**The importance of acknowledging the dissimilarity of the politics of Eritrea and Ethiopia**

Ever since the new government in Ethiopia accepted the 2002 “final and binding” decision of the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) without any pre-conditions on June 5, 2018, the usual detractors of Eritrea have tried to pile pressure on the Eritrean government by calling for reforms.

Those that have sought to bring down the Eritrean government for the past twenty years have failed to understand the fundamental differences of the politics of Eritrea and Ethiopia.

In the past, failure to acknowledge these differences has led to misguided policy decisions to be made about the fate of Eritrea, which have caused much strife and conflict.

Decisions like federating Eritrea with Ethiopia, undermining the federation, dissolving the federation, etc., were all made because those who made these disastrous decisions chose to ignore the differences in the politics of the two countries.

To date, having failed to learn from history, be it the German Foreign Ministry, or the self declared Eritrean ‘experts’ or those that claim to be on the side of the Eritrean people are seen to be making the fundamental error of equating Ethiopian politics with the politics of Eritrea, when they call for similar reforms as those seen in Ethiopia to happen in Eritrea.

Setting aside the history of the differences and simply focusing on the current political scene in both countries, one can see that both countries need to pursue their own paths to achieve their respective aims.

The first and fundamental difference that is conveniently ignored by those who oppose the Eritrean government is that, there has been a revolution in Ethiopia and as a result there is a new government and new leadership of the ruling party in Ethiopia. The name of the ruling party might be the same, but today’s EPRDF is quite clearly a different party to the one that was dominated and directed by the TPLF only a few months ago.

So when the new Ethiopian Prime Minster releases political prisoners, allows those that had been banished by the TPLF back into the country and the political scene, he is not making amends with his opponents, but rather he is regrouping with his comrades in arms who helped him bring down the TPLF.

It should be remembered that the new Ethiopian Prime Minster has incarcerated his former opponents by charging them with corruption. He has also isolated and encircled the TPLF, limiting and confining them to the borders of their regional state, from whence they dare not venture out. It is, therefore, safe to say that the new Prime Minster is a politically savvy operator who has managed to eliminate his opponents by out-thinking them.

When we come to the politics of Eritrea, we are confronted with a different reality. There has not been a revolution in Eritrea to bring about a new government in the country (despite the efforts and wishes of many).

Therefore with the Eritrean government having secured the country after great sacrifice and effort, it will not then jeopardise the fruits of its efforts by associating with forces that have worked day and night for the past twenty years to bring about total state collapse in Eritrea.

As stated before, when the Ethiopian PM, Dr Abiy Ahmed, released prisoners and invited Ethiopian opposition figures and groups, he was simply extending his hand to those that he either had worked with or shared the common aim of having a better Ethiopia, i.e., an Ethiopia that is totally free of TPLF hegemony.

In the case of Eritrea, those who either fail to understand the difference or choose not to acknowledge the different political entities in Eritrea and Ethiopia, call for similar reforms in Eritrea as those in Ethiopia.

Oddly enough, the expectation is always for the Eritrean government to change and never those that fought and are fighting against it. If those who call for reforms in Eritrea are genuine, they should first and foremost call upon the self declared ‘Eritrean opposition’ to denounce its stated aim of bringing down the Eritrean government by any means and at any cost.

As things stand, the Eritrean government cannot invite any group that claims to be an ‘Eritrean opposition’, even if it wanted to, because of the stand of these groups. Those of us that followed their treasonous acts remember all too well their jubilation at the imposition of UN sanctions on Eritrea, and their profound dissatisfaction at said sanctions being lifted recently. We remember how hard they campaigned against Eritrea, allowing themselves to be used by the sworn enemies of Eritrea.

Furthermore, when any self respecting Eritrean knows all too well that the TPLF has been and remains the enemy of Eritrea, these groups are doing the bidding of the TPLF and are trying ever so hard to include this vile mendacious group in the future of Eritrean politics and making it look that it is essential the TPLF has to be included in any peace deal, despite the fact that the TPLF had vehemently opposed peace with Eritrea for the past twenty years.

A good example of the differences in the regional politics is the manner in which the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments handled groups that opposed their opponent’s government.

In the case of the TPLF-led Ethiopian government, it used the Eritrean groups it supported, to further its own agenda rather than Eritrea’s. It is because of this that these groups usually found themselves on the wrong side of Eritrean politics, supporting measures that worked against Eritrea, even failing to acknowledge the achievements of Eritrean sports persons. They allowed the TPLF to hijack their aim as they were blinded by their profound irrational hate of the Eritrean government.

On the other hand, Ethiopian opposition groups who were supported by the Eritrean government were allowed to be Ethiopians and pursue their own agendas. They were never goaded into participating in any political drama where they were forced to acknowledge how great and wonderful Eritrea was, unlike the TPLF which seems to have never lost an opportunity to get the Eritreans to denounce their history and acknowledge how great Tigray (not even Ethiopia) was.

Ethiopian opposition groups were allowed to carry on with their work of bringing down the TPLF, without having to dance to the tune played for them by the Eritrean government. Their political independence was never compromised.

The new Ethiopian government has embarked on a path that it believes best suits the needs of the country. It is trying to clear up the mess that the TPLF has left.

It is quite clear that until those that claim to be the ‘Eritrean opposition’ elevate their politics from focusing on the demise of one individual and collaborating with forces that wish to bring about violent catastrophic change in Eritrea, to one that is based on rational and patriotic ideology, the Eritrean government cannot and should not engage with them.

Eritrea today is in transition. For the past twenty years the focus was survival and defence, but today the focus is securing the future and prosperity.

Despite the differences in the politics of Eritrea and Ethiopia, there is one commonality they share: Both are immerging from the harshness of winter to face spring of peace, friendship and cooperation and a bright future.

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