

Reconciliation for Peace or peace for reconciliation?

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There are some topics not fit for any discussion, some for lack of knowledge, others for fear of retribution and far more for cultural misunderstanding.

In my case, the topic of me, my family, community, country and global community do not merge neatly into conversational discussion. Why because of a single phenomenon of cultural history. #C!!!

What is cultural history? It is the culmination of cultural value with general history. Culture for Ethiopians is a state of mind, for Eritreans it is telling you about yourself.

Personally I grew up independently in renting houses, in boarding schools and colleges. That gave me a kind of individualistic values. My early childhood was surrounded by strong personal family and extended village families. This in turn gave me the chance to understand the value of community life. Having travelled across a recognized international border between Independent Ethiopia and British Administered Eritrea, I have realized that I was a non-immigrant Ethiopian that gave me the concept of country value. Until that point in time, like everybody else, I was a nationalist. My nationalism was manifested during the Neway brothers Coup d'état attempt to topple the Haile Sellasie regime where Eritrean Wingate's had aspired and conspired to return to Eritrea.

However, after my enrollment at the Addis Ababa College, also known as USAA, Eritrean nationalism was abandoned by many of us – now immigrants to Ethiopia. During the 1950's and 60's, the sons and daughters of Eritrea have prospered and progressed unabated throughout Ethiopia. On the private as well as in the public sector Eritreans did very, very well. On the government arena though, there were some hi-cups because of conspiracies and secrets perpetuated by foreign powers.

The above covert operations brought havoc both to Eritreans and Ethiopians. There was neither reason nor logic to fight for both people to fight to the bitter end. Those University students -through their Student Union - realized that Eritreans were in fact the backbone of Ethiopianness and that they were not to be agents of foreign powers, the majority of University students were supportive of the Eritrean cause for nationalism for obvious reasons.

This so-called nationalism, devoid of Ethiopianness will not last long for the following two reasons. The first perspective was that Eritrea – etymologically originated from the Greeks- albeit temporarily amalgamated by the Italians would never alter the real Eritreanness. They will remain with the other Greek name Ethiopia. The University Student Body argued that both Eritrea and Ethiopia were interchangeable names. Their adopted name was Abyssinia. What is a name? Call me by any name!!!

On the other side of the spectrum of the Student Movement was the idea that Internationalism will be the order of the day. Countries will merge together provided they are governed and led by Proletariat policy and party. The powerful dictum of Karl Marx “workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose except your chains”. Powerful as it was, the Eritreans not only those who were born and raised in Ethiopia but also those who have read the Communist Manifesto adopted it and forgot all about Eritrean nationalism.

According to my understanding, the real struggle was not either/or the Eritrean nationalism versus the Ethiopian nationalism. Both concepts of struggle collide in unhealthy environment. They could have taken the course of the Czechs’ and Slovakia republics way of separation. The Czechoslovakians did it peacefully as they are a nation of readers whereas the majority of Eritreans and Ethiopians were/are illiterate despite the provision of GEEZ alphabet.

Adding insult to injury, the digital age has made life more difficult to both Eritreans and Ethiopians. So what is the solution? Reconciliation or peace, which comes first? The chicken or the egg? ህርነት Or ናዝነት? i.e. liberty or freedom?

In order to answer the above questions, we have to go back to the root causes of the conflict. The conflict is based on nationalism instead of the Ethiopian Revolution. The Ethiopian Revolution transcends all others including the struggle for nationalism. The true Ethiopian Revolution was derailed by the slogans of the DERG, aborted by the EPLF and messed up by the TPLF. The true Ethiopian Revolution also known as Eway Revolution is based primarily on methodology although to a lesser extent on content.

The Ethiopian Revolution was designed to change the land tenant system, the bureaucratic system of governance along with the struggle against foreign domination. These three culprits of a) absent landlordism b) bureaucratic regime and c) Imperialism were the target of the Ethiopian Revolution. In the process thousands died, millions were displaced and hundred thousand left the country. The end result is anybody’s guess. As if this is not enough, a second wave of terror and displacement has taken place. Immigrant Ethiopians were deported to Eritrea, brotherly war was carried out that cost over a hundred thousand lives and others are leaving both Eritrea and Ethiopia as if they have no land of their own. To break

this cycle of hatred and animosity, arbitration was arranged in 2000. Mind you that was not mediation. What has happened to this arbitration or reconciliation is again anybody's guess?

This brings me to the main topical title, which come first, reconciliation or peace? I ask my readers to pose and expose this question and decide on the priority. Here lies our solution for future generation. We are not allowed to make a third suicidal mistake on community and societies. We have to negotiate for reconciliation instead of seeking peace for peace has become an illusion not only in the Ethiopian-Eritrean case but also across all sectors of oppositional forces.

Good luck on your choices of priority.

For questions, critics and concerns

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