

Letter to the Financial Times

November 11, 2021 (Source FT)

I have been consistently disappointed in the FT coverage of the conflict in Ethiopia. The latest editorial (“Ethiopia risks becoming a new Yugoslavia”, [FT View](#), November 9) disproportionately lays the blame at the door of Abiy Ahmed, the Ethiopian prime minister, and essentially calls for a new transitional government.

This is both inaccurate and deeply dangerous for the international community’s understanding of the conflict. So many aspects are misinformed, but I want to address the most pressing.

Responsibility for the start of hostilities lies solely with the Tigray People’s Liberation Front. In November 2020, it launched attacks on national army bases in Tigray. On December 1, in an interview with the BBC, ambassador Tibor Nagy, a former US assistant secretary for African affairs, made clear the TPLF was waging war on Ethiopia to restore its lost power. Furthermore, the UN Development Programme clarified that the attack would have been seen as “an act of war everywhere in the world . . . that triggers a military response in defence of any nation”.

As to the suggestion the Ethiopian government is losing control of its armed forces, I would refer you to the weekend statement by 16 nations — the US and UK included — praising the Ethiopian government for its efforts to prosecute those accused of crimes related to the conflict and for ensuring redress to victims.

On a transitional arrangement, I would like to assure you that the vast majority of Ethiopians do not view a transitional government as the answer. The answer is a constructive engagement with the democratically elected government of Ethiopia, something as a career diplomat, I am amazed I need to clarify.

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