

Leadership Crises and Nation Building in a Politically Turbulent Environment: The Case of Eritrea

Desalegn Abraha, University of Skövde, Sweden
desalegn.abraha@his.se

The purpose of this article is to examine the social dimension of the nation building process in Eritrea. A qualitative case-study method which is composed of primary and secondary data is applied to conduct the research. The main findings show that (i) the social dimension of the nation building process was a complete failure, (ii) the main reason for the failure is the inappropriateness of the leadership to lead the task properly and (iii) a directive, visionary, participative and interactive leader that possess, quality, legitimacy, justice, care, competence and character, i.e. honesty, integrity, trustworthiness and principle-centeredness is a leader that can accomplish the task successfully.

INTRODUCTION

This section highlights the phenomenon of leadership, outlines the specific roles of leadership and defines nation building by referring to the various leadership and organizational behavior scholars such as (Kotter, 1999 & 2001; Yukl, 2001 & 2005 and Adei, 2004). According to Kotter (1999) leadership is dealing with changes by setting a direction, i.e. vision creating, goal setting, values promotion, formulating strategy, mobilizing people, managing change, developing other leaders, strategic problem solving and decision making. Moreover, leadership builds the capacity to realize its vision by aligning and motivating people and communicates the new direction to those who understand and are committed to its success. In another related work Bloisi et al. (2003) a leader's duty is to create vision and goals and to influence others to share the vision and to work towards their achievement. Similarly, Warren & Burt, (1985) and Nothouse (2004) define leadership as the process of providing direction, energizing others, and obtaining their voluntary commitment to the vision. Specifically, according to Northouse (2004) leadership is reserved for people who influence a group of individuals towards a common goal. Accordingly, leaders who use coercion run counter to working with others and are interested in their individual goals and seldom are interested in the needs of subordinates. Adei (2004) defines nation building as the systematic improvement of the political, economic, social and cultural well being of a people who in our context, we will equate to the inhabitants of geographical entities/countries. Based on the definitions of leadership and nation building presented above and on the national vision as enshrined in the *National Charter for Eritrea* (Charter 1994: 10-11), nation building in this work is defined as "the systematic implementation and achievement of the political, economic, social and cultural visions and goals articulated after independence in light of what was promised in the liberation struggle. The nation building task is implemented by setting a properly defined national direction, shared vision, goals, programs and appropriate strategies and aligning and mobilizing people to realize the vision.

Consequently, the main purpose of this article is to examine the social dimension of the nation building process and the role the Eritrean leadership played in the process. Moreover it will assess whether the nation building process was successful or not and why. Finally, it concludes by assessing the appropriateness of the leadership to the nation building task and by making recommendations of an appropriate leadership quality if the current one is found to be unfit to perform the task. There are two main reasons to conduct this study; (i) there is a wide spread crises of political leadership in Africa in general and Eritrea in particular. Considering this problem, this article endeavors to deepen and broaden our knowledge of the nation building process and the specific role of leadership in the process and thereby to make a contribution to the solution of the crises which is endemic in the continent and (ii) there

are conflicting views among Eritreans regarding the nation building issue and the quality of the leadership. The proponents of the government claim that the quality of leadership is very high, whereas the opponents attribute the current saddening situation of the nation building process to the lack of appropriate and quality leadership. Thus, this work can contribute to bridge the gap which exists among Eritreans' in the issue examined which in its turn can facilitate the nation building task.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF DEVELOPMENTAL (EFFECTIVE) LEADERSHIP IN NATION BUILDING

The framework is composed of (i) the four dimensions of nation building, (ii) the six roles of leaders that build modern nations, and (iii) the characteristics of developmental and legacy-building leaders.

The Dimensions of Nation Building

The four dimensions of nation building are, building a matured, progressive, stable and participatory political pluralism; developing appropriate economic infrastructure and policies to achieve economic progress; building social unity and cohesion and engendering a dynamic value-based culture rooted in a people's uniqueness.

Social Development & Social Justice (Termed 'Economic and Social Democracy')

The social aspect of nation building includes education, health, water, and sanitation Adei (2004). One can also add information, communication and technology infrastructure which can be categorized under "socio-economic infrastructure." These factors can be considered as almost the preconditions for modern nation building. The other aspects listed below see Adei (2004) are also addressed in this article;

Building social cohesion, this incorporates sustained efforts to build social capital, i.e. creating a sense of belongingness, having a common destiny and working together.

Conflict prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts, this necessitates dealing with various factors such as ethnic politics, inequity, and human rights abuses.

Continuous efforts to build trust, consensus, and dialogue; and

Promotion of justice, equity, basic freedoms and the reduction of bureaucratic corruption

Developing appropriate economic policies, economic infrastructure and achieving economic progress

This one deals with improving the standard of living, specifically the material welfare of the citizenry. It should put more focus on wealth creation and to a certain extent on poverty reduction.

Building a participatory, pluralist, stable and progressive political system

The development of a participatory, pluralist, stable, matured and progressive political order based on the people's traditions and customs is a prerequisite to a successful nation building. One of the main errors of post-independent Africa has been the total rejection of the peoples' traditions and customs in favor of the capitalist and socialist ideologies, none of which has been appropriate to align and mobilize the African people to focus on development (Basil, 1992).

The cultural dimension of nation building

Culture has the potential of promoting or retarding the nation building process and national progress. It is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group or category of people from another (Hofstede, 1992). Similarly, Schein (1985) defines culture as the values, beliefs, orientations and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society.

The Specific Role (Task) of Leaders

Setting the Direction

Leaders provide direction to nation building in at least four ways and they are by formulating a national vision, by defining national development goals, by promoting right national values, and by being living models of their conviction. According to Yukl (2006) the vision can provide a sense of continuity for followers by linking past events and present strategies to a vivid image of a better future for the organization. Before people support radical change, they need to have a vision for a better future that is attractive enough to justify the sacrifices and hardships the change will require. In order to realize a vision leadership has to succeed in *motivating and inspiring* – keeping people moving in the right direction, despite major obstacles to change, by appealing to basic but often untapped human needs, values and emotions, (Kotter, 1999). To be the driving force of national efforts a vision has to be translated into S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound) goals (Adei, 2004 & Bloisi, 2003).

Crafting Strategy to Fulfill the Vision

To achieve the development goals that flow from the vision, every organization – be it governmental, non-profit, or a business – needs to craft multiple strategies (Bloisi, 2003). The development of strategies is also applicable to nation building as Adei (2004) discusses it in detail. Leaders have to put together effective growth strategies translated into effective policies and programmes that, over time, enable the realization of national goals.

“At the core of those strategies are quality education; including universal education up to 16 years or 18 years; the development of basic infrastructure; institutional and financial reforms; the removal of bureaucratic and other impediments such as a confused land tenure and titling system that escalates the cost of doing business; a managed but relatively open market economy; a deliberate strategy that aims at the development of local entrepreneurship and business; and a relatively reliable, predictable and less corrupt judiciary...=//=...” (Adei, 2004, p. 24).

Mobilizing the Whole Nation behind the Vision, Goals and Strategies

Mobilization can be derived from a clear vision, credible strategy, demonstrating a commitment to improve welfare and being demonstrably zero-tolerant as far as corruption is concerned. The mobilization of people to achieve a development invariably starts with a competent and trusted national economic management team, such as the Korean Development Institute, and mobilizing the indigenous business community (Adei, 2004). Mobilizing people is different and it is more of a communications challenge than a design problem (Kotter, 1999). To mobilize people, the leader and his agenda must be perceived as credible, effectively communicated using local metaphors, and supported by showing some early results in a few visible areas.

Managing Change Effectively

Effective national leaders focus on developing the requisite national capacity to manage the chosen path to change and development (Adei, 2004). Kotter (1999) draws two lessons from the literature that deals with change. First, change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time. The second is that critical mistakes in any of the phases can have a devastating impact, slowing momentum and negating hard-won gains.

Decision Making and Problem Solving

Taking decisions and solving development problems are the two main tasks of effective leaders. At certain times, leadership, is a lonely job and more so when one has to take the critical, and sometimes, life-and-death decisions (Adei, 2004).

Developing Other Leaders

A great number of other leaders are needed under the leader of a nation to perform the duty of nation building (Adei, 2004). They can be a vice-president, ministers, regional administrators, and managing directors of state owned enterprises. Moreover, a successful national development leader wouldn't doubt

or hesitate to develop a competent leader to function as his successor with more or less the same vision to continue the national building process already started. The fact that one of the main duties of leaders and managers is to develop leadership and management skill is also discussed in (Kotter, 1999 & Kul, 2005).

Developmental (Effective) and Legacy-Building Leadership Characteristics

According to Munroe (1993) if a nation lacks quality, legitimate and just leaders, national deterioration occurs. What determines the building of a prosperous and peaceful life and nation is the quality of leadership. Adei (2004) stresses this definition of leadership further by developing the three central elements of leadership, i.e. quality, legitimacy and just. *Quality* means to be competent, knowledgeable and skilled in the task of nation building. *Legitimacy* is winning an election and acceptance by the governed. The third is *Just*. The feeling of justice in a society of any nation on tribal, ethnic or social lines often leads to a harmonious life, the building and strengthening of social capital, and, ultimately, promotes progress. It is believed by many researchers that if a country has just, competent and legitimate leaders, within a certain period of time that very country is put on an irreversible path to socio-economic development. In line with the above, Janis (1982) postulates that effective leaders tend to possess three important features and they are *Character*, *Competence* and *Care*. *Care* exists when the subordinates feel that their leader understands their situation and that they are valued through participation. *Competence* means that leaders have to be capable and skilled to do their task. *Character* means leaders show honesty, integrity, trustworthiness and principle-centeredness.

THE RESEARCH METHODS

Both primary and secondary data are used in this article. The secondary data is used to formulate the research problem, purpose and the conceptual framework. The primary data is collected from the various interviews conducted with the president and the political adviser of the president and at the same time who is the political director of PFDJ. The primary data were collected for other purposes rather than the purpose of this article but they are used as they were found out to fit appropriately the research problem and purpose of this article.

The president was interviewed several times by the reporters of the ERI-TV and editors of both the private and government owned and controlled news papers. Whereas, the political adviser was interviewed by the private and government news papers and both were asked several questions after their speech regarding the issues they usually address. Both the president and his adviser were interviewed for several hours in different occasions regarding the social, economic, political, cultural, diplomatic and other national issues. But from all the issues that were covered in the interviews, the author has selected the information which is relevant to the research issues intended to be addressed in this article. By the information which is relevant to the research issues addressed in this article is meant, the information which deals with the social dimension of nation building. In identifying and selecting the information which are relevant to the social dimension of nation building, the author's choice is based on the variables, sub-variables and concepts which are used to construct the conceptual framework applied in this article. Some issues which could not easily be linked to the model were omitted also although they dealt with the social affairs of the country. Some of the responses to the interview were written, some were videotaped and some were broadcasted through the Eritrean television. The data was analyzed by linking it to the various concepts of the conceptual framework in order to address the research issues and to achieve the intended purpose. Thus, the author has deliberately linked the selected data to the various concepts of the developed framework in the discussion section instead of having a separate empirical data section preceding the discussion section.

DISCUSSION

Setting the Direction and Specifically in Terms of a Specific Vision and Goals

The corner stone in the social dimension of nation building is not to assess how credible and realistic it was and how it was implemented. The main problem is the absence of properly outlined and carried out specific role of leadership and in this context the setting of the national direction specifically in terms of a vision and goals. This means that there is no properly defined social dimension of nation building. Of course, there is a 1994 adopted PFDJ charter which the ruling clique calls a national charter. In the charter one can find the social dimension of nation building. However, the author claims that this is unconstitutional and illegitimate. Why? The PFDJ is only one political front and it is not the legitimate representative of the Eritrean people and the various political parties outside the PFDJ. When the PFDJ built and dominated National Assembly adopted the PFDJ charter as a national charter; it means that it imposed the PFDJ vision, views and values on the whole country which is both illegal and unconstitutional. The Eritrean constitution does not recognize the PFDJ as the sole representative of the people that can determine the direction and vision of nation building. This is a top-down approach, i.e. a proactive, non-participative and non-interactive rather than a participative; interactive which is a bottom-up-bottom or up-bottom-up approach. The approach means that leadership sets a party direction and vision and imposes it to be a national vision and the people participate only by reacting on what is imposed on them with no consideration of their views and values. The approach denies the people the right to determine theirs and their country's future and destiny. This is a leadership failure as it does not differentiate a party's vision from a national vision and as it does not allow a participative approach. The other failure is its inability to understand that a nation can not be built in the absence of well defined and articulated national direction and vision. The third failure is the development of the non-participatory and top-down approach which does not consider the views core values, principles and will of the people.

Can a leadership with the failures discussed above succeed in performing the other five tasks of leaders as outlined in the applied theoretical framework? Setting up the national direction which includes the vision and a development of goals that flow from the vision is a prerequisite for the other five tasks of the role of leadership in nation building. It will therefore be difficult to analyze the other tasks of leadership and specifically the second one, i.e. the crafting of strategy to fulfill the national vision in the absence of a well defined national vision. PFDJsm is not and can not replace Eritreanism, as Eritreanism has its own unique history, background, identity, culture, tradition, core values and principles. The clique in power is attempting to destroy Eritreanism and to replace it by PFDJsm and this is one of its serious blunders and worst failures in the nation building process in particular and in the Eritrean history in general. Such an act denies Eritreans the right for self-determination and it betrays the national causes for which the 100, 000 Eritrean heroes have fallen and for which several thousands have been disabled for during and after the liberation struggle. Replacing Eritreanism by PFDJsm means implementing PFDJ vision, i.e. the undeclared vision at the cost of the Eritrean official vision of building a peaceful, developed, democratic and constitutional government that respects human rights and the rule of law.

Building Social Cohesion and Social Unity

Imposing PFDJs vision of nation building on the people can not create social capital, i.e. social cohesion, social unity, a sense of belongingness and to have a common destiny as well as to work together. It is a **non-participative** and **divisive** and **exclusive** rather than an **all inclusive** approach and a clear sign of inequality of the citizens, which classifies people to different citizen groups such as the first and second class citizens. Actually, those who entertain divergent views and who oppose the clique in power are considered as non-Eritreans. This **divisive** and **exclusive** approach created the "We" (PFDJites) and the "You" (non-PFDJites), the "We" PFDJites at the "Top" and the "You" PFDJites at the "Bottom" and the "We" "the PFDJ hard core leadership" and the "You" "the PFDJ peripheral leadership". This exclusive approach blocks the **social capital formation** process. Not only that it created a division among the PFDJ members and non-members, but it also created a serious division within the party at various levels.

The reason why the party operates in the approach discussed above can also be categorized into various phases and the main goal is to secure the concentration of power by the party chairman who is also the president, a person who is solely and mainly interested in his personal aggrandizement. The first phase of this dangerous, divisive, exclusive, antagonistic, conflict creating and exacerbating party policy at all

layers and strata of the society in general and the party in particular aims at or continues until power is concentrated in **the Narrow Funnel**, i.e. the PFDJ central office. The second phase proceeds with the divisive and antagonistic strategy until the power within **the Narrow Funnel** is snatched or sneaked over by **the Narrower Funnel** within **the Narrow Funnel**, i.e. a very small clique within the PFDJ central office. The third phase also proceeds with the same strategy of division, suspicion and antagonism until the power in **the Narrower Funnel** within **the Narrow Funnel** is fully taken over by **the Narrowest Funnel**, i.e. **the G1 Funnel**. **The Narrowest Funnel**, i.e. **the G1 Funnel** exists inside **the Narrower Funnel** within **the Narrow Funnel** and the Eritrea people and the nation building process are the victims of **this funnel**, i.e. **the G1 Funnel** who is the president. To realize the concentration of power within **the G1 Funnel** the party has not only failed to build social capital among the population, but it has failed to do so within the party members and even within the core party leadership. It was due to the absence of this social capital that we have witnessed one of the serious and in-depth divisions among the leadership of the PFDJ in 2000 (<http://news.asmarino.com/PFDJ/membership/Introduction.asp>). It should not be difficult to understand and analyze the seriousness of the impact of the division within the leadership on the unity and harmony among party members and even among the citizens as a whole, i.e. the *social unity* and *social cohesion* of the population. In other words the split at the top definitely had insurmountable grave consequences on the social cohesion and social unity of the population and thereby on the social dimension specifically and the nation building process in general.

One of the reasons for the division in the core leadership is because they maintained divergent views about the direction and vision of nation building. The deep division among the core leadership is a very clear illustration of the fact that the PFDJ charter of nation building was not even fully shared by the leadership of the party. This further shows that a certain core faction within the core leadership imposed its views, values and beliefs not only on the party members and the population as a whole, but also on another leadership faction, i.e. a peripheral faction.

Conflict Prevention and Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts

The clique in power has created a mechanism of conflict creation and exacerbation rather than a mechanism of conflict prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts. PFDJ vision is not set to be implemented but it is used as a tool to mobilize various resources from within and outside the country to be used in the implementation of the undeclared (hidden) vision. Moreover, the vision helps the non-committed leadership to get the support of the people, to legitimize its stay in power, to prolong and consolidate its power. In other words, the resources mobilized by deception and cohesions are also used to create and consolidate the power of the **G1** who is the main actor in the process being described. A practical illustration of the existence of the conflict creation and exacerbation mechanism is how the core clique within PFDJ central office has dealt with the division that emerged within the party leadership in 2000. When the dispute within PFDJ leadership was officially announced by the opponent group, PFDJ Political Director and Presidential Advisor see (Mekaleh June, 2001) has this to say in a speech delivered to the youth at the Junior Club. We have had several similar problems which are both anti-people and counterrevolutionary movements in our long time of the liberation struggle. We have foiled all of them and we are going to deal with the current one also with the same mechanism and we will foil it. When such inflammatory statements are loudly made by the presidents' advisor, regarding the demands of the opponents for the implementation of the constitution, multiparty election, rule of law and fulfilling the promises done to the people, how can we understand and explain the mechanisms of conflict prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Can the clique in power be committed to the creation of the mechanisms of conflict prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts? It is a one man (G1) dictatorial-rule surrounded by a narrow of yes men clique that doesn't allow a multiparty election and a constitutional government establishment. Such a system can not be committed to the creation of mechanisms for conflict prevention and peaceful

resolution of conflicts. These holds because the three elements of the social dimension of nation building referred here are some of the main building blocks of a multiparty and peoples elected democratic and constitutional government. In other words the three elements of the social dimension of nation building challenge the rule of terror, human rights abuses, mono-party system, gross violations of human rights and above all the rule of the jungle like the one that we have in Eritrea. The president and his clique instead of creating and strengthening the social dimension of nation building, they are rather blocking the creation of social capital and conflict prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Moreover, they are dismantling the social-fabrics of the society as it can not support the one man rule which commits gross human rights violations. What are taking place in Eritrea are the social capital destruction and creation of conflicts and avoiding the peaceful means of conflicts resolution to create a fertile ground for the system which exist in Eritrea at present.

Continuous Efforts to Build Trust, Consensus and Dialogue

Efforts to build trust, consensus and dialogue do not exist in PFDJ regimes *modus operandi*. Actually, an atmosphere of *distrust* is created among the leadership and at all layers of the society by using various tactics of deception, coercion, disinformation and distortion of reality, and intimidation. Through these tactics people are forced to follow the individual (G1) and his clique's views without considering the views of the other members of the leadership. There is nothing like *consensus* and rejecting, destroying and distorting all proposals and views for dialogue if they do not originate from the top are the typical characteristics of PFDJ. Anyone who takes an initiative for a dialogue is baptized as cowardice or a treasonous citizen.

A very simple illustrative example of the disregard of building trust is as follows. The case in point is that during the President's visit to the US in 1995 he held a public seminar with the Eritrean Community in Washington DC. In the questions and answers session, a very serious financial allegation and a suspicion of misappropriation of the government funds was forwarded to the then Eritrean Embassy in the US Hagos Ghebrihiwet and who at the same time was chairing the meeting. The specific question that followed the allegation and implication of theft was that: What appropriate measures the president would take to solve the problem? The president attempted to avoid answering the question and tried to swiftly revolve around the issue or to talk in general about the problem. One could say that, the answer did not address the underlying problem and it was diversionary with the aim of covering up the scandal as he himself was implicated as a collaborator. The question was asked again and again until a clear answer was given. Finally the president was compelled to ask the public, if people like Hagos Ghebrihiwet the then Eritrean Embassy in the US and who at the same time was chairing the meeting were committing such financial scandals or the allegation of misappropriation was forwarded to this person and the public unanimously responded by saying yes.

Finally, the president was left with no choice and he was forced to say that we are going to take the necessary corrective measures repeatedly. What are more interesting are the measures that Isayas (the president) took to deal with the serious problem which dominated the public meeting. The president promoted the accused person to be in charge of the Department of Finance of the PFDJ which is the ruling and the only party in Eritrea. The attempt to avoid answering the question and promoting the accused person to one of the highest positions in finance can arouse so many interesting questions and assumptions. The questions and assumptions can help us to analyze how the case in point can be related to building trust which is one of the corner stones in the social dimension of nation building. Why did the president refuse to answer the question directly on the first instance? How and when did he knew that the suspicion was directly forwarded to the then Embassy in the US who was sitting on his side to chair the meeting? Why did he promote the accused person to the highest position in the financial affairs of the country? Why did not he demote him and what would have happened to Isayas if he has demoted the same person? Would such measures lead to the disclosure of much deeper and more serious financial scandals in which the president was involved? It was when he made such decisions and promoted the

accused to one of the highest positions that Isayas lost the opportunity of building trust in the society and at the same time he showed that he does not possess two important characteristics of a leader, i.e. *character* and *competence*. He scored a black chapter in building trust in the social dimension of the nation building process. Consequently, people would and definitely lose trust and can have more suspicions and question marks about such a leader. These developments can also in the ordinary citizens create an attitude and a culture of let us fill our coffers when the leaders are filling theirs. This can be if not the only, one of the main reasons for the overriding and dominating kleptocracy that we can observe in present Eritrea in contrast to what was promised to our people and in contrast to our fathers and fore fathers core values and principles. Instead of continuous efforts to build trust, we can see in Eritrea a continuous effort by PFDJ to destroy trust or continuous efforts to build distrust and suspicion in the society. This creates favorable conditions for the one man rule to consolidate his position which benefits much from sowing the seeds of distrust and suspicion in the society.

Continuous Efforts to Build Consensus

The clique in power is reluctant to build consensus and it has made fruitless all efforts done by other party members to maintain and strengthen the traditional of consensus that existed in the country. Just the case presented above shows that there were no efforts done to build consensus and the decision was not reached by consensus among the concerned authorities. It was single-handedly decided by the president which shows that the culture of consensus based decision making does not exist in the current regime. Another example that highlights no efforts have been done to build consensus and the absence of the consensus based atmosphere of work and decision making in the current regime is how the president dealt with the demand of the G15, in their letter of May 27, 2001, An Open Letter to all Members of the PFDJ: A Call for Peaceful and Democratic Dialogue. <<http://news.asmarino.com/PFDJMembership/Introduction.asp>>. Following the publication of the letter, instead of conducting a constructive dialogue and debate to pass a consensus based decision the president single-handedly fired the Minister of Trade and Industry, Mr. Haile Weldetsae (DRUE) and the Minister of Marine Resources, Mr. Petros Solomomn in June 8, 2001, without consulting the other party leaders and the council of Ministers. The conflict was not at all discussed by the Central Council and the Executive Council as the call for the meeting was rejected by the president (Woldetsae, June, 2001). Not only that there were no efforts done to build consensus, however the culture and spirit of consensus that existed traditionally within the society is systematically destroyed as it does not support the type of the regime we have in Eritrea to stay longer in power. The spirit and mode of operations based on consensus really threatens and destabilizes the type of ruling clique that we have in Eritrea.

Continuous Efforts to Build Dialogue

The various cases discussed so far clearly illustrate that there does not at all exist any culture of dialogue in the current regime. By giving practical examples, it is illustrated that there were no efforts done to build consensus and as a result consensus based decisions could not be made. Let alone to make continuous efforts to build consensus, the traditional atmosphere and spirit of consensus that existed in the Eritrean society had and is still being dismantled systematically by PFDJ clique in power as it does not at all serve its purpose. The absence of a consensus based decisions also are other evidences of the absence of dialogue and the absence of the efforts to build dialogue. A one man rule can not exist and thrive in a society where there is a culture of dialogue and consensus as whenever there are issues and problems of common concern to be dealt with and to be solved there should take place a dialogue and exchange of ideas. A one man rule and a culture of dialogue, consensus based decisions and exchange of ideas can not co-exist.

Both the G15 in the open letter to PFDJ members and the G-13 in the Berlin Manifesto demanded the implementation of the constitution and a sober dialogue among the leadership and the G15 to resolve conflicts. Moreover, in June, 2001 almost 2200 individuals signed a petition and asked for a dialogue to

take between the reformers, i.e. the G15 and the ruling clique in power. The signatories of the petition asked the President, to show maximum efforts, leadership and care in resolving the conflict peacefully, legally and constitutionally. The demands set by the three groups were totally rejected by the president and instead of getting engaged in a constructive dialogue, the president's group launched a campaign of defamation, defeatism, isolation and treasonous acts. It is due to the lack of care, competence and character that the president and his clique took such destructive measures.

The Promotion of Justice, Equity, Basic Freedoms and the Reduction of Bureaucratic Corruption

The various illustrations presented under the variables of *Continuous efforts to build consensus* and *Continuous efforts to build dialogue* in the two previous sections show indirectly that the above four variables of the social dimension of nation building do not exist in Eritrea. In a country where there is no consensus and dialogue it is impossible to realize justice, equity, basic freedom and the abolition of bureaucratic corruption. If there were justice, equity and basic freedom the two ministers that we have observed were fired under the *Continuous efforts to build consensus* section would not have been fired. Both ministers together with many other former government officials are languishing in prison for the last eight years and have not faced trial in any court. No charges have been filed against them and that is clear evidence of the absence of justice, equity and basic freedom. The case also illustrates the absence of basic freedom, otherwise they would not have languished in prison only because they have expressed their views of the sad developments in the country in contrast to the people's expectations in light of what was promised and called for a peaceful dialogue to remedy the problems.

The fact that there is a widespread bureaucratic corruption in Eritrea at present is an open secret which nobody can deny. In various occasions the president has admitted that there is corruption in the country although he attempts to portray himself as a non-corrupted leader. The president should be the last person to talk about and to criticize if there are bureaucratic officials in Eritrea. He should shoulder the responsibility and criticize himself rather than to put the blame squarely on others. In a televised interview with ERI-TV during the first week of January, 2009, the audacious president had the audacity to tell us that the most corrupted actors in Eritrea at present are the veterans of our struggle, i.e. the senior freedom fighters. He further claims that some of the corrupted officials are already identified and the authorities are in the process of identifying more and more corrupted officials. I will not quarrel with the president, but I would rather ask him several questions. First, do you want to deny that there is a corrupted regime in Eritrea? Whose failure do you think that we have a corrupted regime in Eritrea? Should not you be the first person to be criticized, to be blamed and to shoulder the responsibility of the excessive corruption that exists in the country which is tantamount to kleptocracy? Instead of criticizing others, would not it be appropriate to start from the right angle and to take the necessary measures to deal with the underlying factors that have lead to the current situation of a corrupted regime? If the President claims that he will play a vital and leading role in abolishing corruption in Eritrea, nobody will take him serious. Why? Because, every ordinary Eritrean is wise enough to understand that a mosquito can not cure the disease malaria. Mosquito can only create and spread further the malaria disease and it has never and will never ever cure the disease that it has created. By corollary as it is the president and his narrow clique that created a corrupted system in the country, the problem can not be dealt with as long as those who created the problem are in power. The more they stay in power the more corruption will be spread throughout the country. It is PFDJ Central Office spear headed by the president to be held accountable for the excessive level of corruption and kleptocracy that is bleeding the country seriously.

The G1 government can not stay in power and consolidate its position in the absence of a social, political, economic, cultural and diplomatic corruption and that is why the government is creating and spreading all those forms of corruption in the country. This is true because it is only corrupted officials who can support, defend and consolidate the power of a corrupted regime and its corrupted leader. Consequently, we are witnessing the emergence of plutocracy in Eritrea as those who maintain political power are misusing their power base to make themselves the wealthiest class in the country. Actually, one is tested,

filtered and certified to be equally corrupted and to defend the corrupted regime by passing through the G1 funnel before he can be appointed to a certain position in the regime. The above analysis clearly shows that there is a widespread bureaucratic corruption in Eritrea as a clear evidence of the failure of leadership in the social dimension of nation building. Corruption does not promote nation building and on the contrary it is one of the main impediments in building the social dimension of a nation building.

Crafting Strategy to Fulfill the Vision

This article addresses three strategies, i.e. *education, the land tenure and titling system and the relatively reliable, predictable and less corrupt judiciary.*

Educational Strategy

Unfortunately the president has closed the only University in Eritrea which casted a doubt on the people the governments' commitment to higher and quality education. Moreover, he denied the youth the rights to proper education and schools and replaced academic and vocational training institutions by military camps so that the students will not get appropriate quality education and develop their capacities. Various types of constraints and limitations are also done on the common or usual systems of education by military institutions and the qualified teachers and directors are replaced by military officials. In collaboration with the university president, the leader sent 4000 university students to the military detention camp in the desert of WIA which is about 50 degree centigrade warm. Two students who could not endure the hardships, i.e. Yirga Yosef and Yemane Tekie died and their death was attributed to the heat stroke they suffered while in the WIA desert detention camp. Another, similar problem deals with the obstacles and constraints created to Eritrean students in South Africa, who came there under a World Bank funded human resources development program of the Government of Eritrea which is comprehensively discussed and analyzed in (Mekonen and Abraha, 2004). According to the same source many students were instructed to return to Eritrea before acquiring the relevant education stipulated in the contract for higher education under the pre-text of invalid contract according to the Eritrean Embassy in South Africa. Moreover, the embassy in collaboration with the University President cancelled the scholarships of many students making them face acute financial problems which had a serious and negative impact on their academic performance. This case is also a clear evidence of the governments' lack of commitment to higher quality education which gives a clear signal of the strategy of education with its negative impact on the quality of education and on nation building.

The president has also totally denied the veteran fighters of the liberation struggle the right to higher education so that they will not be able to develop their capacity and skills. After committing the above mentioned and other similar blunders in the field of education, it is really unbelievable and surprising to hear the president in his own words saying that, although tremendous achievements have been accomplished in the field of education, I am not yet satisfied as much is left to be done. He also said that, the teachers in the National Service have to be thanked for putting maximum efforts to make the field of education successful, although they are in a desperate situation and have already lost hope for any type of a bright future. Such baseless and false statements are empty and self serving and the aim of the president can be to get support of the youth by winning the sympathy of the teachers who have close contacts with the students. The presidential speech does not reflect the reality in light of the various destructive and irrational measures that the government has taken in the field of education.

Moreover, it is also in a sharp contradiction with the president's speech in a meeting with government officials 14 years after independence, i.e. in 2005. His speech and the decision he made regarding the Ministry of Educations mode of operations and performance follows:

The Ministry of Education has not performed its task successfully and the standard of education has deteriorated tremendously. Nobody knows what the Ministry is doing. In general the type of education

being offered does not enable the youth to get employment opportunities and it is empty which does not give students' adequate background for higher studies. He finally ordered all curriculums to be revised and following his decision the ministry's curriculum was changed.

The above speech shows how confused the strategy of education is. The adventurous strategy and the measures taken have a serious repercussion on the quality of education, which in its turn has a negative impact on the nation building process. Regarding *corruption*, it has already been shown that there is a widespread corruption in the social, political, economic, cultural and diplomatic fields. Land tenure and land titling systems are already addressed in-depth in (Tronvoll, 1998). Accordingly, the traditional social and cultural institutions of the rural population are by proclamation made invalid and drained of 'cultural content', thereafter to be substituted with new and unfamiliar systems imposed by the authorities in the name of 'economic development' and 'nationalism'. Considering, the land tenure system imposed by the regime, it is argued that the whole social fabric of the highlands will undergo radical change. The land tenure and titling system has totally overlooked the peoples' traditions and customs. Moreover, it also shows that the regime has betrayed its own promises of the land tenure system which is one of the main strategies of the social dimension of nation building as envisaged in the national charter. This is also another serious blunder and failure of the government in the social dimension of nation building.

Mobilizing the Whole Nation behind the Vision, Goals and Strategies

A clear vision, credible strategy and a demonstrated commitment to improve welfare and being demonstrably zero-tolerant of corruption are some of the prerequisites to mobilize people behind the vision, goals and strategies. All these prerequisites are nonexistent in Eritrea and they can not be used to mobilize the people to rally behind the vague vision, accompanying strategies and the thereby following goals. It is already demonstrated that there are all types of corruption and mainly, economic, social, political and cultural corruption all intentionally created and promoted by the leadership for the purpose of prolonging and consolidating the power of the G1. It does not suffice to say that there is economic corruption in Eritrea, but kleptocracy is one of the typical characteristics of the clique in power intentionally created by the kleptocratic clique in power and as a result the country is bleeding into an economic, social, cultural and political crises. The reason for establishing a kleptocratic system is to use it as an instrument to achieve the undeclared (hidden) vision of the kleptocratic clique which is the main architect of the undeclared and hidden vision. As the leadership can not mobilize people by motivation and inspiration, it applies other tactics such as coercion, deception, denial of the reality, diversion, confusion, distortion and intimidation. It can not apply motivation and inspiration as it never did or attempted to satisfy basic human needs for achieving a sense of belongingness, recognition, self-esteem, a feeling of control over one's life, and the ability to live up to one's ideals. It has failed to build social capital and a leadership that has scored a worst failure in the social dimension of nation building can not motivate people to rally behind the vague vision, the thereby strategies and goals.

Managing Change Effectively

The ruling clique denies the existence for a need of change whenever there is a demand for change and takes measures which are diametrically the opposite of the change needed. Those who take initiatives for change are seen by suspicion and harsh measures can be taken on them depending on the nature of the issue raised. Two extreme and ineffective management of change that Eritrea has experienced are the initiatives taken by the G13 and G15. These two groups took initiatives for a positive change in the country when they clearly understood that the nation building process was jeopardized and was moving in the wrong direction. Moreover, they observed that a vision distortion was taking over the nation building for reasons which are not known to the people except for the narrow kleptocratic regime who are totally detached from the people and the reality in the country.

Decision Making and Problem Solving

It is already illustrated that the leadership in Eritrea has failed to perform the first four tasks of leadership in the nation building process. These failures prove how poor and incapable the leadership is to make decisions and to solve problems. Actually, making underground, unpredictable and incomprehensible decisions, creating problems and a sense of uncertainty, insecurity and tension typically characterize the leadership rather than making rational decisions and solving problems. It is not leadership by decision making and problem solving that typically operates in Eritrea, it is rather leadership by tension, uncertainty, insecurity, intimidation, interrogation, terror, distortion, disinformation and denying the truth and reality. Such type of an atmosphere enables the leaders to cover up their weaknesses and past failures and to put the blame of the failures on others. In sum, it is leadership by new and unrealistic promises, postponing past promises and finding excuses for past failures and putting the blame squarely on others. Decisions are made underground and in a very mysterious ways. If good and positive results are achieved then the leadership takes the credit for making good decision and solving the problems faced. But, if the results are poor the leadership pretends as if it does not at all know the case and puts the blame on others. The case in point that illustrates the lack of skills and competence in the decision making and problem solving of the leadership is the last televised interview which in ERI-TV was conducted by Asmelash Abraha with the president. The interviewer asked if the government has plans to make salary adjustments and especially for government employees and those in the army following the latest developments in the escalation of the cost of living in the country. The president laughs sarcastically first and thereafter said that there is something which does not change in the governments mode of operations and that will remain the same. An appropriate question to the president would be: If there will not be any change and things will remain constant, i.e. if the status-quo ante is to be maintained it means that things have remained the same and if that is the case why did he have to conduct a five hours interview. Making the same old ballads and boring interviews which are null and void both in contents and presentations can not bear fruits. If that is the case, does he know that the whole interview conducted and the time Eritreans have spent to listen to the most boring, irritating, provocative, and divertive interview was only a real waste of time and resources? Another case that shows the poorest quality of the leadership in terms of decision making and problem solving is also how the president dealt with the border issue with Ethiopia since 1998. The case is well known and there is no need for a detailed explanation and analysis.

Developing Other Leaders

The president and his clique in power work for the personal greed and personal aggrandizement of the G1. The main tactic applied for realizing this motive is by destroying any leadership capacity that exists in Eritrea. No doubt he believes that he is enough to lead the nation building process alone. The nation building process is the victim of these adventurous and flagrant attempts. Immediately after independence instead of building the leadership capacity and quality, he started to destroy, defame and underestimate the leadership capacity of the liberation struggle veterans. The G15 which are languishing in prison are people who maintained various high ranking leadership positions during the armed struggle and after independence. Some of them were members of the Political Bureau which was the highest organ during the armed struggle. Others were also members of the leadership and some others were military strategists and army generals. After independence one of them was a vice-president and the rest were ministers, army generals, regional administrators and ambassadors in various countries. The president instead of developing new leaders to play a vital role in the nation building process, he destroyed the people mentioned above who made enormous contributions with various leadership positions during the armed struggle and after independence. Personal aggrandizement being his only dream, he takes any irrational and adventurous measures to realize that dream. The fact that the president destroyed and is still destroying the existing leadership quality instead of developing new leaders and multiplying the existing one's is another remarkable chapter in the series of his failed chapters in the Eritrean history.

DEVELOPMENTAL (EFFECTIVE) AND LEGACY-BUILDING LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

The Quality, Legitimacy and Just of Developmental (Effective) Leadership

The several cases presented illustrated the Eritrean leadership has not performed its tasks adequately which is a clear indication of the absence of the appropriate leadership qualities. *Legitimacy*, the leadership is illegitimate as it is not elected which makes it difficult to be accepted by the people. *Just*, the current leadership being illegitimate it is automatically unjust. The promised socio-economic development is not realized and this shows that the leadership is incompetent, illegal and unjust. Monroe, (1993) postulates that if a nation lacks quality, legitimate and just leaders, national deterioration occur and the key to a prosperous and peaceful life and nation is quality leadership. This is true in Eritrea as it lacks quality, legitimate and just leaders national deterioration is occurring and getting worse continuously.

The Character, Competence and Care of Developmental (Effective) Leadership

Competence is already addressed and showed that the Eritrean leadership is incompetent. *Care*, no ordinary Eritrean in his right mind can claim that the president and his clique care about the people. Anyone who believes so, he himself does not care about the Eritrean people. In a recent televised interview with ERI-TV the president was asked if a salary adjustment will be done considering the sky rocketing cost of living in the country. Instead of giving a proper answer he had the audacity to say that it is because people are spoiled that they are expecting salary increment. A more convincing point which shows that he does not care about the people is that he is in the process of destroying the basic social unit in the society, the family. Family members are split and are languishing in various trenches and in the so called 'Warsay-Yikealo' national service program for an indefinite period of time without getting regular salaries. Not only that, but he has also in Washington DC in a meeting with the Eritrean community told the audience that what he is interested in is only the money irrespective of how and by whom it is collected. I do care **only** about the money is tantamount to saying that, I do not care about you people. *Character*, i.e. **principle-centeredness, honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness** are the concepts that the president hates most. He is also well known of denying facts although people do not dare to say it loudly. He also changes every now and then and he can explain the same issue in different ways, in different places and different occasions to the same and or different people. The lack of principle-centeredness, honesty, integrity and trustworthiness can easily be explained by the fact that the president walks out from a council of ministers meeting at any time when he is asked certain questions that he hates and does not want to or can not answer. The types of questions that he hates most are the ones that expose the leadership failures, deviations from what is promised and planned and inconsistencies. He walks out, if his usual answer of denying facts, changes and I do not know does not satisfy the participants of the meeting. If that happens the meeting participants can ask him one and the same question in different ways until they get a satisfactory answer and in such circumstances he walks out, a behavior that clearly illustrates the lack of principle-centeredness, honesty, integrity and trustworthiness.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the main conclusions of this article is that, the social dimension of the nation building process is a total failure. The other conclusion is that the cause for the failure in the social dimension of nation building is the lack of a developmental (effective) leadership in Eritrea. The absence of effective (developmental) leadership in Eritrean is justified by the fact that current leadership does not possess quality, legitimacy, justice, character, care and competence to lead and accomplish the task of nation building successfully. Moreover, it did not develop a credible, attractive, clear, specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic and time bound vision, goals and values that give direction for nation building. On top of that it could not develop appropriate strategies and it could not mobilize the people behind the vision, goals and strategies which are some of the important pillars of nation building. The other leadership deficiencies are its inability to deal with development challenges, to make vital decisions and to develop other leaders. A leader that can match the task of a successful nation building is a directive, visionary, participative and interactive leader that possess, quality, legitimacy, justice, care, competence and character which includes honesty, integrity, trustworthiness and principle-centeredness.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Several leadership implications can be drawn from this article. Firstly, leadership has to admit that the social dimension of the nation building process has failed and should make a proper assessment as to why it did not achieve success. Secondly, the results of the proper assessment for the reasons of failure can give a clear direction for the future course of action and to correct past mistakes. Thirdly, developing official and unofficial (hidden) vision and mobilizing resources in the name of the official vision to be used in the implementation of the hidden vision creates only confusion and nothing can be achieved from this mysterious way of leading nation building. Fourthly, such an approach makes people suspicious and makes it very difficult to make them rally behind any vision in the future. Fourthly, leadership in order to win the trust of the people again, it should in detail explain to the people the underlying causes for failure and the lessons drawn and how they will be incorporated in the future course plans. Lastly, leadership should develop an action plan in order to be able to bridge the competence gap that can exist among the current leadership and the leadership that can conduct the task successfully.

REFERENCES

- Adei, S. (2004). *The Promise of Leadership, The Chances of Ghana Having The Leadership To Move From the Country From Third to First World*. Accra: Combert Impressions Limited.
- Adei, S. (2004). *Leadership and Nation Building*. Accra: Combert Impressions Limited.
- Basil, D. (1992). *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation State*. New York: New York Times Books.
- Bloisi, W. Cook, C.W. and P.L. Hunsaker P.L. (2003). *Management and Organizational Behaviour*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- EPLF. (1994). *A National Charter for Eritrea: For a democratic, just and prosperous future*. Approved by the Third Congress of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Nacfa: Sabur Printing Press.
- G13, (2000). *An Open Letter to President Isayas Afewerki, Berlin Manifesto*. Retrieved January 2, 2009 from <http://eritreaoe.com/Archive/FebruaryArchive.htm>.
- G15, (2001). *An Open Letter to all Members of the PFDJ*. Retrieved November 15 from <http://news.asmarino.com/PFDJMembership/Introduction.asp>.
- Hofstede, G. (1992). *Cultural Constraints in Management Theories in Wren (1995). Leader's Companion Insights and Leadership Through The Ages*. New York: The Free Press New York.
- G2000, (2001). *A Call for a Dialogue Among the Reformers and the President*. Retrieved on December 12, 2008 from <http://www.awate.com/portal/content/view/4885/3/>.
- Janis, I. (1982). *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascos* 2nd edition. Boston: Boston Houghton Mifflin Ltd.
- Kotter, J.P. (1999). *What leaders Really Do?* Boston: The Free Press.
- Kotter, J.P. (2001). *Leading Change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Mekonnen, D.R. and S.M. Abraha (2004). *The Plight of Eritrean students in South Africa*. Work in progress.
- Northouse, P. G. (2004). *Leadership – Theory and Practice*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Richards, D., & S. Engle (1986). *After the Vision: Suggestions to corporate visionaries and vision champions*. In J.D. Adams (Ed.), *Transforming leadership*. Alexandria, VA: Miles River Press.
- Schein, E.H. (1985). *Defining Organizational Culture*, in *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jessey Bass Inc. Publishing.
- Tronvoll, K. (1998). "The process of nation-building in post-war Eritrea: created from below or directed from the above?" *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36 (3), 461-482.
- Warren, B. and N. Burt (1985). *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Change*. New York: Harper and Row Printing Press.

- Woldetsae, H. (2001). Personal Interview with the Eritrean Free Press. Retrieved January 15 from <http://news.asmarino.com/PFDJCentralOfficeMember>.
- Yukl, G. (2001). *Leadership in Organizations*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Yukl, G. (2005). *Leadership in Organizations*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Munroe, M. (1993). *Becoming a leader*. California: Pneuma Life Publishing.

