

POPULAR UPRISING UNDER WHAT NATIONALISM

ENDGAME OF PFDJ (PART V11)

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OVERVIEW

Through out modern history popular forces motivated by radical democratic ideals have thought to combat structures of hierarchy and domination. Sometimes they succeed in attaining freedom and justice, other times they simply get crushed. Popular uprising have been going on through out history as in the French revolution, Bolshevik revolution, tea party revolution [taxation without representation] of the US against the British Empire.

Popular uprisings are collective responses to injustices, undemocratic, suppressive and oppressive systems that deny people equal treatment and deprive them of equal opportunities and rulers that fail to be governed even by their own laws, lack human decency and fairness. Although popular uprisings anywhere could have universal similarities as far as causes and effects are concerned, each country could have different dynamics and unique perspectives. They also have different goals and objectives. For some, it is a call for reform, for others it could be change of leadership, still for others it can be a call for change of government and for others it could be a demand for a whole new system.

Eritreans are prisoners in their own country. They are deprived of the following basic survival or necessity, above all their political rights:

- They don't earn for their labor or get that does not help them to survive. {slave labor}
- Eritrean farmers cannot use what they produce. The dictatorial regime takes away their produce at a price that does not cover cost of production with the barrel of a gun.
- There is no health service. What people see is building built with slave labor with no facility or adequate medicine in the building.
- Education is sub-standard. The elementary schools are like day care facilities with no enough writing and reading materials. High school education barely teaches anything because the focus is to prepare loyal soldiers with out pay. We have never heard high school students finish their 11th and 12th grade studies in military camp in any part of the world. The only university we had is closed instead there are technical schools which do not lead to higher education.
- Young Eritrean cannot marry and have family because there is no job that earns one to support a family.
- People live on hand out food from donors.

- Villagers travel many kilo meters to get water that is not safe to drink and those in towns and cities get tap water every three days. Electricity is the most precious item that only lucky ones get it.
- What is happening to the elderly? If they are lucky there is some relative to support if not dying untimely death.

No human being would like to tolerate or is prone to hardship or oppression, but if there is no other means you live with it or bear with it till the opportunity knocks the door. “For every thing under the sun there is a remedy or none, if there is one try to find it and if there is none never mind it” Eritrean are trying to find the demise of dictatorship, but are we following the right strategy or path?

The solution to the political crisis is also the path to the solution of the survival crisis.

Group of veteran Eritrean even put the dictator under their custody for some hours in 1993 with the demand for democratization, but that lucked planning and fizzled in minutes.

Villagers at different provinces of Eritrea revolted to protect their land, but every time end up in jail with out justice.

The disabled Eritrean war heroes demonstrated in Asmara demanding their right and their answer from the dictator was the bullet to their face.

Eritreans of different walks of life are trying to get rid of dictatorship, but did not make a dent. Why? I would say luck of being organized the right way. What are we doing in the opposition? Trying to tackle dictatorship under different banners of nationalism that lead to mistrust, false unity of action, allows intervention, competition for leadership position, etc.

ERITREAN OPPOSITION NATIONALISM BANNERS

Nationalism is an official state ideology or a popular non-state movement. The Eritrean opposition today is organized under four nationalism banners.

RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM- defines the nation in terms of shared religion. They believe political legitimacy derives from religious doctrines which is more of theocracy than a nation- state. The TADAMU front which is formed of four political organizations that are members of EDA to some extent fit into this banner of nationalism with the exception of ELF. The three fronts of TADAMU are mostly advocators of religion, their members are only Moslems and in some areas they desire to establish Shari a law.

DIASPORA NATIONALISM- This is organization of people away from their home land of origin. The civic societies, youth organizations, and others who have loose relationship with the political organization and less committed to the struggle fall into this category.

CIVIC OR STATE NATIONALISM- Bases its political legitimacy on the active participation of its citizens. It is believed that people lead harmonious nation-state under such banner. All concepts of democracy could be satisfied under such setting compared to the other nationalism types. The Eritrean political organizations that I reluctantly put under this type of nationalism include Eritrean Salvation front, Sagm, Eritrean Revolutionary Democratic front, EPDP, ELF, etc.

ETHNIC NATIONALISM- Defines the nation in terms of ethnicity. Political legitimacy in this type set of identity is based on ethnic group that might affect cohesiveness the diversity of the nation-state. Ethnic nationalism glorifies ethnicity prior to nation- state. Red Sea Afar front, Kunama Liberation front, Al-Nahda Party, Saho Biher organization fit into the ethnic nationalism. The Red Sea Afar front allows only Afar ethnic group to be members so does the Kunama front, the Saho Biher and the Al-Nahda members are from the Jeberti Tigrigna speakers.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OR DIS ADVANTAGES

Eritrea is multi-ethnic, multi-religion multi-lingual nation state. Eritrean societies have been and are living harmoniously and the only problem in the country is political crisis. There is brutal dictator that knows no religion, no ethnicity, no language, but his grip of power in the country. I see no advantage, but disadvantage organizing along those lines of nationalism to get rid off the dictatorial regime.

It is not a matter of semantics or different approach that the opposition organizations are defining the brutal dictatorship in Eritrea in a different way. It is because they identify themselves differently. The religious organizations define the dictator as Christian regime because they identify themselves as religious group rather as citizenry of a nation- state. The Ethnic nationalists define the dictator as Tigrigna regime because they identify themselves as ethnic group rather as a citizen of the nation-state. If we in the opposition do not organize ourselves as a democratic nation-state in mind it is hard to have cohesive strategy for victory.

Dialogue, negotiation, compromise, seminar, conference and congress are means politicians use to bridge difference of political opinion, differences of strategy for action, difference of political program. To bridge the gap one has to identify the problem, but to try to use them because others use those shows weakness of leadership.

In August 2011 Eritrean had a conference in Ethiopia. The issues for discussion should have been;

- Why is the opposition crowded with splintered organizations? Is it healthy? What should we do? Is having united front within united front healthy for struggle?
- Contribution of Eritrean to the struggle is not satisfactory. How do we bring it up?
- Foreign support that is morally, politically, materially for our struggle is minimal. Are we doing something wrong, how do we expand it?
- How do we devise feasible strategy to get rid of dictatorship?

Instead the leadership came up with meaningless four paper and ten days of 330 participants was wasted. The conference formed a commission of 53 people that was tasked to organize a “national” congress. This commission drafted constitution, roadmap to nowhere, national charter etc. In November 2011 about 700 Eritrean from 36 political organizations, about 40 civic societies most of them with not more than ten members and individuals attended the congress for ten days. What did they do?

- a) Shelved the drafted constitution. Eritrea has now two shelved constitutions. The leadership knows that they cannot agree on any of the issues that concern the Eritrean people, so they let the attendees waste their time on untimely issues. The real issues should have been like those mentioned above.
- b) The congress attendees suggested 127 national assemblies to be delegated from 11 EDA member organizations, 25 non-EDA organizations, civic societies, women organizations, youth organizations. Where there any criteria to be a delegate? None. What is their task? To hold a meeting twice a year. Eritrea now has two national assemblies one that is frozen by PFDJ and the second one is the brand new ready to serve the whims of the Ethiopian Government. (The Teclai Abraha fiasco is haunting the council or assembly at this time)
- c) This assembly then suggested 21 executive bodies to be delegated from EDA, non –EDA and the other group. Now we have the Trinity-Government in exile. Why do I say Trinity? Tewelde Gebreselsse is chairman of Sagem, chairman of EDA and information bureau of the government in exile. Kernelos is the chairman of the Kunam organization, Executive body of EDA and executive body of the government in exile. Ibrahim Haron is chairman of red sea Afar, executive body of EDA and executive body of the government in exile.

This is happening because we are identifying ourselves differently thus makes things hard to agree on workable strategy but meaningless organization like the national assembly in exile. Can we do better, only if we organize ourselves based on citizenry that is civic or nation- state nationalism?

- d) Organized a body of leadership with no chain of command. What I mean by no chain of command is that they form the national assembly with its executive committee with no guidelines on how to cooperate with EDA and the non-EDA organizations. Some brag that this leadership hierarchy is crafted by political science professor. I urge this professor to explain the Eritrean people the theory of political science he referenced to create this mess.

WHAT IS THE RESOLVE

The Coordinating Committee of the Eritrean National Democratic Forces CC/ENDF has put guiding principles on how all the opposition can organize ourselves that can lead us to victory.

- Organize on the bases of strengthening the Eritrean people's unity in diversity. This principle calls on the name of all Eritrean people's identity, but not based on one ethnic group or one religion. Thus the Eritrean national identity is strengthened and the recognition of nation-state is glorified.
- Defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity. When we organize ourselves with this principle in mind the issue of secession becomes irrelevant and the idea of considering religion in governance would be eliminated from any ones mind.
- Promote peaceful management and resolution of conflicts. The opposition at this time has about 50 political organizations, movements and civic societies, but if we adhere to this principle we can end up with fewer organizations and effective strategy for action that can lead to victory in a very short period.
- Independence from harmful external political influence and interference. This principle teaches us to say I CAN, that is to have self esteem; of course it does not mean we do not need material and moral support and political recognition.

We Eritrean have to understand that our diversity is a blessing. Eritrean never experienced social upheaval, but social harmony even with the unfortunate era of chain of colonial powers. To subdue colonialism our armed struggle was organized based on civic nationalism even under the unfortunate civil war the civic nationalism tenet was not compromised. It is therefore high time that Eritreans consider pushing mainstream

politics based on peaceful and civic resistance against tyranny instead of prolonging the life of tyranny by wasting opposition time in vicious circle of dancing to the tune of foreign agenda and the politics of polarization.

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Glory to our martyrs