

Eritrea: Exploring the divisions rooted in its past history

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The process towards unifying all the forces for democratic change in the Eritrean Opposition Camp failed in all its efforts in the past two decades. The struggle from dictatorship to democracy requires skills and knowledge about the identity rooted divisions and their management.

In this article, I will delve on addressing the real causes of conflict in the opposition political and civic organizations and what is the root cause that they split every time now and then. The Eritrean internal conflict is deep-rooted conflict based on identities. This deep-rooted conflict has never got the right solution from the very beginning of Eritrean political struggle for self-determination and later during the armed liberation struggle and now at this time of struggle from dictatorship to democracy. Eritrean leaders have inherited violent and destructive conflict management and this authoritarian and totalitarian culture of excluding, ignoring or attempting to eliminate each other has never brought peace inside and outside Eritrea. The Eritrean political elites must learn the past violent conflict resolving methods and adopt the new democratic methods based on mutual respect and leading towards peaceful co-existence.

Developing a national awareness requires objectivity, tolerance of cultural difference and knowledge of the diverse Eritrean people's history and their struggle for independence and freedom. Tolerance and resilience- the properties we all lack to solve our internal and external conflicts. It is disappointing that every now and then that the Eritrean political organizations split in groups because of personal chemistry. The recent split inside EPDP was not based on political program or national principles according to the two groups' arguments and counterarguments, it was simple to resolve it by sitting together and negotiate on the issues of conflict.

What we experience inside the our political leaders their incapability of solving their internal conflict and reminds us that still they lack the skills of managing conflicts. What can we the grass-roots do in order to help them come together. What we need is open mind and heart and discuss the issues of conflict in the Eritrean political arena.

What we see and experience in the opposition camp in the social media is not constructive but destructive in all aspects. The political leaders have been manipulating and exploiting the unawareness of our people for their narrow benefits, this is the main cause of multiplication of political organizations now and then. The Eritrean people must be aware of such elements who preside their personal interests before the people's interests. The people must rise against such leaders and warn to change their destructive attitude of conflict management and search new tools for conflict management suitable to our case in Eritrea. We must say now enough is enough no more walls of hate and disintegration but building bridges for peace and harmony to win the dictatorship inside Eritrea and transfer the power to its owner- the Eritrean people.

Tools for conflict management in the opposition camp

The Eritrean internal conflict is identity -driven and emotionally charged mobilized to violence instead of building trust and harmony. The situation of the Eritrean Forces for democratic change(political and civic organizations) is in crisis. We failed to resolve our internal conflicts in the past 15 years. Let us learn from our failures search for new methods of conflict management.

What we need is a new range of flexible and adoptable tools that can take consideration of the interests that helps us solve the personality-related conflicts. The aim of this article is to concentrate on developing the resources and materials by assisting the construction of the process of negotiation/ dialogue and its outcome. Designing good conflict management based on the democratic values is criteria to come together and negotiate. Democracy itself is not a panacea itself but if we in the opposition camp believe in democratic principles we must first resolve our internal conflicts peacefully without external

intervention. We must own the process. An imposed solution cannot resolve our internal conflict, such imposed or coerced conflict management failed is not sustainable.

In this article I would like to propose that Negotiation/ Dialogue is the only possibility and in this case we must assist the opposition leaders to:

- enter the process of negotiating a political settlement by helping them generate creative scenarios for progress towards an acceptable outcome.

- provide them with a wide range of political options both for designing the most appropriate negotiations process for them and selecting the democratic structure suitable to our situation

- assisting them in developing solutions which are acceptable and appropriate with our situation

- provide information on the range of varied approaches to building sustainable democracy inside the opposition camp to gain the people's trust and legitimacy.

In conclusion, I would like to remind all the forces for democratic change focus on issues not on personalities.

References:

1. SIDA/ Sweden International Development Agency, " Democratization and Armed Conflicts.
2. IDEA/ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, " Building Trust and Cooperation

