? What about for the long-term, and most importantly, whom would they feel confident with as the future leader of Ethiopia? I suspected however, that they are confident, and that they believed to have a good grip of power and, that they are not feeling threatened just yet because they believed (I assumed), that all the key Tigrayan actors will represent their interest to the end. I presumed, they will feel Berhane Ghebrekristos, Samora Younis and the other Tigrayans that dominated Ethiopian power structures will somehow revive a Meles like persona to perpetuate his legacy. And I felt, all the internal juxtaposition was aiming for that outcome.

Did that happen? No. But most importantly, would the people have cried the way that they did had they known that the transition would turn out the way that it has? I sincerely doubt it.

On Friday Sep 21st, Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn was sworn as Ethiopia’s new Prime Minister. That day will also officially mark the end of the TPLF hegemony of Ethiopia! Will the new administration governs differently in a way that benefit all peacefully? That is a different subject for another day but I wish the people of Ethiopia peace and success.

Contrary to what his Tigrayan supporters would have made themselves believe .i.e. that Ethiopia was a rich, progressive, democratic country-advancing fast with all types of accolades and high growth percentages; according to author Dr. Dambissa Moyo, under Meles, 97% of Ethiopia’s budget was based on foreign aid. Not to mention the unlimited funds Meles Zenawi received for peacekeeping missions, for his interventionist agendas in Somalia and funds he collected in the name of fighting terrorism. That meant that Meles was essentially leaving on handouts. However, we have to give Meles credit for turning begging and extortion into an art form.

What that means is the incoming PM will receive all the funds Meles Zenawi used to get directly. The US, Western donors and other supporters will not care to search for TPLF supporters and satisfy their needs. They will keep empowering Hailemariam to ensure stability. . Through the money that he receives, Hailemariam can afford to maintain the status quo. The obedient soldiers are fine but those that resist will lose their benefits. Those that are in high military positions will have to accept the new leader because their future will be threatened with sanctions otherwise. What Meles did to forward his hegemonic agendas was empowered the military particularly the ranking files by providing good lines of credit, in other words, they were hired guns, Hailemariam could do just that.

Clearly, there is no easy path for the new PM. Many entrenched rich powers like Azeb Mesfn will try to sabotage the process. However, the risk to their riches will be far greater through sanctions and travel restrictions hence, not wise to stand on the way of Hailemariam.

This appears to be the cleanest transformation of power since the Arab spring thus far. The power brokers have done a masterful job in masking this transformation as a grand event by creating mass hysteria to quell the questions that needed to be asked. The people of Tigray were the primary target and were duped while mourning for nearly two months.

Pryor to Meles’s death, no Tigrayan TPLF supporter would have believed that matters will unfold in the way that they have. The sudden death caught all by surprise. The faces told everything from sadness, to shock and disbelief. However, what was more unexpected was the fact that Meles deliberately recruited his successor to be from outside-anticipated circles. That was another shocker since they expected to be on the helm for a while.

The reaction to the transition by various quarters tells where the realities are.  From the American side, former ambassador David Shinn expressed satisfaction saying, “I think that it was almost predictable in that Hailemariam was being groomed by Prime Minister Meles to succeed him.” And that he was not surprised that Hailemariam came to power.

What I found extremely surprising was how Aigaforum, the mouthpiece flipped so fast from a diehard TPLF into the new woyane revolutionaries. In reaction to Ambassador Shinn’s statement Aigaforum made the following sarcastic remark,

“It is amazing and sad people like David Shinn have not grasp what the woyane revolution is all about yet! The main reason the woyane revolution succeeded against all odds is because it was a popular revolution any Ethiopian of any color can easily adapt. The woyane revolution that started in Tigray is borderless today, thus, it does not matter from which ethnic the next prime minister will be. What matters is if the person understands the essence of the woyane revolution! Laboring on the number of Tigrean population is meaningless from this perspective. The revolution has spread and today millions of Ethiopians from north to south are the proud promise keepers of the woyane revolution.” End quote.  Emphasis mine.

I could not help but laugh reading this sarcastic remark. However, I am compelled to quote it as is, since it supports the point. There is nothing called the Woyane revolution. The woyane revolution was defeated when millions came out and voted it out in 2005. Weyane was imposed on the people of Ethiopia. But what this statement tries to do is appease TPLF supporters by assuring them with this quote,

“The woyane revolution that started in Tigray is borderless today, thus, it does not matter from which ethnic the next prime minister will be. What matters is if the person understands the essence of the woyane revolution!”

This statement is telling TPLF supporters not worry because Hailemariam Desalgn espouses their views and values, thus, there is no cause for alarm. The statement recognizes their concerns and addresses it in a coded way. The reality however, not everyone shares that sentiment.

On recent interviews, Sebhat Nega tried to undermine the process of the transition prompting Mr. Mesay Kebede to respond by saying,

“What Sebhat is in reality revealing is the conditional nature of his Ethiopianism. He is Ethiopian so long as the constitution, imposed by the TPLF and conducive to its hegemony over Ethiopia, is the supreme law of the land. What this means if not that Tigray will not agree to remain within Ethiopia if the TPLF loses its hegemonic position. I cannot speak for all Tigreans, among whom many are dedicated Ethiopians, but Sebhat’s position shows that the leadership of the TPLF has been and still is appropriated by individuals who have always posed the issue of Ethiopian unity in conditional terms.”

**The Key**

The revolution Meles Zenawi led TPLF brought was hegemony that imposed its will on Ethiopia and the entire region. It was futile and unsustainable. It was very destructive, deadly and it denied the people of the region a sense of normalcy by fomenting a perpetual state of conflict in the region. That is because it did not have interest in peace since it could not survive in peaceful environment. TPLF’s main enemy was also democracy and the rule of law since it could not survive in a democratic environment as witnessed in the 2005 elections. Nearly every constituency of Ethiopia and the entire region vehemently rejected the minority regime. Thus, it could not afford to risk its ouster through the ballot box. Therefore, Aiga’s woyane revolution claim is an attempt to throw white towel, soft landing of sort.

The challenge the minority regime brought on the people of Ethiopia was expressed by Mr. Mesay Kebede when he said, “I cannot speak for all Tigreans, among whom many are dedicated Ethiopians.”

 It is debatable the extent of support the TPLF garnered from Tigray. However, regardless of the size of the support, Ethiopians that opposed Meles and the TPLF were cognizant of the ramifications of alienating the entire Tigray population based on Ethnic affiliation with the TPLF. Hence, there was a measured approach on dealing with them. That bodes well for the maturity of the people of Ethiopia and the region. However, it does not mean that people stopped their observation.

After decades of being-marginalized, over the last 21 years the people of Tigray realized some success. However, the question lingers, whether they shared their success or allowed the success to become a source of resentment against them. Article 39 guarantees Ethiopian regions to secede if they so choose. Sebhat Nega was amongst those that hinted the possibility. The question is what percentage of people from Tigray will chose to be independent? On the other side, to gauge the Ethiopian psyche, what percentage of Ethiopians would like Tigray to be independent?

The first question will ascertain the commitment of the people of Tigray to the rest of the country. And the second question is a gauge how the people of Ethiopia perceive the people of Tigray for how they handled the nation when in power. Regardless, the people of Tigray have a great opportunity to move forward on a positive path since what took place over the last 21 years was not ideal for the people of Ethiopia and the region.

Meles Zenawi was loyal to no one. His loyalty was for himself and his family. But he served his Western masters to his grave. In the process, he stripped-bare the TPLF from the national leadership position that it ones had. Meles Zenawi deliberately separated it from Ethiopia’s power structures to ensure the interest of the West.

So what role can TPLF play, how can it evolve to serve and, has it achieved what it struggled for? What will the TPLF do and how will it deal with the people of Tigray, the people of Ethiopia and the people of the region. There are many questions but the key is how it will affect the political, economic, social and military dynamic of Ethiopia and the region. One thing for certain, it will no longer have Meles Zenawi on the helm and, it will also no longer have direct access through which it could access international resources.

**Conclusion**

It is time for TPLF to do some serious soul searching and hopefully come out as a force for peace. It must come to the realization that the power it had was baseless and without core because it ended with a single event, the death of Meles Zenawi. The political dynamics of the region has changed dramatically overnight. Hence, it is incumbent on its leaders to redirect the gear in different direction for they risk marginalizing the people of Tigray once more. It is a historic responsibility and opportunity with serious ramification for the nation and the region.

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