

## **Isayas and Meles: The Regional Confederalism That Divorced Their Alliance**

The EPLF and the TPLF, until early 1995, shared and believed in democratization process in their respective countries. The lesson learned the fallen government was that the Derg, as a one party rule, sought to dominate through the use of force sparking nationalists/resistance movements.

The EPLF and the TPLF, to avoid a repeat of the Derg mistakes, they both believed in framing constitutions as to institutionalize multi-ethnic or multi-nationality in their respective countries. Both, the EPLF and the TPLF, realized that the use of force to dominate power with the support of one ethnic group had sprouted a monster or a brutal dictator and, therefore, both viewed that that was not to be their choice of governance.

Because both, the EPLF and the TPLF, upon liberation found that the fallen governance of the Derg had plagued their respective liberated countries with unfair distribution of wealth and inequitable allocation of resources, the victims of disparities were pushed to become rebellious. As such, both the EPLF and the TPLF condemned all the past unequal justice.

The TPLF in line with its Marxist ideology was committed to recognizing the different and all nationalities of Ethiopia with a right to secede. Yet, to unite all the Ethiopians, the TPLF saw an all nationalities decentralized governance to be the best tailored to share/distribute powers and resource fairly and equally.

The TPLF together with the other amalgamated political organizations that formed the RPRDF (The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Party) established a commission (the National Constitutional Commission) to draft a new constitution for creating ethnic federalism of nine autonomous regions and a parliamentary system of government. The parliamentary system of Ethiopia, as explained by Meles to Isayas, not only was intended to ensure inclusive and a fair representation of all Ethiopians but also to gear up for more democratic changes and developmental programs for all autonomous regions.

Similarly, the EPLF took off with launching administrative reorganization based on the old split up of the country into provinces plus the capital city. According to

the EPLF's administration reorganization, the country was divided into 10 (ten) autonomous regions with provincial governments. Each of the regional/provincial government was to be led by a senior EPLF member from the region. And, all of the autonomous administrative regions were to be run under a unified system of the Eritrean Federal Government.

The two liberation movements accepted the recommended government style of federalism and constitutional democracy for the countries of East/horn of Africa region to enable the tribal and ethnic groups separated by the colonial borders to live in peace with those of their ethnic groups across the border. According to a political prognosis of the region, the alternative is a military rule or dictatorship that is predicted to result in failed states, political tensions, and/or border conflicts.

Somalia, the ethnically homogenous country, is a good example on two effects. Internally, the different tribal groups made federalism necessary. Regionally, the fractured Somalis among four countries made confederation of the federated countries in the region necessary to avoid re-mapping or border conflicts and political tensions.

Since all the countries in the region are patched with separated tribal and ethnic groups that are bisected by the colonial boundaries, there must be a political structure that gives the separated people the freedom of movement across-borders. Otherwise, redrawing of the region's map will be necessitated to allow reunion of the bisected ethnic groups. The ethnic factor, according to the prognosis will remain to be a source for disintegration of the region's countries unless all the possible political tensions and border problems are resolved through confederation of the federated countries.

With the transformation of the EPLF, in February of 1994, from a liberation movement into a political party (the PFDJ), it became clear that Isayas was hesitant to associate the new party (the PFDJ) with the EPLF's democratization process of the country. Obviously, Isayas's decision to put the new party under his thumb meant no share of power, no share of decision-making, and no share of spotlight.

Isayas who wanted Eritrea to remain stuck in the style of the liberation era administration, where and when he had supreme control over the front, fighters and the people, appeared not to be ready to surrender power to the people. The

Eritrean people, on their part, with the final victory of their armed struggle believed that the liberation struggle was wrapped up and hence they were not to be subjected to further harsh struggle era exploitation any more.

Most of the EPLF senior leaders remained committed to the EPLF's National Democratic Program adopted in its First Congress of 1977. Those pro-democracy EPLF seniors were also supportive of the emerging Eritreans' demands, such as: calls to end the harsh-struggle-era life style, the right to freely travel in/out of the country, the right to resign from military/public services, etc. Additionally, the pro-democracy EPLF seniors were committed to the 10 (ten) autonomous administrative regions as well as constitutional democracy, which all amounted betrayal to Isayas's command and order system.

As opposed to the recommendation of political prognosis for the region's stability, Isayas had his own version of achieving regional stability through confederation of the dictatorial regimes in the region. Under the Isayas's version, the ethnic factor was going to be addressed through intermarriage of the young generation and through imposed ethnic mixing at the regime's conscription camps, like Sawa.

To assess challenges of governance and to expand cooperation, the countries of the region formed organization, such as: Saana Club and IGAD. The organizations were formed to get groundwork laid to achieve stability of the region through confederation of the federated democratic countries in the region. Those that failed to comply as to avoid the predictions of the prognosis were warned to expect internal tensions, instability and polarization due to possible border conflicts.

Isayas was not exceptional and that was why he faced internal and external tensions and isolations. Internally, Isayas's command and order system was rejected outright by his lifelong comrades because they believed that the Eritrean people never expected the EPLF to raise an Eritrean dictatorship on the ruins of the Derg dictatorial rule. Regionally, because the Isayas's regime had nothing in common with the regional governments, it found that its dictatorial system not of a feather or unfit to become a member of IGAD or Saana Club and, therefore, Isayas chose to go into self-isolation.

## **Confederating the Federated-Democratic Countries and What Entails**

The priorities of the federated-democratic countries in the region are sovereignty and stability. Only through participation of all countries the regional stability can be achieved by sealing off all threats of border conflicts that lead to disintegrations.

The confederation is to provide mechanisms for peaceful co-existence. The mechanisms for peaceful co-existence will help to ensure that every citizen has the right to a peaceful life. The confederation will create more space for the separated ethnic groups to develop closer relationships and a sense of belong to each other. The homogenous people (based on ethnic or tribal distinction) across borders, while retaining their ethnic identities, the members of ethnic groups hold their national identity with the other ethnic groups within the country's boundaries in accordance with each member country's priority of sovereignty.

The countries of the region have been involved in launching different organizations (IGAD, Sanaa Club) and creating many committees to deal with several challenges. While mitigating border conflicts and establishing peace as their priorities, the main focus of the member countries is to open borders to free trade, free movement of their people, and to integrate their markets.

The free movement of the people is powered by the member countries' understanding that their constitutional democracy is a declaration of condemning all tools of repression and brutalities. Yes, the constitutional democracy as a source of freedom guarantees that every citizen has the right to live in peace with the right to fire his/her ambition to reach own potential, which right is absent under the dictatorial rule in the region. The member countries of the regional clubs or organizations are also required to condemn all types of abuses of power and to forge justice from the victims' pains and sufferings.

The power of good governance is in promoting transparency to the level demanded by law and the people regarding the government's budget preparation and budget execution (receipts and spending) as well as agreements entered with foreign governments or companies. The soundness of governance is in having mechanisms of accountabilities that help to regulate the government's decisions and actions.

The assigned committees drawn from the member countries of the regional organizations/clubs review the forms and contents of each member country's policies and practices. Gradual steps are suggested to make changes towards achieving uniformity of policies and practices as well as preparing the federated-democratic member countries for confederalism in order to enhance the stability of the region.

### **Bridging the Confederation of the Dictatorial Regimes and What Enforces it**

The priorities of dictatorial regimes in the region are to strengthen and protect their powers by taking away all the rights of people to pose questions when commanded to carry out orders. The regimes grip more power by intentionally deteriorating security and then in the name of law and order they take up the task of silencing or taking out their opponents (what Abiy learned from Isayas confirms).

Internal threats are suppressed through the use of force to secure internal stability. To combat the threats beyond their national boundaries, the dictatorial regimes forge an alliance in the form of a joint-project (Abiy, Isayas, and Farmajo against the TPLF).

The joint-projects as the products of the regimes alliance have short-life and are non-committal in nature. If the joint-project does not pick favorable outcome to all parties involved, the project risks withdrawal of the party dismayed and gets discontinued (Isayas-Abiy border-crossing agreement refers).

The strength of the regimes alliance is achieved by suppressing transparency and accountability. Because the dictators in alliance are in absolute control of power distribution in their respective countries, all of their ministries/departments are said to be led by their yes-men. The ministers are not at the discretion or have no the freedom to accommodate answerability and explanations about the terms of agreements/projects signed with other countries.

The suppression of transparency and accountability is the main tool they have in uniformity in their policies and practices. This tool is being used in their project of joint-dominance of the region (Isayas, Abiy and Farmajo). However, the hybrid dictators (Abiy and Farmajo) appear to face political resistance derived from their

people's constitutional rights to question the dictators' actions taken or projects entered into.

The bridged confederation in the form of their joint-projects to achieve joint-dominance of the region is negotiated out of the dictators' weakness and is to be given up when outcomes are expected to be not to their favor. The joint-projects are launched by giving their blessings without discussing the risks associated with their side of participation.

Each of the participating dictator feels like he is the architect of the joint-project and thus individually responsible for own actions contributed. In case of international law violations that result in imposing international law and order, the answerability and explanation come into play for the participant's committed wrongs. It is here that the participating dictators exercise their power of denial and silence thereby betraying the unwritten terms of the joint-project and leaving the violator alone to face the international investigators for explanations of the wrongs committed (as evidenced in Abiy and Isayas joint-project against the TPLF).

Once again, the conflicts in the region confirm that the regional stability is only achievable through compliance with the political prognosis of the region.

**Mamino**