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Navigating the Aftermath: An Analysis of Tigray's Fractured Landscape in the Wake of Genocide

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Abstract

Peace agreements crafted to guide societies from conflict to stability necessitate thorough peace implementation and peace building endeavors. The efficacy of this transition hinges on the quality of the agreement, subsequent political discourse, and collaborative commitment to progress beyond the burdens of conflict toward democracy, stability, and societal unity. The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) was established between the federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) with the objective of terminating hostilities and laying the groundwork for enduring peace. Nevertheless, a qualitative assessment of the COHA and post-Pretoria developments in Tigray, based on surveys and desktop research, reveals that inadequately formulated agreements can yield outcomes contrary to the objectives of peacemaking and peace building. This is evidenced by the persistence of direct and structural violence, the resurgence of hostilities, and the emergence of new conflict dynamics in the postwar period. Numerous deficiencies in the context and process of peacemaking, the nature of the COHA itself, a critical absence of subsequent political commitment and discourse, and a lack of implementation mechanisms, along with deliberate manipulation by the federal government and spoilers, have undermined the anticipated implementation process. Consequently, salvaging the agreement from these perils and addressing post-Pretoria conflict dynamics in Tigray will necessitate primarily addressing basic survival and human needs, reinvigorating political engagement to fortify the agreement, devising viable implementation frameworks, and coordinating efforts to resolve emerging conflicts and transform long-term relationships. Revitalizing peace from a derailed peace process demands concerted endeavors not only from the agreement parties but also vigilance from regional, continental, and international stakeholders who can provide resources and support mechanisms.

Keywords

Tigray Genocide, Pretoria Agreement, Conflict, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Bereavement

Cover Page Footnote

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Introduction

The two years Tigray war between Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) and the allied armies of Ethiopian National Defense, Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) and Soldiers from Somalia, the special forces of all regions of Ethiopia including the newly established regional state of Sidama, more brutally involved were Amhara Special Forces (ASF) and the Amhara *Fano* brought hell on earth in Tigray (Nyadera, I. N., and Osedo, C., 2023). Supported by the arms and state of the art weapon systems and drones from UAR, KSA, Turkey, China, Iran, Azerbaijan and Israel (Insecurity Insight, 2022; Danssaert, 2021; The Bazaar of War, 2023) combined with the above combination of regional forces created a regional structure of genocide in the Horn of Africa with its international tentacles (Mistir, 2020).

The war totally devastated Tigray with more than a million civilian casualties, 126, 000 reported systematic rapes, the looting, burning and spoilage of the economy, infrastructure, environment, forest cover and vegetables and gardens. Even farm animals were disemboweled for no purpose of eating, chickens burned or buried into a bough with the intention to starve and kill the people of Tigray who survived the war (Danssaert, September 2022). For Tigrayans and independent scholars, this constituted crimes of genocide. As the war progressed to Afar and Amhara regions the respective regions were also affected. Even Human Rights watch and Amnesty international reported war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing were committed in Tigray by the regional structure of and to a lesser extent in Amhara and Afar (Amnesty International, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2022), short of genocide though.

The siege, blockade and tightening cage of Tigray (Danssaert, 21 February 2022) by the above mentioned members of the regional structure of genocide (EU, 2022) fashioning Sri Lankan government final campaign against the Tamil Elam (Weiss, 2011; Price, 2022; Price, 2022; Hanson, Picador, 2011) used famine and starvation as weapon of war causing the death of hundreds of thousands.

The genocidal war ended in November 2, 2022 with the signing of the Agreement for lasting peace through permanent Cessation of Hostilities (aka CoHA) between the Ethiopian federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in Pretoria, which sought to end all forms of hostilities towards building lasting peace. The CoHA had the express goal of ending violence in Tigray in order to ensure unfettered access to life saving humanitarian aid and basic services to reach the civilians affected by the war and facilitate the reconstruction of infrastructure destroyed during the war. To this end, the agreement called for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of any form of hostilities between federal and Tigray Defense Forces (TDF). The main provisions of CoHA called for the withdrawal of the Foreign (Eritrean military) and non-ENDF (Amhara) forces from Tigray territories; the disarmament demobilization and reintegration of Tigrayan fighters in 30 days; the restoration of essential services in Tigray including communications, transport, and banking; the restoration of the constitutional order disrupted by the war in Tigray; undertaking transitional justice, healing and reconciliation within the AU transitional justice policy framework; the protection of civilians from all form of violence and the safe repatriation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees following the restoration of the Tigray administrative structures in the territories occupied by ASF and EDF status quo ante (AU, November 3, 2022).

This was much applauded as a critical move towards peace (Antonio Gutierrez, 2 November 2022). It also shined a ray of hope toward African solution for African problems, though AU was complicit through its secretary by dubbing the war on Tigray as law enforcement (Plaut, 2024). On the part of the parties the agreement was recognized as the best possible solution to end the bloody war. More so with the part of the people of Tigray devastated by the war. However despite little success in the restoration of basic services and limited humanitarian aid, the establishment of Tigray Interim Administration (TIA) and the partial demobilization of TDF the core issues remained unaddressed. EDF, ASF and *Fano* continued their occupation of constitutionally guaranteed Tigray territory and the brutal repression and ethnic cleaning of Tigray population under their control. Millions of IDPs and refugees are not returned adding burden to their homes and the implementation of CoHA indefinitely postponed by the Federal government, the lack of political power on the part of TIA and TPLF, and the guarantors of the agreement. Consequently, it is exacerbating the

multidimensional crisis of Tigray region devastated by the war. Moreover, it generated new conflicts and triggered old tensions.

To the dismay of the people of Tigray, post-Pretoria period witnessed the rise of complex conflict dynamics, as revealed by a qualitative exploration conducted in multiple cities. These conflict dynamics span across political, social, economic, religious, and values domains, contributing to ongoing tensions and challenges. This article aims to analyze the nature and dynamics of conflicts in Tigray post-war context to develop a nuanced understanding about post-Pretoria conflict dynamics in Tigray and to provide recommendations designed for reducing violence, increasing justice, restoring governance, mitigating divisions, supporting vulnerable populations, and rebuilding trust between communities and leaders, and ensure lasting peace promised by CoHA. Besides it adds valuable lessons for post-war societies' peace building efforts about prioritizing the restoration of stability, social cohesion, and a sense of justice in through careful implementation peace agreements in order to achieve lasting peace and prosperity. One distinctive contribution of this article is its examination and illumination of the diverse factors and contextual elements involved in peace making and peace building. It sheds light on how peace agreements, originally intended to halt violence, can advertently and inadvertently become a catalyst for the emergence of new dynamics of conflict and the perpetuation of existing conflicts, potentially leading to a resurgence of war and violence.

Theoretical Framework

Moving from violence to peace is a daunting challenge for post-war societies. It is also a long journey that stretches from crafting a workable and good agreement for cessation of hostilities through a careful implementation of the agreement and up to building lasting peace. Accordingly, this theoretical discussion covers type of agreements, implementation, and the nature of peace building as well as post-agreement conflict dynamics and the normative frameworks of resolution.

A good agreement is characterized by precision of wording, technical feasibility, international legitimacy, and a detailed implementation timetable. It aims to result in durable peace by containing all necessary steps for each party to achieve the end of the conflict, reform state institutions, promote national reconciliation, and consolidate democracy. A bad agreement may lead to delays,

setbacks, or even the collapse of the peace process. Imperfections in terms of wording, feasibility, or legitimacy can exist. However, these imperfections may be acceptable costs if they help maintain the momentum of the overall transition (Arnault, 2006).

Successful implementation involves adapting to emerging opportunities and constraints during the process. It may not mirror the original agreement entirely but should lead to a lasting peace by gradually accommodating the agreement to the ground realities. Implementation failures can arise from various weaknesses common to peace agreements. Not all agreements are liable to implementation, and certain threshold conditions need to be met for successful implementation. UN participation in negotiations is crucial to ensure operational requirements are considered, human rights standards are upheld, and the parties take pre-ceasefire steps to enhance the viability of the settlement (Arnault, 2006).

Peace agreements encounter challenges stemming from various factors such as the overestimation of capabilities, political constraints, and unmet vital concerns. The limitations on the part of international actors and guarantors in guaranteeing parties' security, legal protection, power sharing and political survival, and substantive gains, should be fully addressed during negotiations rather than deferred to the implementation phase. Mutual trust between parties is crucial for cooperation during implementation, with pre-ceasefire actions serving to build trust. International actors play a role in providing capacity, advocating for agreements, and coordinating assistance. Effective agreements incorporate power-sharing mechanisms to navigate implementation challenges, particularly for weaker parties. Implementing agreements that meet essential conditions, such as addressing vital concerns and aligning with human rights principles are basic factors. The success of the peace process ultimately depends on how difficulties during implementation are managed, emphasizing the importance of addressing problems that typically mar implementation and the risks they pose to the parties and the peace process (Arnault, 2006).

Moreover, the lack of coordination among international actors can undermine peace implementation efforts. Successful cases demonstrate that tools like "Friends Groups" and lead states can facilitate coordination. However, with the proliferation of actors involved in peace building, coordination has become more difficult. Effective coordination implementation of peace agreements

depends on factors like a clearly defined lead agency, continuity of key actors across negotiation and implementation phases, and established coordination forums (Jones, 2001).

These challenges of crafting and implementing a good agreement interface the peace process with the grand task of peace building. Johan Galtung established the concept of peace building which centers on creating structures that generate sustainable peace in a society. He advocates that these structures should address the root causes of violent conflicts and support local capacities for conflict resolution. Essentially, peace building involves taking measures to construct a peaceful society by addressing core sources of hostility and promoting mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution (Galtung, 1969). This calls for the need for transforming structures, cultures and relationships of violence through comprehensive reconstruction, re-structuration and re-culturation (Galtung, 2001).

Similarly, Jean Paul Lederach emphasizes on the need to address immediate basic human needs, reduction of violence and increasing justice as core elements of peace building based on the paradoxical dyads: establishing truth and offering mercy and ensuring justice and peace. Here balancing peace and justice is vital for the transformation of society from violence to peace. Healing, rebuilding cohesion and reconciliation through a workable formula of transitional justice are keys for peace building. Besides, political commitment of parties to engage in cooperative political dialogue is vital to the level of disappointing their respective constituency that ensures the implementation of agreements (Lederach, 1997).

The commitment to move from the violence of the presenting situation and to envision a shared peaceful future should be supported by addressing the immediate issues and the epicenter (the roots causes) of the conflict, for violence to be hindered (Lederach, 2003). Accordingly, this calls for analyzing the remote conflict environment factors and proximate peace building factors that influence post-conflict peace. Remote factors include the costs of the previous war, natural resources, ethnicity, and the type of war end. Proximate factors include international commitment, reconciliation efforts, disarmament and demobilization, refugee repatriation, and state capacity (Leib, 2015; Leib, 2016).

In line with Lederach's transformative and integrated framework, peace building needs to understand and analyze the key actors, power relationships,

underlying causes, and external influences and dynamics of conflict to design, implement, and evaluate effective peace agreements. This is useful for preventing armed conflict, ending war and violence, contributing to society's recovery in the aftermath of conflicts, and promoting social justice and development (Woodrow, P., Tsuma, W., Aulin, J., & Movlazadeh, Z. , 2015). Furthermore, in post-war context, a range overlapping and issues, embedded in patterns and history which manifest in the presenting post-war situation should be addressed before addressing the epicenter (Lederach, 2003) not to replace into violence and for peace building to take root. Among many issues which contribute to the rise of conflicts are the needs and repatriation of IDPs requiring special focus not only during implementation but also integrating in peace process and the text of the agreement. The main steps to integrate internal displacement and engage IDPs in the peace process are as follows: Firstly, it is crucial to assess the causes, dynamics, and characteristics of internal displacement. Subsequently, a framework for integrating internal displacement should be established. The next step involves actively engaging IDPs in the peace process, ensuring their voices are heard and considered. Finally, human rights and the interests of IDPs should be integrated into the peace agreement (Hugh, 2010). According to Koser, durable solutions for the displaced are not simply a humanitarian and socio-economic issue, but a political issue too. As a political issues the displaced – and especially IDPs – should be consulted or represented in peace processes and its' implementation; overlooking their particular circumstances and needs in the language of peace agreements and their marginalization in peace building initiatives-more so with displaced women in particular tend to be forgotten (Koser, 2009).

The prevalence of unresolved grievances, competition for resources and the absence of democratic power sharing mechanisms in the agreement and the implementation triggers multifaceted conflicts among various groups. These conflicts can also hinder the post-war reconstruction and reconciliation process, and in some cases, lead to a resurgence of violence. In some cases, communal conflicts can be linked to state-based conflicts, where they may be entangled with other forms of violence (Brosché, J., & Elfversson, E., 2012), analyzing the dynamics of post-war conflict dynamics should take serious note of.

Power vacuums left by collapsed governments can spark competition for control. Unresolved ethnic or religious tensions fueled animosity during wars and

may escalate locally. Armed groups retaining weapons post-war can perpetuate violence and instability. Destroyed infrastructure, displaced populations, and disrupted livelihoods create economic insecurity, inequality, and competition over limited resources, contributing to local conflicts. Addressing root causes requires comprehensive approaches encompassing political reconciliation, economic development, and social cohesion initiatives to foster long-lasting peace and stability (Sisk, 2004).

Economic destruction, disrupted livelihoods, and unequal resources create disparities and tensions. Unemployment, poverty, and inequality fuel unrest. Foreign involvement, whether military or political, exacerbates divisions and prolongs conflicts, impeding stability. Effective resolution and peace demands a comprehensive understanding of the specific context and dynamics of each case (Krause, 2019; Bara, C., Deglow, A., & van Baalen, S., 2021) and implementing sustainable solutions that promote unity and resilience within these societies (Florian Krampe and Henning Melber, 2010). Another vital issue is crafting a workable formula for the implementation of transitional justice that truth, peace and social and political reconciliation (Wessells, 2007; Sisk, 2004) which in turn expedite post-war recovery, reconstruction and rebuilding towards economic development and social cohesion (Brosché, J., & Elfversson, E., 2012). Pursuing justice for war crimes can hinder reconciliation and denial of justice relapse post-war societies to violence, so striking the right balance is critical (Florian Krampe and Henning Melber, 2010).

The prevalence of trauma, grief, bereavement and re-victimization by the rise of criminality and the absence of victim centered and compassionate Mental Health and Psychosocial Social Support (MHPSS) and medical services to victims of Gender Based Violence (GBV), People with disabilities (PWD) and veterans, casualty notification, bereavement and post-bereavement support services (Fossey, 2012) should be timely addressed to assist rehabilitation and social resilience and healing. A coordinated MHPSS, medical casualty notification, bereavement and post-bereavement support to connect survivors with long-term support like Survivor Outreach Services (SOS). SOS provides personalized guidance, financial advice, and resources for dealing with grief, legal issues, and other concerns (Willerton, E., Samper, R., & MacDermid, S. M., 2008).

The absence of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) properly designed and need based program is another volatile issue that affects the post-war conflict dynamics. Failure to get the dividend of peace on the part of ex-combatants can lead to insurgency, criminality and the rise of new forms of insecurity (Bara, C., Deglow, A., & van Baalen, S. , 2021). The degree of attention and practical commitment to address these issues is vital to analyze and understand the post-war conflict dynamics in Tigray.

The review of post-war conflict dynamics shows a comprehensive approach. Resolving conflicts after civil war requires addressing underlying grievances requires understanding tensions, struggles, and factors fueling conflicts. Promoting reconciliation and trust-building through dialog and initiatives can resolve issues. Strengthening governance and institutions ensures capacity and equitable resources distribution. Incorporating local perspectives in solutions designed ensures relevance and sustainability (Brosché, J., & Elfversson, E., 2012). Also, emphasizing on inclusivity and meaningful participation of all stakeholders in conflict resolution (Sisk, 2004) is indispensable. Another dimension of effectively managing and resolving post-Civil War conflicts during reconstruction include addressing root causes, promoting healing, and fostering reconciliation. Moreover, ensuring equal civil rights regardless of social divisions; promoting education and economic opportunities; strengthening inclusive governance and civic participation; providing community healing support; preserving historical memory are indispensable (Krause, 2019).

Furthermore, balancing justice and reconciliation, implementing effective disarmament and reintegration programs, prioritizing socio-economic development, ensuring development efforts are conflict-sensitive, coordinating international cooperation, engaging local communities are vital (Florian Krampe and Henning Melber, 2010). Also, strengthening security through disarmament, reform, and combating arms trafficking, building inclusive, accountable governance through participation, rule of law and transparency are key recommendations (Bara, C., Deglow, A., & van Baalen, S. , 2021).

Successfully executing Casualty Notification and Bereavement support services for army families presents challenges that must be addressed to ensure effectiveness. Adhering to these recommendations contributes to meaningful,

compassionate casualty notification and bereavement care (Willerton, E., Samper, R., & MacDermid, S. M., 2008; Fossey, 2012) which in turn contributes to the resolution of conflicts.

Finally, a successful post-conflict healing and resolution require an inclusive, multi-faceted approach which includes facilitating inclusive dialog and mediation among stakeholders; addressing root causes like inequalities; establishing transitional justice mechanisms; fostering reconciliation and social cohesion; strengthening institutions and governance; prioritizing sustainable development; encouraging international cooperation; and maintaining long-term commitment. By implementing comprehensive strategies that engage all groups in addressing underlying issues, promoting justice and reconciliation, strengthening society and governance, supporting development and cooperation, post-conflict areas can experience sustainable peace, resolution and community well-being (Wessells, 2007).

Methodology

The study employed a phenomenological inquiry in to the lived experience of Tigrayans in a post war conflict dynamics. The data for the qualitative exploration was collected using 65 Key Informant Interviews with relevant stakeholders and the personal observation and immersion of the authors during the field work. The interviews were conducted in four urban centers, namely Mekelle City, Adigrat, Aksum, and Shire Town. The key informants included representatives from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), community representatives, and other government organs. These interviews aimed to gather valuable insights and perspectives on the conflict dynamics in the region.

The selection of key informants was carried using purposive snowballing among government organ leaders, CSOs and NGOs operating in those areas and clustered random sampling among community representatives which included men, women, elderly, people with disability, IDPs and TDF ex-combatants were equally represented. The qualitative data is categorized and analyzed using content and thematic analysis aligning with the theoretical framework to generate meaningful narration of the post-war conflict dynamics in Tigray. Therefore, the findings from the Key Informant Interviews, observation and immersion formed the basis for the result and discussions section of the article. These findings shed light on the complex conflict dynamics in the various cities of the Tigray region, leading to the identification of key implications, challenges, and recommendations for addressing the conflicts and restoring stability in the region.

Post-Pretoria Conflict Dynamics in Tigray

Before unpacking the conflict dynamics in post-Pretoria Tigray by aligning with the agreement, it is vital to understand the prelude as the road that led to Pretoria and the process of agreement making. This provides us the conceptual frame work of good and bad agreement and its consequences on the implementation and peace building at large.

The Road to Pretoria

The journey to Pretoria passed through rough roads amid the height of war. According to a senior military leader within the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF), after successfully repulsing genocidal forces from most of Tigray and marching victoriously deep into the Afar and Amhara regions nearly 170 km from the capital Addis Ababa, TDF found itself trapped by its own victories and drawn further by the allure of battle. Additionally, the Ethiopian National Defense Force's (ENDF) defensive strategy, along with allied militias, and increased use of drones in combat, transformed the engagement into an all-out war effort that forced TDF to return to Tigray (GMI, 2022).

However, another senior TDF leader characterized the return as influenced by pressure from the international community, led by the United States and its allies, who were wary of TDF advancing on the capital without a clear political roadmap for Ethiopia's future. This was seen as a threat to destabilize and divide the country. The Ethiopian government vigorously promoted propaganda campaigns and pursued diplomatic pressures framed around this existential threat, effectively rallying public support. According to the source, while military defeat was not the sole factor, lack of progress on the political front ultimately impacted battlefield outcomes (GGT, 2023).

Both sources agree the second wave of invasion was successfully defended, thwarting aims to conquer Tigray. This led to a period of siege, blockade, and confinement within the region. Allied forces used this interval to reposition military strategies and align forces, despite a brief humanitarian ceasefire. However, this truce was broken as ENDF, militias, and regional forces blocked aid from reaching Tigray. The Afar region president's statement ruling out allowing even a single loaf of bread into Tigray exemplified using starvation and

famine as weapons of war, evoking cruel medieval tactics of Genghis Khan. The international community condemned this as potentially employing disease through denial of medical aid, which could constitute use of biological weapons (Danssaert, 21 February 2022).

The third wave of invasion of Tigray resulted from meticulous preparation, repositioning, realignment and reengagement of ENDF, EDF, ASF, *Fano* and Afar forces for the decisive defeat of Tigray. In terms of military strategy, launching heavy weapons firepower at combatant and civilian settlements, keeping ammunition and logistics supply lines far from the battlefield, and engaging the numerically inferior and lightly armed TDF with overwhelming numbers were synchronized to overwhelm and outgun TDF. According to a front commander, TDF faced ammunition shortages despite decisively repelling direct assaults not only due to new allied force strategies hindering typical tactics of replenishing supplies by capturing enemy weapons, but also failures in political and military strategic leadership from TPLF and TDF to import arms when possible. Specifically, he identified that postponing long-awaited arms imports due to lack of strategic decision making left TDF empty-handed against the massive invading force. The deliberate carpet bombing of civilian settlements, razing of villages and towns like Adi Adaero to ashes, and destruction of farmlands with the declared intent to utterly defeat Tigray put TDF in a desperate position (TMI, 2022).

The war continued TDF failing to break the siege and the allied forces progressively narrowing the cage and blockage. A military resolution in Ethiopia appeared highly improbable, nonetheless. The Tigrayan forces remain unable to break the ongoing siege, and it seems equally implausible for Abiy or any combined Eritrean and Ethiopian forces to decisively overcome them. Besides, Abiy was also contending with conflicts in Wollega, Benishangul, Borena, Bale, Arusi, Afar, Somali, and the Amhara region. Internal conflicts and dissatisfaction within Ethiopia have besieged him. In Pretoria, both parties acknowledged that their survival was jeopardized by continuing the war (Yohannes, 2022).

However, according to one of the negotiators of the agreement, the claim on the part of the federal government was total victory and imminent capture of Mekelle Tigray' capital, and demanded total surrender; while the Tigray team adamantly reaffirmed that TDF is keeping the allied forces at bay despite the

continued massacre of Tigrayan innocent civilians (NFH, 2022). The claims and counter claims regardless, the agreement was reached because neither party can achieve a military victory. Yet, given the ongoing massive killings of innocent civilians, the TPLF was under pressure to prioritize the survival of its people over other demands that constituted as aspect of power asymmetry vis-à-vis the federal government.

Post-Pretoria Tigray

The Pretoria agreement elicited a range of reactions in Tigray, sparking mixed feelings, confusion, and divisions among the allied forces of the regional structure of genocide, including the ENDF, EDF/Somalia, ASF, and *Fano*. Within Tigray, the agreement sent shockwaves and continued to be a source of division, contention, political schism, and resentment, while also kindling a sense of hope and survival. For certain segments of society and leadership, Pretoria represented a survival mode that rescued the people of Tigray from utter annihilation, viewed as a wise and pragmatic approach to confront a determined genocidal force bent on the complete destruction of Tigray.

Informants often reference the speeches of the social affairs Advisor of PM Abiy Ahmed, Daniel Kibret, and Eritrean President, with Daniel Kibret being considered by Tigrayans as the chief architect of the Tigray genocide (Adigrat-Elderly, 2023; Mekelle-Elder, 2023; Aksum-Women, 2023), openly declaring the eradication and burial of Tigrayans from the face of the earth and memory, preventing even their remains from being found by archaeologists (Danial, 2022).

Conversely, for others who had fought fiercely for two years in what was deemed one of the worst wars of the 21st century, the signing of the COHA was viewed as capitulation. Even among the top political leadership of the TPLF and military leaders, there was great frustration, perceiving that the cause of Tigray was betrayed by individuals within the negotiating team. The COHA became a source of political schisms, creating a lasting fault line in Tigray politics, within the TPLF, and the TIG (Muauez, 2023).

Similarly, despite the government of Ethiopia's celebration of a decisive victory, the COHA significantly shifted the dynamics of the Regional Structure of Genocide in the Horn of Africa, triggering a political upheaval within the allied

forces that invaded Tigray. Eritrean and Amhara forces felt betrayed and opposed any peaceful reconciliation between the federal government and Tigray, advocating for anything but the cessation of hostility with Tigray. Their objective was nothing short of the absolute destruction and surrender of Tigray. Subsequently, relations with both Eritrea and Amhara soured significantly over the following three months. In accordance with the provisions of the COHA for the withdrawal of foreign and non-ENDF forces and the imperative for the latter's disarmament and demobilization, ASF and *Fano* engaged in armed confrontation against ENDF, resisting the DDR of ASF and *Fano* (Blanchard, January 23, 2024; ICG, 16 November 2023).

Consequently, the second civil war between partners in the Tigray Genocide continues to rage. Relations with Eritrea and Somalia soon deteriorated into regional hostility, posing a significant threat to regional peace (Mohamed, 2023). Consequently, the interplay of external factors to COHA, internal political tension within TPLF and TIA and federal government's manipulation of changes to delay the implementation of COHA created diversified forms of conflicts in Tigray.

Emergent Conflict Dynamics

The qualitative exploration in Mekelle City, Tigray, revealed complex emerging conflict dynamics across various domains, necessitating attention. Politically, tensions are evident between the government and the public, within the TPLF, and between the Tigray Interim Administration (TIA) and TPLF. The lack of clear leadership and structure in the TIA, established following the signing of the Pretoria agreement, has contributed to societal fractures. Furthermore, deep-seated resentment persists among former Tigray Defense Force (TDF) combatants and the wounded towards local politicians and past recruiters, further exacerbating political tensions (Mekelle-Elder, 2023; HOP, 2023; Social and Labour Affairs Bureau, 2023).

Ex-combatant informants expressed their deep sense of sacrifice and struggle for the freedom and survival of the people of Tigray in the face of genocidal war, emphasizing the significant sacrifices made against formidable odds. They highlighted that the youth of Tigray played an unconditional and relentless role in preventing the potential extermination of their people by the coalition of genocidal forces and their technologically advanced allies. However,

following the Pretoria agreement, ex-combatants felt abandoned without proper Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR), leading to feelings of being used and betrayed (Ex-combatant-Mekelle, 2023).

Despite the commitments made in the Pretoria agreement for the proper DDR of Tigray Defense Force (TDF) combatants, thousands of ex-combatants were left without proper support, leading to deep resentment and conflict. The failure to implement proper DDR has forced many ex-combatants into criminality and despair, with some resorting to migration as a result (Mekelle-Youth 2023). Additionally, the return of ex-combatants to society without proper DDR, particularly those originally from Tigray territories occupied by Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) and Amhara forces, has led to the emergence of ex-combatant Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). These ex-combatant IDPs face vulnerability to economic, psychological, and emotional problems, exacerbating social and political conflicts (Mekelle-IDPs-1 2023).

Socially, intolerance and irritability have permeated families and neighborhoods, leading to disintegration and discord. This has resulted in unattended trauma, frustration, and an overall economic and humanitarian crisis caused by the war and perpetuated by the failure to implement the agreement. Economic conflicts have arisen from the destruction of land titles and documentation records, as well as illegal land seizures and transactions. Land, housing, and property (LHP) conflicts have been fueled by the deliberate destruction of title deeds, housing and property certificates, and legal documents by the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and EDF during the war, leading to social conflict. Illicit practices such as the seizure, sale, and forgery of land, housing, and property evidence by criminal groups have further escalated economic and social conflicts. Religious conflicts and gender-based violence have added complexity on the ground, with instances of resentment towards Muslim community members and discrimination against victims of such violence and mothers of children born from rape (MuMs, 2023; Mekelle-PWD, 2023; Mekelle Mayor's Office, 2023).

The study identified critical challenges and considerations shaping the emerging conflict dynamics in Mekelle City. Powerful businessmen and politicians have reportedly engaged in land grabbing, contributing to the deterioration of social solidarity and moral values. This has led to social

grievances among the consumer society against businesspersons supported and backed by politicians for exploiting consumers during the siege, blockade, and war period through hoarding, price fixing, and demanding exorbitant prices for basic commodities. The practice of usury against the consumer community unable to make ends meet is considered an act of brutality, exacerbating social conflict (Mekelle-Elder, 2023; Mekelle-IDPs-1, 2023; Mekelle-PWD, 2023; Mekelle-Women, 2023; Mekelle-Youth, 2023).

During the war, soldiers from Somalia, Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF), and Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) actively sought to sow division between Christians and Muslims in Tigray. While engaging in a systematic and planned rampage, including indiscriminate massacres of innocent and unarmed civilians, and widespread rape of women, girls, and in some cases, men and boys, they sought to create the illusion of sparing the lives and property of Muslim Tigrayans. Despite this being far from the truth, they propagated the impression that Muslims were their allies. In order to deceive Christian Tigrayans and stoke religious conflict, they orchestrated isolated incidents of apparent care for the Muslim community and spread false rumors that the invading forces spared those wearing Muslim attire such as Kaftan, Abaya, and Hijab. Some individuals desperately attempted to comply with these fabrications, leading to the rapid spread of misinformation across Tigray. Furthermore, propaganda campaigns were launched to portray Muslims as identifying PM Abiy Ahmed Ali, a converted evangelist and Muslim by birth, as their leader, insinuating that it was time for them to support him. Rare incidents of Muslims allegedly welcoming the invading allied forces were exaggerated to bolster the well-crafted propaganda, disregarding the complicity of Christian politicians who replaced the regional government of Tigray. Ultimately, this propaganda campaign dealt a severe blow to the historically nurtured inter-religious symbiotic coexistence of Muslims and Christians in Tigray (TIPS, 2021).

Upon the return of the regional government of Tigray to the capital and the retreat of the invading forces, rumors about the resistance of Muslim Tigriyans to join the Tigray Defense Force (TDF) were amplified, reinforcing enemy propaganda. Additionally, the small number of bereaved Muslim families receiving casualty notifications, indicative of the numerical minority status of Muslims, further fueled the enemy's propaganda. Consequently, the post-war religious conflict between Muslims and Christian Tigrayans observed in all hubs,

except at Aksum with its historical roots, stemmed from these dynamics (TIPS, 2021; Mekelle-Elder, 2023; Mekelle-Youth, 2023).

In contrast to the universal practice of casualty notification, bereavement, and post-bereavement support services, the process of casualty notification in Tigray lacked empathy and compassion (Fadeeva, A., Mann, E., McGill, G., Wilson Menzfeld, G., Moreland, M., Melling, A., & Kiernan, M. D. , 2023; Fossey, 2012), leaving bereaved families without support and causing resentment against recruitment mobilizers, local cadres, and Civilian Notification Officers (CNOs). Families of martyrs have accused past recruitment mobilizers and local cadres, further exacerbating discord. In some cases, recruiters faced intimidation and reprisal killings, and a former recruitment woman committed suicide upon learning of the death of a young man she had recruited forcibly. The stalemate in implementing the Pretoria Agreement is seen as the root cause of public grievances, compounded by the ongoing occupation of certain areas by Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) and Amhara forces, as well as the prolonged displacement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). A growing lack of trust in political leadership, greed among businessmen, and the strain on limited resources for city residents, IDPs, persons with disabilities, victims of gender-based violence, and non-reintegrated ex-combatants further compound the challenges (ASDEPO, 2023; ADR, 2023; ACSOT, 2023; TIRA, 2023).

In Adigrat town, the study has uncovered several emerging conflict dynamics. Political tensions have arisen between ex-combatants and TPLF/local authorities, as well as between the TPLF/local leaders and the community/IDPs. The reasons and causes of conflict identified in Mekelle similarly apply to the emergent conflict in Adigrat. Additionally, latent political conflicts exist among supporters of different factions of the TPLF, TIA groups, and political parties due to political fault lines within the TPLF and tension between TIA and TPLF. The absence of a clear political roadmap and lack of trust towards the political leadership have led to a political crisis manifested in societal conflict (Adigrat Youth Association, 2023; Adigrat Women League, 2023; CRC-Adigrat, 2023). The machinations of the federal government have exacerbated political conflicts at elite and community levels. Deliberate postponement of the agreement's implementation, curtailing of public finance and civil servants' salaries, and diversion of humanitarian aid by the federal government have delegitimized TIA in the eyes of a section of TPLF and the society. Furthermore, mutual

incrimination between pro-TIA and anti-TIA elements of the TPLF has deepened the divide.

Socially, rifts are evident between ex-combatants and the community, as well as among ex-combatants, families of martyrs, and veterans regarding past recruiters. Intra-family tensions and intra-community disputes around aid distribution have also been observed. Economic conflicts, including latent issues between the business sector and consumers, as well as challenges faced by persons with disabilities and the broader community, further contribute to the emerging conflict dynamics. The causes and reasons of conflict discussed in Mekelle similarly apply to Adigrat (Alight-Adigrat, 2023; Hiyab Association-PWD, 2023).

Another dimension of emergent conflict is related to the rise of anomie and value degeneration implanted by the allied EDF and ENDF during the war. According to informants,

During the war, EDF and ENDF committed systematic gang rape, mutual rape among family members, forced residents of Adigrat to loot and destroy public and private assets, slaughtered, tortured, and mutilated civilians alive. Overkilling and corpse abuse were dominant practices. Residents were rendered helpless and forced to observe other sexual practices considered as taboo by the community. They practiced various taboos with the intention to embed their atrocity crimes within the social values of the society (CRC-Adigrat, 2023; Adigrat-Elderly, 2023).

As a result, the values and practices of the invading forces have led to the emergence of unprecedented and alien crimes, creating value conflicts that impact social bonds as taboos in society and degrade social values (Adigrat-Elderly, 2023; Adigrat Town Administration Office, 2023).

In Aksum town, the study has revealed several emerging conflict dynamics. Politically, tensions have arisen between IDPs and TPLF/local authorities, as well as between the TPLF/local leaders and the community/IDPs due to the failure to implement the Pretoria Agreement. The presence of 70,000 IDPs has created competition for access to sacred public resources and basic services between the host community and IDPs. The rise of criminality

attributable to the IDPs and ex-combatants has contributed to the escalation of conflict (CPWD-Aksum, 2023; Aksum-Elderly, 2023; Adigrat-IDPs-1, 2023). Conflicts also exist between past recruitment officers and bereaved families of TDF members, as well as between casualty notification officers and bereaved families. Socially, rifts have emerged between house owners and renters, ex-combatants and the community, families of martyrs and veterans towards past recruiters, and IDPs and the local community for reasons discussed in the Mekelle hub (Aksum-Children and Gender Affairs office, 2023; Aksum-Public Relations Office, 2023; Aksum-Youth, 2023).

Intra-family tensions, intra-community disputes around aid distribution, and economic conflicts among aid workers and beneficiaries, the business community and consumers, persons with disabilities and the community, and landlords and tenants further contribute to emerging dynamics. Additionally, values conflicts and historical religious tensions impact social bonds within the community (Aksum-Social and Labour Affairs Office, 2023; Aksum-Elderly, 2023; Aksum-Women, 2023; Hawelti-Aksum CSO, 2023).

The study has highlighted critical challenges and considerations for Aksum town. Ex-combatants feel resentment towards TPLF/local authorities and the community due to lack of support. Distrust and perceptions of illegitimacy plague local authorities and TPLF due to unresponsiveness, misuse of resources, and inability to address the needs of the host and IDP communities. The absence of proper and compassionate bereavement aftercare, transit camps for IDPs, verified beneficiary master lists, and diversion of aid pose major hurdles (Hawelti-Aksum CSO, 2023; Tigray Association of Hikers-Aksum, 2023; Tigray Youth Association-Zone, 2023). Additionally, students' resistance to attending school, alleged involvement of politicians in illicit activities, and scarcity of resources to support veterans, ex-combatants, and persons with disabilities must be addressed to effectively mitigate emerging conflict dynamics in Aksum town (CPWD-Aksum, 2023; Aksum-Children and Gender Affairs office, 2023; Ethiopian Peace Institute-Aksum, 2023).

Findings in Shire Town revealed a complex web of intersecting conflict dynamics across multiple domains. Political conflicts have emerged between the TPLF and local authorities versus the community and IDPs due to the failure to implement the Pretoria Agreement aimed at resolving issues. Additionally,

tensions have arisen between military recruitment officers and bereaved families of TDF members, as well as casualty notification officers and the same families (CRC-Shire, 2023; IRC-Shire, 2023; Shire-IDPs-2, 2023). The sources of the political conflicts are the same across the three hubs.

Social conflicts are evident between ex-combatants and the community, families of martyrs and veterans opposed to recruiters, and various factions of IDPs against local authorities, NGOs, and the host community (Shire-Social and Labor Affairs Office, 2023; Shire-Women, 2023; Shire-Youth, 2023; ANE, 2023). Economic conflicts have also surfaced, involving aid workers and beneficiaries, the business community and consumers, PWDs and the community, and landlords and tenants (Alight-Shire, 2023; Shire-Security Office, 2023; EECMY-Shire, 2023). Furthermore, value conflicts and religious tensions have further complicated the social fabric within the community (Shire-Public Relations Office, 2023; Shire-Elderly, 2023; CRC-Shire, 2023).

The study highlighted several critical challenges and basic considerations that must be addressed to mitigate the emergent conflict dynamics in Shire town. Ex-combatants' resentment against the TPLF/local authorities and the community due to the absence of support, as well as the lack of trust and growing illegitimacy of local authorities and the TPLF, have significantly contributed to the prevailing tensions. The absence of proper and compassionate bereavement aftercare support, transit camps for IDPs, and verified beneficiary master lists, along with the abuse and diversion of aid, pose significant challenges. The alleged involvement of politicians in illicit activities, the lack of resources to support veterans, ex-combatants, and PWDs, and discrimination against civilian PWDs further exacerbate the conflict dynamics. Addressing these challenges is crucial to restoring stability and fostering social cohesion within Shire Town (Shire-Social and Labor Affairs Office, 2023; IRC-Shire, 2023).

Implications and Conclusions

Understanding post-Genocidal war conflict dynamics requires taking note of the unique nature, damages and lingering consequence of genocide in Tigray society. The challenges of implementing peace agreements like the CoHA should be viewed from this perspective.

The promises of the CoHA, marred by inadequacies in unequivocally providing compulsory implementation modalities, have unleashed a cascade of complex regional and national political, military, and security dynamics, ultimately paralyzing the CoHA's implementation and catalyzing the emergence of new conflict dynamics in Tigray. The absence of internationally guaranteed DDRRR for EDF and DDR of ASP and *Fano* has perpetuated violence, ethnic and demographic conversions, and occupation-related atrocities in Tigray, rendering the restoration of occupied territories and the safe and timely repatriation of IDPs and refugees impossible. The belligerence between the Ethiopian government and Eritrea has triggered regional and security crises in the Horn of Africa, while the outbreak of civil war between ENDF and Amhara *Fano* militia, supported by Eritrea, has introduced new political, military, and security factors that have destabilized the CoHA.

The Federal government and the Amhara *Fano*, along with its ally EDF, have directly and indirectly demanded Tigray's alliance in their war against each other as a precondition to address the core interests of Tigray. Despite Tigray's persistent rejection of their requests to take sides and its steadfast commitment to neutrality and the unconditional implementation of the CoHA, the Federal government and *Fano* have insisted on pushing Tigray to take their respective sides to secure the restoration of occupied territory and the repatriation of IDPs and refugees. The resulting political, military, and security realignments have placed TPLF, TIA, and TDF in a grotesque political, military, and security standing, stripping them of their political agency and interests meant to be ensured by the CoHA, thus creating multifaceted repercussions on post-Pretoria Tigray.

Millions of IDPs, refugees, and TDF ex-combatants are enduring famine and inhumane conditions, engendering opposition, grievances, and political illegitimacy for TPLF, TIA, and TDF. This has underpinned political, social, economic, religious, and value-based conflicts in Tigray, providing the federal government with a political trump card to indefinitely postpone the implementation of these core issues, further exacerbating conflicts, widening political divisions, and igniting political schisms among TPLF, TIA, and TDF. Additionally, the prevalence of families of victims and survivors of genocide, genocidal rape, and trauma waiting for justice, restitutions, recognition, healing,

and reconciliation in Tigray, coupled with the deliberate exclusion of Tigray from the Ethiopian Transitional justice, has inflamed resentment and disowning of TPLF, TIA, and TDF, further fueling the overall conflict dynamics.

Political conflicts have fractured communities and eroded trust between citizens and local authorities in Tigray. The breakdown in governance and widespread distrust of regional administration exacerbates societal fault lines, emphasizing the need for political reform and inclusive governance tailored to foster civil rights and freedoms in the post-war context (Krause, 2019; Sisk, 2004; Wessells, 2007). The experiences of post-war states underscore the necessity of a comprehensive approach to address the immediate issues, root causes of war and embark on political reforms and building culture of peace (Galtung, 2001; Lederach, 1997). The failure to enforce comprehensive conflict management and resolution has enabled the federal government contrary to the purpose of CoHA to sow factionalism and division within TIA and TPLF, creating a political crisis in Tigray. Consequently, the people and government of Tigray are not benefiting dividends of peace.

Social conflicts in the urban centers are closely linked to political conflicts. Without restored confidence in political leadership and reconciliation of divided populations, social cohesion will remain fragile. The latent clashes among various political supporters could ignite further strife, endangering social bonds and community stability. Addressing the needs and expectations of various political actors, bereaved families of TDF, and the reintegration of ex-combatants under internationally supported DDR is vital for the restoration of social harmony and order (Brosché, J., & Elfversson, E., 2012; Florian Krampe and Henning Melber, 2010). Neglecting these requirements has led to the rise of social conflicts in Tigray.

While comprehensive approach to post war reconstruction of the visible and invisible damages is vital for the success of peace building (Galtung, 2001) and constructive transformation of relations (Lederach, 2003), the absence of Resilience, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction program led to economic conflicts which in turn have destabilized the local economy and hindered reconstruction in the region. The absence of economic opportunities, the imperative for prioritizing socio-economic development, and the building of economic infrastructure are vital for the post-war transformation of society. Economic conflict in Tigray, if

unaddressed, could engender a self-perpetuating cycle of conflict with regional peace and security repercussions. The people of Tigray, having endured a two-year-long genocidal war, are grappling with unaddressed calls for justice, trauma, harm, bereavement, and famine amid overlapping conflicts. This environment has the potential to become a breeding ground for the emergence of violent groups seeking retribution against the perpetrators.

Wars may widen historically deep-rooted divisions and contradictions, creating fresh conflicts that challenge historical memories of peaceful coexistence. In the absence of community healing support and efforts to preserve positive historical memory, post-war conflicts can get exacerbated (Krause, 2019; Brosché, J., & Elfversson, E., 2012) as is the case in post-war Tigray. Religious conflicts in Tigray have been engineered by invading forces to sow division between Muslims and Christians, eroding the reverence victims of genocidal sexual violence have for religious leaders.

Recommendations

The conflict dynamics unfolding in the Tigray region are intricately intertwined with civil wars and regional crises in the Horn of Africa, creating a complex web of interconnected factors and challenges that span from local to regional levels. Addressing these challenges requires multifaceted interventions and policy reforms involving multiple stakeholders to reinstate peace and security, stability, trust in governance, and social cohesion across different levels. The forthcoming priority recommendations aim to address the conflict dynamics in Tigray while considering the involvement of regional and global actors.

The root causes of the conflicts are attributed to the nature of the CoHA and the delayed implementation of the Pretoria agreement. These agreements, if properly implemented, could address issues such as the establishment of an effective Transitional Interim Administration (TIA), the proper implementation of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) for TDF combatants, the evacuation of Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) and Amhara forces from Tigray, the restoration of occupied territories, and the repatriation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to their homeland. Resolving these issues is crucial in addressing the multifaceted conflicts arising from the overall war damage and the post-Pretoria agreement stalemate. Therefore, the international community, African

Union (AU), and guarantors of the agreement need to rally support and exert pressure to initiate political dialogue, amend the content and process of CoHA implementation, and ensure compliance from the federal government while preventing the disruptive role of Amhara forces and EDF.

Firstly, the international community and guarantors are urged to advocate for internationally guaranteed Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DDRRR) for Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) of Amhara Special Forces (ASP) and *Fano* to address perpetuated violence and occupation-related atrocities. Additionally, diplomatic efforts should be facilitated to de-escalate belligerent postures and seek peaceful resolutions to regional and security crises in the Horn of Africa.

Secondly, the Ethiopian Government and Regional Authorities are called upon to engage in constructive dialogue and negotiation to address the core interests of Tigray, including the restoration of occupied territories and the safe and timely repatriation of IDPs and refugees. It is crucial to prioritize inclusive governance and political reform tailored to foster civil rights and freedoms, thereby rebuilding trust between citizens and local authorities.

Thirdly, Tigrayan Authorities and Community Leaders should be empowered and supported by international actors and put pressure on the Federal Government of Ethiopia to ensure the unconditional implementation of peace agreements, maintaining a steadfast commitment to peace and reconciliation amid external pressures and internal conflict dynamics. Furthermore, there is a need to prioritize the restoration of social harmony and order by addressing the needs and expectations of various political actors, bereaved families of TDF, and the reintegration of ex-combatants under internationally supported DDR.

Fourthly, it is essential to implement comprehensive post-war reconstruction programs to address the visible and invisible damages, fostering resilience, rehabilitation, and reconstruction to promote economic development and social stability. Community healing support and efforts to preserve positive historical memory are vital to fostering reconciliation and addressing the trauma, harm, and bereavement endured during the war.

Fifthly, religious and community leaders should work towards preserving positive historical memory and fostering interfaith dialogue to mitigate religious conflicts and rebuild trust between religious communities. Long-term peace building efforts are essential to address the root causes of conflict, promote constructive transformation of relations, and prevent the emergence of violent groups seeking retribution.

Seventhly, there is an urgent need to implement measures restoring public confidence in administrative structures. The regional government appears dysfunctional, and communication lines between leadership are unclear. Community-based initiatives promoting religious, ethnic, and social tolerance could help address deteriorating traditional values and unity within families and neighborhoods. Economic conflicts stem from insecure land and property rights as well as illicit activities; stabilizing housing and land ownership through new policies and enforcement against crimes could alleviate tensions. Gender violence and religious discrimination must be confronted through respectful dialog, victim support, and social reforms.

Moreover, land grabbing and unlawful behavior severely undermine property rights and social solidarity. Reforming laws and vigorously applying them can restore order. External forces inflame tensions between religious and ethnic groups; diplomatic outreach fostering regional understanding is important. Displaced people yearn to return home but occupied areas lack stability; community assistance and trusted leadership are needed. Scarce public resources overwhelm local capacities; targeted aid for vulnerable citizens and equitable services could ease economic conflicts.

Lastly, open communication and mediation involving opposing political, social, and economic factions to rebuild trust and cooperation is needed. Initiating conflict resolution and reconciliation programs addressing value and religious differences promotes community understanding and unity. Comprehensive support for former combatants, displaced individuals, and bereaved families addresses pressing needs and restores faith in local leaders. Transparent and accountable aid distribution through verified recipient lists prevents misuse and diversion of supplies. Investigations into alleged politician criminality and discrimination restore trust in just governance and social inclusion.

By implementing these recommendations at various levels and with the involvement of different actors, Tigray can work towards mitigating conflict dynamics, fostering stability, and laying the groundwork for sustainable peace and development. These measures, when implemented in a coordinated and committed manner, have the potential to address the multifaceted challenges facing Tigray and pave the way for lasting peace and prosperity in the region.

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