

Claiming the Tree versus the Fruit Framing: Should TPLF Revoke Eritrean Secession or Claim Assab Only?

Critical Review of General Tsadkan Gebretinsae documentary on EBC

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<https://youtu.be/LiSrbFmKAos?si=OV57FTbsiaOn0xe->

TPLF's main mission was to make Eritrea a separate country by betraying Ethiopia's national heritage, history, narrative, culture, civilization, security, diplomatic rights, national territorial integrity, and harmonious unity that lasted for generations and centuries. The TPLF higher commanders and political elites have accused Ethiopia of being a colonial power over Eritrea and have committed notorious treason against our country, Ethiopia. TPLF was the only faction that made these false allegations and worked day and night to make Ethiopia landlocked and fragmented, siding with the strategic advantage of Arabs (especially Egypt). In fact, TPLF leaders and commanders have a strong and determined stand on this, and still they accuse General Alula Abanega and King of Kings Yohannes IV as colonial powers in Eritrea. They even dismissed and erased the legacy of these mighty warrior Agaezi Ethiopians and replaced them with pro-Egyptian and pro-Italian legacies both in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Now, it is becoming a trend to see a few TPLF commanders, such as General Tsadkan, claiming Assab as Ethiopian while they still have a firm stand for Eritrean sovereignty and secession from Ethiopia.

Before proceeding to the detailed analysis and critical review of such a stance, let us see the context:

Tree: Eritrea as a sovereign, internationally recognized state

Fruit: Assab (a port city within Eritrea)

The key is whether General Tsadkan and his TPLF clique can separate the “fruit” from the “tree” after the tree itself has been recognized as whole and independent by TPLF themselves. This reminds us that General Tsadkan Gebretensae was among the hardliners for Eritrean secession, and he was the Ethiopian National Chief of Staff when Eritrea was separated illegally and illogically. Tsadkan and his likes are still actors for self-determination and Article 39 in Ethiopia, which pushes for disintegration and fragmentation of Ethiopia, the ancient civilizational state, into pieces following the footsteps of Eritrea.

It needs to be clear that General Tsadkan and his TPLF factions, when they claim Assab, are saying either “We need the fruit → therefore we can take it” or “The tree belongs to Eritrea → how can we access the fruit with permission?”

In the pro-Meles Zenawi group TPLF versus anti-Meles Zenawi group TPLF war in the Tigray region from 2020–2022, General Tsadkan, in the bush, underlined that the TPLF’s stand for Eritrean sovereignty and independence is firm and will never be compromised. He declared this while the Eritrean military was fully within Ethiopian territory, confronting the pro-Meles Zenawi Ethiopian National Defense, especially the Northern Command that was trained by pro-Meles Zenawi generals such as General Seare Mekonnen, who was assassinated in Addis Ababa.

Does this statement of General Tsadkan reflect consistent TPLF policy? Or is it a tactical strategy to divert current public demands and eventually save the Prosperity Party, which is being challenged in many Agaezi Ethiopian areas such as Tigray, Amhara, Gurage, Shewa, Gamo, Harar, Wollega, Arsi, and Bale for its crimes and systematic democides?

Historically, the TPLF government (1991–2018 era under Meles Zenawi), including General Tsadkan, accepted Eritrean independence (1993) illegally and illogically. This aligns with Tsadkan’s statement, and the statement is not new or contradictory; it reflects a long-standing position of TPLF for Eritrea to be separated from Ethiopia.

The Legal “Whole Tree” of TPLF

After the Eritrean independence referendum organized by TPLF leaders and commanders:

Ethiopia was forced and betrayed into formally recognizing Eritrea as a sovereign state. Under international law, sovereignty includes territorial integrity as well.

That means Eritrea's borders (including Assab) are treated as a complete unit—not divisible “fruit by fruit.”

Now, the question is: once TPLF leaders and commanders accept the tree (Eritrea as sovereign and never part of Ethiopia), how can they claim to pick a fruit off unilaterally from Eritrea? TPLF leaders and commanders such as General Tsadkan believe that Eritrea is a sovereign state. Its borders (including Assab) are internationally recognized after the Eritrean independence referendum organized by TPLF. Eventually, Ethiopia was forced to accept this outcome regardless of legality or other valid evidence. So any argument must deal with the whole tree first, not just the fruit. Why has General Tsadkan never asked for an apology for Ethiopia and honestly claimed the return of Eritrea as a whole, instead of focusing on a single portion—Assab only?

Applying Logical Reasoning (Not “Single Fruit Thinking”)

Observation (fruit): General Tsadkan Gebretensae argues that Assab should belong to Ethiopia (or be accessible).

Whole-tree reasoning asks:

What does sovereignty mean? → Control over all territory within recognized borders. Why are General Tsadkan and his TPLF faction claiming Assab while still maintaining their stance for Eritrean separation from Ethiopia in a baseless and controversial manner?

Can part of a recognized state be claimed unilaterally? → No, not without:

Consent of the state (Eritrea), or

An international legal process, or

War (which violates international norms unless in self-defense).

Given this situation, the TPLF faction's purpose, such as Tsadkan's, could be to dismantle Ethiopia's natural and legal right to reclaim its land, sea, and territory by making it irreversible.

Are there alternative, lawful paths? → Yes:

Port access agreements

Leasing arrangements

Trade corridors

The other strategy presented is to revoke Eritrea's recognition as a sovereign state and claim it as Ethiopian territory, which focuses on the whole tree rather than a single fruit. Why is this position not welcomed by Tsadkan and his TPLF factions? General Tsadkan

argues that Assab is geographically near Ethiopia; however, proximity does not override ownership, especially given his advocacy for Eritrean sovereignty.

Where “Single Fruit Thinking” Goes Wrong

A flawed argument would be: “Ethiopia needs sea access → Assab is nearby → therefore Ethiopia can claim Assab.”

Why this fails logically:

It ignores the tree (Eritrea’s sovereignty) recognized by TPLF leaders.

It jumps from need to entitlement without legal basis.

It treats territory as detachable without consequence, which could expose Ethiopia to a permanent and irreversible landlocked condition.

This argument often leads away from logic into power politics, not law, and could weaken Ethiopia in the long-term Red Sea geopolitical struggle.

Balanced, Reality-Based Answer

Can Ethiopia legally claim Assab after recognizing Eritrea? No, not unilaterally under international law.

Can Ethiopia seek access to Assab? Yes, through negotiation, diplomacy, or agreements.

Does one political or military figure’s claim change this? No—one “fruit” (a statement) does not override the “tree” (established sovereignty and law).

Refined Rule of Thumb

If a claim about one part (Assab) contradicts the established status of the whole (Eritrea as sovereign), then the whole must be addressed first—not isolated parts. This highlights the contradiction: while TPLF leaders maintain Eritrean sovereignty, they also claim Assab for Ethiopia.

Territory is not a loose collection of fruits; it is part of a legally recognized “tree.” Once the tree is acknowledged as independent, any attempt to take a fruit must go through the owner of the tree, not based on proximity or need.

Once you recognize the tree belongs to someone else, logic does not ask, “How do I take the fruit?” It asks, “How do I gain access to the fruit without denying the tree?”

If General Tsadkan believes that Eritrea is a sovereign state (since the Eritrean independence referendum), then its territory—including Assab—is part of a single, indivisible whole, and sovereignty means control over all fruits on the tree.

In conclusion, the time for ambiguity is over. The TPLF factions, along with figures such as General Tsadkan Gebretensae, must clearly and directly answer fundamental historical, legal, and strategic questions that continue to shape the future of Ethiopia.

Do they still stand by the claim that Ethiopia is a colonial power over Eritrea, and that Eritrea has never been part of Ethiopia's historical and political fabric? Or will they acknowledge the complexity of shared history and responsibility?

Do they continue to defend the ethnic-based constitutional order—widely criticized as a system that has deepened division, weakened national cohesion, and placed identity above unity?

Do they persist in undermining the legacy of the Aksumite civilization—its enduring symbols, its historical continuity, and its contributions to identity, culture, religion, and statehood, including its historic access to the Red Sea through ports such as Adulis?

Do they still frame the Amhara people as strategic adversaries, thereby reinforcing cycles of mistrust, conflict, and grievance that have cost generations dearly?

Do they remain committed to ideological doctrines rooted in past revolutionary movements that dismissed or diminished Ethiopia's deeply rooted religious and cultural heritage—both Christian and Islamic traditions that have coexisted for centuries?

Do they seek to erode the shared Ge'ez civilizational foundation—its language, script, and cultural continuity—in favor of systems that disconnect future generations from their historical identity?

Do they continue to attack and delegitimize Ethiopians who advocate for national unity, sovereignty, and a renewed connection to Ethiopia's historical presence along the Red Sea?

These are not abstract questions. They go to the core of national identity, historical truth, and the direction of the state. Until clear and honest answers are given, calls for trust, partnership, or reconciliation will remain incomplete.

If these positions have evolved, let that evolution be stated openly. If they have not, then the Ethiopian people deserve clarity on where these actors stand.

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