

DEMOCRATIC ERITREA DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE BY EAIM (AMARE GEBREMARIAM GEBRE)

OVERVIEW

Looking around the world, there can be no doubt that countries differ dramatically in their quality of their governments. Great variation exists, no matter how one wish to define and measure government quality. Some governments are extremely corrupt, wasteful, and ineffective at providing basic public services to their citizens. Here when we say governments we mean to address democratic system of governments that may be of different forms.

THE ESSENCE OF DEMOCRACY

The essence of democracy is not the high level of education of the people, but the mechanism of change and rotation of power. This means that democracy does not represent the acme of perfection, for there is no absolute perfection in any human endeavor. Rather it is better system than others. Its relative superiority derives from the fact that it does not lead to the emergence biggest defect in human nature, which is the continued presence of people in power with out a time limit. The availability of a mechanism for the rotation of power acts as a check in the human defect that allows people to believe they can remain in power for as long as they live.

It is clear from the above that those who say Eritreans are not yet ready from any form of democratic system of government are way of the mark. This false prophecy serves only those who would deprive us of the finest achievement of humankind, democracy, which brought about a fundamental transformation in the concept of governance in the interest of the citizen. Eritrea is multi-national, semi-ethnic, multi-lingual society. It is time to bring the peoples' attention towards such issues as forms of governments, language relations, economic development and disparity, peace and security, etc. In so doing, one has to have in mind that the objective should be to teach and inform, bring the pros and cons of the issues, create harmony among the Eritrean public, but not to insight and divide, influence and take advantage, impose once believes upon others, misinform by omitting certain theoretical facts and experience. The objective of EAIM here is to teach and inform based on theoretical studies and own experiences, but not based on field research of the Eritrean reality at the present time because we are deprived of the right to reach our people like many Eritreans outside the country. We will give our preference, but does not mean we are diehard when facts and convincing study is presented when the constitution is drafted. In our opinion, it is not time to form alliances and give press release based on certain form of government, but to exchange views and try to have common understanding if possible. We thing it is too early to say Eritrea should have decentralized, unitary or federal form of government as a political stand, because by saying that we might be taking the very say or role of the people we are trying to help liberate themselves. One can vent preferences with an open mind leaving the decision to come from the people when the constitution is drafted. We hope the EDA meant that by mentioning decentralization in its charter as the form of the democratic system of government we are struggling to erect. We should be very careful as a vanguard force to

know what our political mandates and limitations are so as to avoid depriving the people of their role, which is so crucial in mobilizing them to our side. People have to feel comfortable that we adhere to democratic ideals and we mean it and show them in practice. Here when we discuss decentralization, our objective is to inform, teach and make the people aware of the different forms of governance so as to make intelligent choice in the future, but not to impose our whim on the people.

WHAT IS DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE

Decentralized form of government is actually either of more unitary type or more of federal type. Some scholars say that there is no as such decentralized form, but adjusted unitary or federal form of government. There are five concepts of decentralized type and they are: Structural, decision, resource, electoral and institutional decentralization. With field research and sociological study of the need of the people, Eritreans might adopt one of these forms or a combination of them. Over the last decades an increasing number of countries have been trying to make efforts to deliver public services in terms of responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and that form of governance is said to be decentralization..

The factors of decentralizations are related to:

- Development should not be a top down process, but requires community involvement and motivation. Local population should share resources and decision making that affects their own development.
- Centralization has led to only limited flow of resources to peripheral levels with much of the funds being drained in the central level and some times the peripheral areas receive funds only on paper,
- Planning by central governance usually lack the knowledge local area need..

ADVANTAGES OF DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE.

- LOCAL KNOWLEDGE –users who have lived with and harvested from resources over long period of time develop accurate models of how their biophysical system operates, thus success depends on such knowledge.
- INCLUSION OF TRUSTWORTHY PARTICIPANTS- this is just involvement the very people equipped with know- how..
- RELIANCE ON DISAGGREGATED KNOWLEDGE- fishers are aware, for example of changes in the size and species distribution of their catch over time while irrigators learn whether a particular rotation system allows most farmers to grow the crops they most prefer.
- BETTER ADAPTED RULES-Local users are more likely to craft better-adapted rules for local common-pool resources than any general system of rules for a larger array of resources systems.
- LOWER ENFORCEMENT COST- less bureaucracy means less monitoring cost..
- LESS REDUNDANCY- having different set of rule of function at different regions minimizes failure while maximizing success.

WHY DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE IN ERITREA?

There are many different forms of government in the world. One method of describing government is based on where sovereignty lies. When we discuss, the feasible, realistic and satisfactory form of government we should expect and propagate in upcoming democratic Eritrea, the following factors should be thoroughly adhered. They include:

- Eritrean languages (are people who speak the language spread all over or are residing in one locality)
- Culture and cultural relations.
- Area- how big is Eritrea.
- Population- which areas are densely or scarcely populated.
- Resources and economy of the country.
- History of Government.

In unitary form of government the sovereignty lies in a central government. The decision making body is the central government and administers the country by appointing governors to provinces; district administrators, mayors and village chiefs, etc. The constitution can be parliamentary democracy or representative democracy. Eritrea under EPDJ dictatorship is having the unitary form of government. The political opposition is not based on the form of government, but based on the system of government. Once we get rid of the dictatorial regime, people may keep the unitary form we have with some adjustment.

A federal form of government is a union of states, groups, etc in which each member agrees to subordinate its power to that of the central authority in common affairs. In other words, the member states give up most of their sovereignty to a central government, but keep a limited amount of sovereignty for themselves. In countries that practice federal form of government, their constitution defines the powers reserved to the central government and those to be exercised by the federal states. They may also exercise certain provisions concurrently.

In Eritrea we suggest the executive body, the parliament or legislative body and the judiciary get elected by the people of the country and remain with the center, while the administration of the provinces that is the governors of each province are elected mainly by the people of the provinces. Below is our opinion of what should be at the center and at the local level in decentralized governance.

The central government may exercise powers relative to:

- * Foreign affairs
- * Monetary system
- * Basic justice
- * National suffrage
- * National public works
- * Armed forces
- * Basic Education
- * Citizenship rights and duties
- * National taxation and customs
- * Postal and telecommunications

The local or provincial administration may exercise among other things, powers over:

- * Local development
- * Marine and aquatic resources
- * Trade and commerce
- * Local taxation
- * Mineral resources
- * Forest and other natural resources
- * Police
- * Education

As we can see in the above list of central and local state power provisions there is an overlap. Eritreans should study it carefully and thoroughly before they try to mobilize the people for one form or another.

CONCLUSION

Eritrea is one of the countries of the world considered to be small. In fact it is so small that one can drive from eastern edge to the western edge in less than six hours that is from Massawa to Tessenai. Also to drive from north edge to the south edge does not take more than eight hours. The country is well connected by roads. More than nine languages are spoken including some dialects. Some languages are spoken in only one geographical area while others are spoken in different localities. Some languages are spoken by vast majority of the population, Tigriña 50% and Tigre 40%. Eritreans should know the difference between equality of languages and use of official languages. Language equality is based on language as identity factor while use of official language is based on language use for communication. Use of Arabic as official language has nothing to do with Arab identity being an Arab nationality. We have the Red Sea that is good economic resources. Eritrean population has disparity in economic development and educational skills. In this case, some people jump to portray the Tigriña nationality as oppressors of the other nationalities. The Tigriña nationality or nation has been oppressed along with the other nationalities or nations by the Italians, the British, and the Ethiopians and now by PFDJ dictatorship. The disparity occurred for reasons we suggested on our previous articles. We have diverse culture that needs to be respected and maintained. Eritrea has a long history of having imposed unitary form of government crafted by colonialism that has its advantages and disadvantages. The EPDJ regime added insult to the injury by dividing Eritrea into administrative zones, by eliminating the historical provinces that infuriated all Eritreans without exception. The land tenure issue is one of the important factors in trying to craft the workable acceptable form of government in Eritrea.

We would like to say our suggestion is based on theory and from 20 years old experience until we get some data and do more research on the topic we hope you will bear with us.. We also would like to call our scholars and intellectuals to share their expertise with the people. But we believe the voice of the people during the debate for the constitution determines what is to be Eritrea's form of governance.

GLORY TO OUR MARTYRS

WE STRUGGLE WE SUCCEED

Give comments >> ama766@comcast.net