

## **THE UGLY POLITICS OF POLARIZATION OF ERITREANS IN DIASPORAS**

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**Polarization usually refers to how people think or sustain viewpoints or beliefs that drive them apart. Some people are enthused by a dangerous and dubious ideas that may gradually lead them to acquire a more extreme viewpoint which isolate or separate them from others. Polarization is the splitting of a society into distinct groups, that are alienated and divided by politics, religion, region or ethnicity though they might co-exist in the same country. As human beings, all of us harbor and entertain certain opinions or perspectives about sensitive issues in a society. Our personal opinions tend to change or disappear when we are in a certain political group setting and take on more extreme forms to be like the rest of the group. This phenomenon is the process by which the political group opinion escalates and goes to the extremes and claims to be different from others. It is usually referred to as group polarization in the name of politics, ethnicity, religion, or region. In all cases, polarization weakens social cohesion or unity and leads to patterns of separation, isolation, or segregation. Politics is what we think it is. It is a noble profession if its principles serve the people under the divine moral guidance and govern the nation under the rule of law. However, politics is a dirty business if its principles create social polarization, alienation and division by ethnicity, region or religion. We need to understand that there is too much at stake for all Eritreans, particularly those of us in Diasporas to surrender to the ugly politics of polarization by ethnicity, religion and region because it does not serve our purpose, in fact, it is dangerous to our unity and integrity.**

**The ugly politics based on divide and rule policy promotes polarization of people by any social compositions. The divide and rule policy were highly utilized in Eritrea by our former foreign aggressors. They divided our people across ethnic, religious and regional lines to serve their colonial purposes. It was particularly implemented during the British and Ethiopian colonial rules. The ugly politics of polarization reached its highest peak in Eritrea during the Ethiopian colonial rule, when the former Ethiopian leaders escalated the situation by igniting the flames of adversity especially between the Christians and Moslems and among our people in the highlands of Eritrea in the name of regional soccer teams. It has been commonly observed that the Ethiopian political leaders were intentionally engaged in preparing and creating a convenient ground or environment for the Eritrean people to be polarized usually by supporting one region and ignoring the other, by favoring one ethnic group and neglecting the other, and by attending one religion and restricting the other. The divide and rule policy were basically applied by creating division, conflicts, contradictions, and alienation between the Christians and Moslems, between the highland people and the lowland people, and among the various Eritrean ethnic groups. The PFDJ leader has recently added an inflammable fuel to the ugly politics of polarization when he publicly denounced at the 25<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary of Sawa Military Training Service that the enemies or opposition groups against the government in Eritrea are from one region. Likewise, the mere fact of having too-many divided Eritrean political opposition groups functioning separately or independently against the cruel rule of the government in Eritrea might have the potential to escalate the ugly politics of polarization of our people in Diasporas. The Eritrean political opposition groups have now a good opportunity to come together in unity and work together by holding firmly their common grounds in support of the dynamic Eritrean people's movement which is activated and accelerated by our outstanding Eritrean young men and women.**

**It is evident that many of us do not know our regional, religious and ethnic combination and distribution in Eritrea. It is essential to realize that we all Eritreans cannot come from the same village, or region (awraja). Some of us are from Hamasein; some of us are from Seraye; and some of us are from Akele Guzai; some of us are from Senhit; some of us from Setit Gash Barka,; some of us are from Semhar; some of us are from Sahel; and some of us are from Denkalia; some of us are from the highlands; and some of us are from the lowlands. We all cannot worship the same faith or religion. Some of us are Christians and some of us are Moslems. Even within Christianity, some of us are Coptic Orthodox Christians; some of us are Catholics; some of us are Protestants; and some of us have other different faith, like Pentecostal, Bahai, and Jehovah Witness. We all cannot come from the same ethnic group. Some of us are Tigrigna; some of us are Tigre; some of us are Saho; some of us are Kunamas; some of us are Bilen; some of us are Narra; some of us are Hidareb (Harendewa); some of us are Afar; some of us are Rashaida; and others. We all cannot be born from the same mother and father or have the same parents. Some of us have parents composed of Eritreans and Ethiopians, Eritreans and Yemenis, Eritreans and Sudanese, or Eritreans and other nationalities. We all cannot speak the same ethnic language, nor can we have the same ethnic cultural heritage. We all cannot have the same political views or ideologies. Although a few members of PFDJ think that they are more Hagerawian (Eritreans) than the rest of us, we are all Eritreans, nothing more and nothing less. We all Eritreans belong to the same country Eritrea and the same country Eritrea belongs to all Eritreans irrespective of our political, ethnic, religious and regional differences. We are as diverse people as the strong combination of diverse colors of a beautiful rainbow. Our diversity must be considered, dignified and respected as our priceless national treasure and social pride. We must recognize, appreciate and cherish the unique identity of every ethnic group, religion and region with great respect and honor because we are all one beautiful nation. We must relate ourselves with all Eritreans around us because there is more power in unity than division. An Eritrean, though important as an individual person, is like a drop of water, but all Eritreans together in unity we can be an ocean loaded with a powerful and stormy water.**

**It is important to understand that the current Eritrean people's movement is not a movement of one political function or the other. It is not a movement of one religion or the other. It is not a movement of one region or the other. It is not a movement of one ethnic group or the other. It is neither the movement of the highland people nor the movement of the lowland people. It is the people's movement of all Eritrean people together in unity, dignity and integrity for justice, democracy and peace in Eritrea, irrespective of our political, ethnic, regional and religious differences. Our diverse ethnic identities, our varied religious beliefs, and our unique regional affiliations should not serve as political tools to create barriers and obstacles to our unity and nor to initiate division, animosity or hostility among the Eritrean people. Our diversity in our society must be considered as valuable attributes to our rich cultural heritage which must be inherited by our Eritrean younger generations. It is essential to secure and strengthen the unity and cohesion of all political groups, Eritrean communities, religious institutions and all other civic organizations and professional associations in the struggle for justice, democracy and peace in Eritrea. The more we are divided and separated, the higher is the survival and sustenance of the PFDJ regime. The more we bring ourselves together in unity and challenge our enemy, the sooner is the victory and glory of the Eritrean people's movement. The voice from a united people**

is much louder and stronger than the blast of bombs from an army brigade. The voices of people for changes demonstrated in Sudan, Algeria, Egypt and other countries is a typical example that reflects the strength of people's voice. At this critical time, we need to bring together our scattered voices from our scattered people because one solid and strong voice from a united people of all Eritreans can make a big difference in our people's movement. Where there is unity there is always victory. We need to bring all Eritrean people from all regions, religions and ethnic groups together in unity and encourage them to actively participate in our dynamic Eritrean people's movement galvanized and propelled by the devoted and dedicated Eritrean young men and women who are leading the way to victory. The Eritrean youth are prepared to give the power to the Eritrean people so that they would be governed by the rule of law. We are always better and stronger when we bring ourselves together in unity to defend and safeguard the national sovereignty of Eritrea.

It matters a great deal to realize that *'enough is enough'* campaign has been the turning point for all Eritreans in Diasporas to come together in unity in support of the Eritrean people's movement for justice, democracy and peace in Eritrea. Now, it is enough to say *'enough is enough'* because we have already said enough for a long time. It is now time to go to work because we have an urgent job to do. We all have something to contribute to the Eritrean people's movement based on our talents, skills, capabilities, professional expertise, knowledge and experience. However, we must immediately stop our squabbles and quarrels among ourselves which are manifested on the social medias. These disagreements should not be based on our ethnic, religious or regional differences. The problem usually arises when we use our ethnic, religious and regional association or affiliation for separation or isolation from each other and claim to be better or unique one from the other. Such practices promote the ugly politics of polarization in our social fabrics. Our civility and behavioral characteristics are all judged and measured by the contents, relevance and significance of what we say and do in relation to the welfare of our own people. It is not the right time now to talk about ethnic, religious or regional affairs when we have many urgent issues to talk about at national levels, such as: about the demarcation of our border between Eritrea and Ethiopia; about the massive exodus of our Eritrean youth who are perching in the Sahara and Sinai deserts and drowning in the Mediterranean sea; about our political prisoners who are unlawfully incarcerated in the prison cells and ditches; about the endless and unlimited national military service of our Eritrean youth; about the implementation of our forgotten national constitution; about the intervention of the PFDJ government in the affairs of our religious institutions; about the officially undisclosed agreements signed between the PFDJ government and the Ethiopian government and between the PFDJ government and some Arab countries; about the scarcity of basic social services or supplies and the economic disaster of our country; and about the absence of fundamental human rights, justice and the rule of law in Eritrea. Instead we are engaged in bickering and snapping at one another for no apparent reasons when we could tolerate and understand each other in unity and integrity. It takes discipline and decency to respect one another and work together in peace and harmony.

At this inspiring moment and advancing progress of the struggle of our people for justice and democracy in Eritrea, we should not be the obstacles and roadblocks to the Eritrean people's movement by instigating the ethnic, religious and regional adversity. It takes far more time and energy to fight one another than what it takes to tolerate and understand each other. If we stop and think for a moment to carefully listen to one another,

there is a great deal of opportunity to understand and respect each other. Since we all have different background, knowledge and experience, we are all different in so many ways and we may understand our political and socio-economic issues differently. It is human nature to make mistakes because we are not perfect. It is also human nature to learn from our own mistakes and do the right thing. However, we need to understand that we can always benefit from each other and develop a sense of understanding among ourselves when we roll away our barriers and take the initiative to encourage and support one another. The social medias must be used to unite us, not to create division among ourselves. We need to have discipline and decency when we appear on the windows of the social medias. We must not allow our adversity to define us who we are. Our adversity which is frequently manifested through the windows of the social medias cannot go away anywhere and anytime soon, if we do not respect each other unless we try to embrace peace and harmony among ourselves. We need to read the moral lessons of the Holy Bible and Quran if the divine intervention makes a positive difference in our social relationship with one another.

We must understand that *“Diversity is the art of thinking independently together”* (Malcolm Forbes). The interconnection of our different hands together (as shown in the



Figure) reflect diversity in unity. The Greek philosophers also indicated that the collection and combination of outstanding ideas and opinions for progress and development come out of people who have different perceptions, not out of people who have similar perspectives. When these people who have varied perspectives come together in unity and work together in peace and harmony, they can make miracles happen in the lives of people. We need diversity of thoughts to face and challenge our diverse political, ethnic, religious and regional adversity and disagreements. The unity and integrity of varied perspectives can serve as the building blocks for the development of a nation and the corner stone for the social progress of humble people, no matter our differences. As a lot of different flowers make a beautiful bouquet, ethnic, religious and regional diversity adds richness and happiness to a society when we function together in unity, peace and harmony. We are all different, but that is the one true thing we all have in common, which is great because we are all unique and precious in all aspects of human life. We need to embrace and give each other the opportunity to exercise our diversity and our individual unique identity so that we may give and receive from each other such beautiful things as ideas, openness, and dignity. It is about time that the Eritrean scholars and professionals and members of the Eritrean communities and religious institutions must rise in devotion and dedication to come together in unity in support of the Eritrean people’s movement. All of us collectively, particularly the older generation, are needed to serve as guardian angels, role models and mentors to guide the Eritrean young men and women and teach them that in diversity there is always beauty, there is always strength, and there is always victory. The beauty of our country lies in the diversity of its beautiful people. We have the moral obligation and parental responsibilities to support our Eritrean youth to cherish our national identity and preserve our cultural diversity that nourishes our Eritrean people and strengthens our nation. We need to restore and walk back to our traditional values, cultural heritages and customary laws and orders that have been our national identity and social pride from generation to generation. Thus, it is essential to remember that whatever we do for ourselves dies with us. But whatever we do for the welfare and security of our people remains eternal and immortal forever. God bless Eritrea and its people.

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