

Unity is Strength

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 03 February 2011 13:05 -



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Eritrea's holistic development and economic emancipation is based on the Golden Principle of 'Political and Economic Independence'; the driving force or engine is its human resources; and the fuel that feeds this engine and gives it the strength required is the **unity of the people**.

For centuries, Eritreans of different ethnic composition and beliefs have lived together in harmony. However, this harmonious coexistence and mutual respect for each other, of this civilised people was first targeted by the British during the British Military Administration when their well know policy of divide and rule was implemented dividing Eritreans along religious, ethnic and geographical lines in 1940s. Ten years later, the Ethiopian Emperor pursued a more aggressive and divisive policy than that of the British in order to weaken the unity and cohesion of the people and tried to sabotage the birth of an independent Eritrea in the Horn of Africa albeit they all failed miserably.

In spite of decades of foreign intervention and their divisive policies, Eritreans were united in a **common cause, independence for Eritrea**

. In their wisdom, the early Eritrean leaders of the peaceful resistance against Ethiopia's violation and aggression decided to put their religious, ethnic and ideological differences aside and put the

national interest first

in order to pursue the peaceful struggle in unison.

Ten years of peaceful struggle in 1950s failed to bring the desired freedom and justice and in the early 1960s, Eritreans decided to pursue a military struggle to achieve their independence. Although this military struggle was initiated by a small group in 1961, Eritreans of all ethnic groups and beliefs were united in a common objective, to pursue **amilitary struggle for**

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independence in unison

Soon, Eritrean youth from all walks of life and from as far as Sudan, Ethiopia and Yemen abandoned their education and livelihood to join the armed struggle for independence led by the ELF. However, the ELF leadership was corrupt, regionalist and tribalist. Furthermore, they lacked vision, selflessness and commitment. Also, there was significant foreign influence, interference and assistance that came with strings attached. As a result of these and so many other issues, there were major internal problems that gradually forced small groups to split from the ELF, some of whom eventually formed the EPLF in 1971.

Very critical lessons were learned by the EPLF leadership from the mistakes and failures of the ELF leadership. Therefore, the EPLF leadership had a vision, was selfless, promoted equality and was committed to unite Eritreans in pursuit of a **common objective, Eritrea's**

independence

. They recognised that Eritrea's independence can only be achieved if there is unity and collective participation and commitment to the struggle and this unity could only be achieved if

EPLF had a golden principle of 'Political and Economic Independence' and 'self-reliance'.

For the next ten years both ELF and EPLF fought side by side against a common enemy, however, they occasionally fought against each other triggering a civil war. Following the civil war between the EPLF and the ELF in 1981 and the subsequent disintegration of the ELF into several splinter groups in neighbouring Sudan, the EPLF became the sole liberation front fighting for Eritrea's independence. Ten years later and after foiling several offensives, the EPLF achieved Eritrea's independence.

In spite of the fact that the offensives and battles of the 1980s were more sophisticated and better coordinated than those of the 1960s and 70s, the EPLF was able to defend its stronghold positions and bases at Sahel mainly because of the unity and collective participation and commitment of the people. **Furthermore, in collaboration with the people, the EPLF carried out frequent surprise counter offensive attacks behind enemy lines including in Asmara Airport** until the balance of power gradually started to shift to its advantage particularly after the liberation of Afabet in 1988. Two years later in 1990, the Port city of Massawa was liberated and Eritrea achieved its independence a year later in 1991.

After the EPLF became the sole liberation front in Eritrea, the vast majority of the Eritrean people inside the country and abroad put their political and ideological differences aside and **put the national interest first**

by supporting the EPLF in unison. Indeed, the people were not disappointed because the **EPLF delivered what was promised, independence**

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. Within the EPLF, the policy of

unity in diversity

was effectively and consistently implemented ensuring the active participation of women who comprise at least 50% of the population and that of the minority ethnic groups who used to be marginalised. As a result, over 30% of EPLF fighters were women and all nine nationalities took active participation in the armed struggle for independence such that just before independence, the EPLF fighting force grew to almost 110,000 fighters. This unity in diversity of its fighters and that of the people is therefore, what gave the EPLF the strength to win battles and the war for independence.

After independence, the Government of Eritrea (GOE) pursued its policy of unity in diversity in its efforts to implement social justice through equitable distribution of wealth and the promotion of equal opportunities as well as by providing basic social services, such as education, health care, potable water, transport, electricity etc all over the country. Unlike most developing countries, holistic developments, opportunities and provision of basic social services in Eritrea are not limited to the few in the urban areas.

Roughly, about 80% of the population live in rural areas that used to be deprived of opportunities and basic social services before independence and that is why the GOE rightly put rural holistic development as its top priority. First and foremost people need safe and secure environment in a sovereign country which has secure boundaries and secondly they need food security, employment and adequate basic social services.

Eritreans are composed of nine ethnic groups, Muslims and Christians and have civilised culture and mutual respect for each other. They have lived in this land in harmony for centuries and are in the process of developing themselves, their environment and improving their standard of living in collaboration with their government. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to state that **western style democracy is not even in the bottom of their priority list.**

Sawa has since 1994 reinforced the unity of the Youth by acting as a melting pot and a mould that forges generations of Youth to become united, confident, capable, industrious and disciplined. The National Service played a pivotal role in implementing rural developmental projects by constructing vital infrastructures required by various social services. The provision of these vital social services all over the country further ensured the promotion of equal opportunities and social justice that strengthened the unity of the people.

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20 years after independence, the unity of the people inside Eritrea and in Diaspora is as strong as ever and their unanimous rejection of the UN Security Council Resolution 1907 to impose sanction against Eritrea is a testament to their unity. The enemies of Eritrea were gutted and disgraced when thousands of Eritreans in Diaspora simultaneously and in a coordinated manner demonstrated peacefully in Europe, America and Australia in opposing this unjust resolution and in support of their government.

This was loud and clear vote of confidence that shocked the enemies of Eritrea

.

On 24th of May 2011, the people will be celebrating Eritrea's 20th year independence in unison, at a time when food security and holistic development have been achieved and its economic growth is forecasted to be the fastest in the world. All these achievements were made possible against all the odds and in spite of the conspiracies, plots and current global economic uncertainties because the people are united. Tens of thousands of Eritreans in Diaspora are expected to visit Eritrea in 2011 to celebrate this glorious occasion.

The unity that gave Eritreans the strength to liberate their country and achieve independence against all the odds, in 1991 has given them the strength to achieve holistic development, food security and Economic Emancipation in 2011. Just as the **EPLF delivered what was promised, independence in 1991, the GOE is set to deliver what was promised, food security and economic emancipation in 2011.**

The achievements and experiences of the last twenty years will be used as a spring board to achieve further holistic developments in social, political, economic and environmental aspects for the next ten years and in 2021, well watch the space.....

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