

# Pressure from US and EU Gives Wrong Signal: Violence Pays **Off**

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**Recent policies of the US and EU in the Horn of Africa since the start of the Tigray conflict ultimately leads to rewarding use of violence as a political tool. This can lead to destabilizing the whole Horn of Africa region, as other violent groups might follow the Tigray example as they see, that adversary will be lectured upon, sanctioned, funding discontinued, pushed to make ceasefire, and then pushed to negotiate power sharing. These harmful policies can be changed if the West chooses to do so.**

It seems that violence pays off in Ethiopian politics as Western countries are encouraging this dynamic with their misguided actions. The spokeswoman for Ethiopian government Ms. Billene Seyoum put it best, saying that outside actions towards Ethiopia have been condescending in nature, patronizing in tone, belligerent in approach and destructive in outcome. **Since November 2020 we have witnessed the US and EU giving political cover constantly to TPLF** ignoring the crimes they have committed. It is safe to assume that remnants of the TPLF have been emboldened by this form of biased international support and continued their destructive struggle even more.

Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa is home to many armed extremist groupings apart from TPLF, who are watching the international response to the Tigray conflict. They might be very much encouraged to use violent means, because of the Tigray example, as they see that rewards for that can be a ceasefire, which solidifies their violent gains and possible power sharing negotiations. They see that the government of the day is pressured to this by outside countries by cutting aid, sanctions, endless lecturing and other forms of pressure. We see an indication of this as July 1st 2021 one of the extreme factions posted in [Facebook](#) after the announcement of ceasefire just four days ago. Posting is likely connected also to the imminent second filling of the GERD dam, and possible malign influence from Egypt's military dictatorship in some shape or form.

Power sharing negotiations in many post-conflict countries usually lead to so-called national unity governments. This is the default answer favoured and promoted by Western members of the international community. Turns out, that usually these so called national unity governments are extremely fragile, there is no trust between the members of these governments and they usually collapse soon, leading usually to new violent conflict. If the decision makers in the West had more knowledge of the dynamic of ethno-nationalism in Ethiopia, they might come to realize that their actions could encourage more ethnic regions to attempt separation from the nation of Ethiopia. This is a complete non-starter as none of the regions could survive as

independent entities economically, politically or in terms of international recognition.

Hands-off approach by countries like China or Russia, true to their appalling human rights record home and abroad, is at least not doing any harm on the ground. One thing to be exposed is the total bias on the side of TPLF and Egypt in Washington. This is evident in words and in deeds. Egypt is awarded huge amounts of military assistance as emerging democracy in Ethiopia is sanctioned.

It will be easier to pressure Ethiopia in the Nile question, when the image of the country is deliberately tarnished. We must remember, whatever Egypt does in the future, the US is complicit due to its enormous support to the Al Sisi regime. Therefore, failure to contain aggression of Egypt would be an enormous US foreign policy failure. The US is not a neutral arbiter of the conflict, but more like one of the parties to the dispute. Is consent being manufactured to make Ethiopia look so bad, that it will be more convenient to support Egypt if the need for this would arise? We must keep in mind, however, that a possible military adventure by Egypt could be extremely dangerous to the Al Sisi regime, as likely military disaster would most probably contribute to the regime's downfall.

### **Haavisto's Dumpster Fire**

Ethiopians have been outraged by the current Finnish foreign minister's briefing in European parliament in June 2021 regarding the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray province. No need to repeat these comments here, but suffice to say his performance in European Parliament in June 2021 was disgraceful. Not to mention, he called Ethiopian elections in advance as a "so-called election". These kinds of irresponsible comments in a sensitive context, throwing baseless accusations and labeling elections undemocratic, can also cause incidents inside Ethiopia, even if they are said by an outsider.

Haavisto is unwilling to **disclose** who exactly would have said these things to him. This stonewalling does not increase his credibility, as he still maintains that these things were actually said to him. Journalist from Finnish newspaper Iltalehti asked him a direct question, who actually said this to him. His answer was: "We held so many discussions there in February. But it described pretty well that atmosphere there." On Ethiopian criticism he concludes: "I guess time will tell, does this have an effect on [my envoy assignment]." It is **not the first time** during a short period, when his integrity as a minister has been called into question. That time he was clearly caught lying, but avoided resignation because other parties in his coalition wanted to keep the government together. He is not the only one mixing things up. One other Finnish politician is also mixing things up completely talking about "**ongoing genocide**". Turns out he is no stranger to **controversy** either.

## Situation in Ethiopia After Government Withdraws From Mekelle

Decision to withdraw came after the peaceful conclusion of elections in the country. Suffice to say elections were imperfect, but a step in the right direction as the director of the country's electoral board said. European Union and the United States left no stone unturned to declare elections flawed both before and after elections. By doing this, they undermine the democracy and human rights work their very development programmes are supposed to promote. These are lessons learned for everybody willing to do democracy and human rights promotion—this is not the way to do it. Democracy and human rights are difficult “export products” and we in the West are exposed as lousy marketers of these “products” time and again.

Before the time of current Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Western development donors used to praise the stability that Ethiopia provides to the wider region, and also justify the authoritarian actions of the government on relatively positive economic growth. Are we now in a kind of watershed moment, where this relationship or these explanations are not valid any more? Some in Washington policy circles even had the audacity to call Ethiopia as a potential **adversary**.

For the US especially, it is particularly sanctimonious to condemn steps in democracy, whilst supporting military dictatorship in countries like Egypt, where there are no elections whatsoever. The essence of Ethiopian elections was captured well by Birhanu Nega answering to a question from journalist:

*"At the end of the day the credibility of the election is going to depend on what we do, not what the EU does, not what the United States does, not what any other country does. We do this election to make it credible for our sake, not for the international community's sake. So my hope is it would have been good if they would have come, so that they can ascertain to certain degree not complete degree but at least, to ascertain to a certain degree that the election was credible, but there are other other forces that are looking at it, there are civil society institutions, Ethiopian civil society institutions, that are looking into it, political parties have their observations. We would know at the end of the day whether this election has been credible or not without the presence of the EU."*

Withdrawal of federal forces might offer short-term gains for the TPLF, but their political room to maneuver is extremely limited. They can manipulate international humanitarian aid to their benefit, control the population by fear and violence, and play their propaganda games using the suffering of innocent Ethiopians as a canvas to disinformation operations. Ordinary people are powerless under the oppressive TPLF regime, whose grip on the region has provoked resistance **even before** the recent Tigray conflict broke out.

For Ethiopia and especially the Tigray region, it will take years to heal from the conflict TPLF callously started. **It must be stressed time and again, that**

**contrary to public portrayals of TPLF being a marginalized oppressed group, they were the core of the government for three decades.** They decided to self-isolate, and ultimately start armed conflict in their own country for purely political reasons. **Millions have to suffer as a consequence of political frustrations of few people, who used to be on top of the country's political elite.**

Facts on the ground have changed as the federal army has withdrawn and both sides have shown initial willingness to negotiate. Remains to be seen what role outside mediators can have, if any. I assume TPLF will continue to manipulate the international community to its favor, as the West has shown considerable understanding to them previously, failing time and again to attribute TPLF for the atrocities committed. Situation will be solved in Ethiopia by Ethiopians without outside interference. It will certainly not be solved in Washington D.C. as one lobby firm has **proposed**.