

The importance of building trust towards national unity

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The Eritrean conflict is intra-state conflict originating from early statehood and now after liberation in organizing state and governance. The Eritrean post- liberation state organization process was an exclusive not accommodating the Eritrean diversity. Eritrea today is ruled by a coterie political elites of the same interest preventing others from joining.

The internal conflict is identity- based on differences of ethnics and combined by unjust policies political, economic, social and cultural rights. Most conflicts of the world today are intra-state conflicts much less amenable and emotionally charged by Eritrean political elites.

This article will try to illustrate some tools for conflict management inside the opposition forces for democratic change.

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The Eritrean democratization process is still in its initial phase or is only at its rhetorical stage. After more than ten years' the outcome of these waves of accusations and blames led to more disintegration in the camp of the Eritrean opposition forces for democratic change.

Conflicts are escalating between different personalities and clientelist politics both inside the political and civic organizations. The Eritrean forces for democratic change are in uncertain and conflict-prone unable to work within the current situation and prepare for the future.

How can we descalate these conflict –prone attitudes? How can the Eritrean forces for democratic change build trust by joining their efforts? This article will argue on some approaches that can help us come together and reunite our efforts in the following fields:

- political approaches
- diplomatic relations
- popular mobilisation

- media
- economy

How can the opposition manage joint political affairs

The historical circumstances behind the renaissance of most of the Eritrean opposition organizations makes them closely related to their respective old programs, and even a large number of the opposition leaders are historical leaders, to the extent that the spirit that influenced the political discourse and the leaders in the era of struggle against colonization still more or less reflected in the political performance of the Eritrea Government and the opposition alike, and this discourse undoubtedly instilled in the Eritrean people, particularly the younger generation that has emerged in the beginnings of the 21st of the century, not to mention the generation born after the independence of Eritrea at home who haven't been acquainted with the opposition and its political discourse, consequently lacks the needed stimulus to participate and support the opposition, therefore the political discourse of the opposition must undergo a radical change of mode or paradigm shift through broader modernization in concepts and terminologies, and that should be reflected in the practical performance of the political forces and civil rights' organizations.

The opposition today requires a political discourse that would combine the history with the present, highlighting that the values of democracy are fundamental rights that doesn't allow compromise, founding its political discourse on the concepts of human rights, the political discourse must attract the wishes of the new generations to encourage them participate in the bid to highlighting the benefits of the moral and material meaning of home, the opposition's discourse must make use of the modern media communications which would surely attract our young generation, This discourse is based on: -

- 1- To stress the legitimate right of the Eritrean people to own their political decision and share the wealth of the country and to take their deserved part in ruling over their country, by the well-defined means of democracy methods and the right to enjoy justice by the virtues of the law that they established through their representatives in the parliament.
- 2- To focus on the concepts and values of democracy and human rights.
- 3- To pay much attention to the civil society, especially the associations of youth and women, and to involve them in the formulation of the political discourse so that they would be empowered enough, because they know how to conduct a successful dialogue to win over their peers.

How can the opposition gain the popular confidence?

- civil -disobedience----- ይአ ክል

-Joint Popular mobilization..... ሓባራዊ ሕዝባዊ ምልሶ ዓል

Since the Eritrean masses as stakeholders would directly benefit of the democratic change , then the opposition must mobilize the entire sectors of the Eritrean Public at home, as well as abroad in the process of change through the mobilization and raising public awareness, the political and civic organizations which are leading the endeavours towards change should recognize the differences in the political programs and coordinate a mechanisms and consolidate a unified political discourse to accelerate the project of democratic change in Eritrea

Today the Eritrean public needs a glimmer of hope that could encourage them to work for democratic change, they need a leadership that could convince them about the credibility of the struggle for change, alas the opposition leadership seemed to be dominated by the differences over secondary issues that dominate and hinder its unity on the key issues and consequently keeps the public away from any mass action, public mobilization must be based on the following:-

1- Build-up of credibility through positive attitudes and behaviour on the part of the political leadership interacting with the public.

2- Paying much attention to the suffering of the public and provide alternative solutions, especially the issues relating to the legal status of refugees and migrants, particularly with countries that have good relations with the opposition

3-Recruiting the public in the branch-offices of the opposition and mandating of leaders that can serve as role models to help the public come close up to the opposition, and not the kind of leaders that scare people away from the ranks of the opposition.

4- The establishment of service sectors, that could serve the public such as education and health services, wherever Eritrean communities exist, and to refrain from providing such public services according to one's political or organizational affiliation.

5- Establishment of grass-roots associations such as youth, women, workers and other sectors and to give those institutions a real attention through professional understanding and practice.

6-Establishment of branches combined of members of collective umbrella of the Eritrean national council for Democratic change/ENCDC and EPDP to furnish

information and programs for the public to ensure improving it beyond the organizational differences.

Joint diplomacy/international relations

Countries are no longer islands isolated from each other in our era of intertwined interests, as the foreign policies of countries are driven by interests, therefore, it must be well-understood that foreign countries would have to take their respective positions towards Eritrea according to their political and economic interests, perhaps it is an irony that the foreign policies of the Eritrean Regime had to play a catalyst helpful role on the part of the opposition to pursue a constructive productive and effective diplomacy in their struggle for change, but the Eritrean opposition, despite the just and legitimate cause in the struggle to bring about democracy, but it has shown incapability to win the sympathy and support of foreign states, the opposition have to make use of the diplomacy based on the know-how of the modus operandi of international relations which had been administering the world today, the interests of countries with national sovereignty, and international organizations attends to the interests of international security, regional organizations that sponsor the security and interests of the countries in the region, as well as non-governmental organizations that has become of great influence in international politics and overseas companies with a significant impact on the process of political decision-making.

Therefore any formulation of diplomatic action plan must be based the above mentioned backgrounds, it would be helpful to point out some important guideline here below:

1. A diplomatic action built on positive interaction, that is to say, there are parties in the world who have their respective stakes in Eritrea, who need to be convinced that the opposition can be faithful to their interests as long as not inconsistent with the national interests of Eritrea, therefore countries which their interests have been damaged by the Eritrean Regime will cooperate with the opposition, but first, the opposition must confirm its credibility and seriousness

- 2- A diplomatic action built on negative interaction, and we mean that there are parties in the world that Eritrean Regime constitutes a source of concern for their respective national security, whether serious or minimal concern, such forces would be more than happy to watch the Eritrean Regime disappearing, they have genuine interests in the disappearance of this Regime due to the keenness to their respective national security, but these countries cannot risk to establish relations with the opposition unless ascertained in the seriousness of the opposition, for fear that the establishment of such a relationship might

deteriorate the internal affairs of their respective countries, the Eritrean Regime is notorious in exploiting the internal contradictions of foreign countries, which constitute a threat to the security of those countries, the seriousness of the opposition would be associated with its political discourse and its mechanisms.

3- A diplomatic action built on bilateral policy and attitudes, where some countries are in harmony with opposition on their stance towards many issues, attitudes towards public issues is inconsistent with the positions of the Eritrean Regime, therefore compatibility with opposition or contradiction with the regime, is stimulus for diplomatic cooperation between the opposition and the foreign nations.

4- Diplomatic functioning based on lobbying through local communities, civic organizations and individual relationships, where every vote counts on the part of the Western countries in times of elections, the grouping of communities and activating civic organizations or take advantage of individual relationships can influence and stimulate the policies of Western states towards Eritrea.

5- Benefit from Non-governmental Organizations of certain areas of concern, such as human rights organizations, and organizations concerned with freedoms of religion or press, or transparency and those NGOs fighting corruption, and even the relief and health humanitarian organizations that the Eritrean Regime refused to give access to providing aid to the Eritrean people, all these factors could be valuable for the diplomatic advancement of the opposition if used properly.

The Eritrean opposition need to muster the factors that manipulate world politics through a specialized and skilful apparatus the make use of its political and administrative authority, and perhaps the most important aspect in this regard is appoint united-external-political unit composed of united delegation

The following points might be useful in this respect.

1- Formation of diplomatic apparatus for the Eritrean forces for democratic change to run the international relations with political and administrative competency and capabilities.

2- Consensus on the features of the external political discourse by all components of the opposition/ ENCDC and EPDP

3- Coordination of the foreign policies of the political organizations through a united committee consisted of the external relations officials of the ENCDC and EPDP organizations. With the task of making ENCDC- EPDP joint foreign policy a non-partisan policy through the evaluation of external policy

functioning, exchange of information and proposal of plans, and benefiting from the relationships of organizations and individuals in this area.

4- Coordination with the civic organizations that support the overall objectives of the opposition, especially in Europe, America and Australia, and take advantage of their relations, and to mandate the civic organizations to implement and illuminate the foreign policy of the Eritrean opposition.

5- To draw a maximum benefit from the partnership's presence in the capital of the African Diplomacy Addis Ababa, where the African Union Head Quarters is located, beside a high-ranking diplomatic missions of the most important powers, the ENCDC- EPDP joint diplomacy should approach these countries by taking advantage of the public events that these missions held as well as the occasional events held in the host country , Ethiopia, and to constantly send messages in the occasion of public National Holidays of diplomatic missions.

6- Establishing a joint website so that it could be a reference to all the questions that may arise in the mind of any policy-maker or a diplomatic mission, as well as writing leaflets carefully prepared and in different languages.

Joint Media development strategy

In today's world, which is dubbed as the “age of information evolution”, though the media of the Eritrean opposition is not commensurate with the magnitude of the cause it is raising and the challenge it is facing, despite the progress that opposition media has registered in general, but that is not enough to deliver the message of opposition, especially when the regime it is opposing has an information outlets that are considered the most prominent strengths of the regime.

even the improvements that opposition's media outlets have shown are due to efforts without any coordination which is not enough to deliver the message of the opposition , most of the oppositions media outlets lack professionalism, most of the member opposition organizations have their own media outlets which lessen the effectiveness of the spirit needed for change, even the oppositions media outlets are often used to highlight the secondary political contradictions between the various organizations , we could point out the following points in this respect:

1- Formulation an information policy with clear goals and instructions to convey a convincing message through all available information means.

2- Tolerate secondary contradictions of political and civil forces, and focus on the overarching challenge of removing the dictatorial regime in Eritrea.

- 3- Coordination of work between media organizations and the signing of the Code of Conduct for the media outlets, so that the media war between the organizations, degradation or questioning of the principles, personal attack would be perceived as a red-line.
- 4- Development of the radio through the creation of an independent radio with working-hours for as long as possible pursuing a dynamic approaches in conveying the opposition's message to resist the Regime and to deliver opposition's message in an intelligent way.
- 5- Diligences in founding a TV-channel to convey the goals of the opposition and reflect the suffering of the Eritrean people, and work to highlight the abuse of the regime against our people.
- 6- Establishing opposition Satellite TV challenging the PFDJ's ERITV.
- 7- Develop opposition websites on the web and make it more professional and more easily viewed, and more substantive and meaningful.
- 8- Pay much attention to the Internet to benefit from groups on facebook, Twitter and other tools that gains the attention of a large number of sympathizers.
- 9- The importance of training and the adoption of assigning media work according to individual competency and not organizational affiliation.
- 10- Opening up communication with TV channels, news agencies, global and regional newspapers and magazines and all that can contribute to delivering the message of the opposition.
- 11- Use the universal language in the media, in terms of focus on the concepts of human rights, democracy, transparency and good governance.
- 12- Documentation of the regime's Violations, and reporting the evidences in figures and images because it makes the message of the opposition more credible and acceptable to the recipient.
- 13- adoption of mechanisms and means to evaluate the feedback such as surveys, questionnaires and others to determine the effect of the message on the recipient

Joint Economic Development strategy

The biggest dilemma of the opposition is how to finance its activities, as it is known , that, those who lack financial sources cannot fully own their decisions, The people of Eritrea have had an honourable history in financing and supporting the Eritrean revolution, therefore the opposition need to explore extraordinary alternative plans to attract support and to discover funding

sources, its economic plans must not depend only on funding sources, but in drying-up the support of the Regime, especially as the Regime draws-in support from neutral places where the opposition exists.

We can refer to the following points in this respect:

1- Authentication of the relationship between the opposition and the public, encouraging the people to bear the responsibility of regime change as the sole beneficiary of the change, this can be achieved only through a high degree of transparency and openness, and building bridges of trust between the opposition and the public.

2- Establishing a constructive relationship with countries that can accumulate with the political positions of the Eritrean opposition, then to make use of these relations in opening economic cooperation to finance the activities of the opposition

3- Presenting partnership projects with organizations that have relations with the Regime such as the European Union in order push them towards parallel treatment between the Regime and opposition, through pressure by voters in the European countries, and to benefit from these projects in financing the opposition in particular with regard to the entrenchment of the values that form the agenda fixed in the concerns of the European Union and organizations alike.

4- Cooperation with NGOs on human rights, freedoms, gender, transparency etc., and enter into partnerships with them to serve the common goals of the organizations and the opposition alike.

5- Search for investment projects, and not necessarily to be at the centre level, but can be done at the branch level, so that the opposition activities can be financed by its own projects.

The above points are relevant to improving the financial capabilities of the opposition; the following steps are to cut off the sources of financing of the Regime.

1- On the official level, by persuading countries and organizations that sponsor projects in cooperation with the Regime until it stops financing of such projects, or at least could proceed funding the Regime's projects but after imposing its own terms and conditions, to prevent the Regime from using such funds in the oppression of our people.

2- At the grassroots level to stop the tax imposed by the Regime on Eritrean nationals living in Diaspora, and projects that the Regime claims to support the families of martyrs and the disabled, especially since the Regime is

using the means of blackmail and intimidation in the collection of such tax which contradicts the laws of the countries in which the Eritrean communities live.