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Eritrea's national security predicaments: Post-colonial African syndrome

Meressa Tsehaye Gebrewahd

Department of Political Science and Strategic Studies, Mekelle University, Ethiopia.

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The post-2001 Eritrea is repeatedly viewed as North Korea of Africa: small state with isolationist foreign policy that could not burden totalitarianism, that the critical young generation is leaving the state and the remaining population is in a military uniform waiting for an imaginary enemy, that all the critical state institutions are decayed, that the port-based (Massawa and Assab) national economy lost its economic comparative and competitive advantage to Djibouti for decades to come, as a result the policy of "self-reliance" in era of globalization proved to be incompatible with the "Singaporization" of Eritrea. The regime has leased the Eritrean ports to Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, military based for Sunni Arab states fighting the Shiites in Yemen, to prolong regime survival at the expense of Eritrea's long term interests which will make Eritrea a proxy base for Middle East's superpower military competition. Eritrea is thus in the process of becoming a second Somalia in a region where fragile states are pervasive, and the neighboring states mainly Ethiopia should develop a road map to contain the worst case scenario: state collapse. This study therefore aims to critically analysis the post-independence nation building project in Eritrea, and its subsequent dynamics with a particular focus on the post-Ethiopia- Eritrea war of 1998-2000. The study mainly uses secondary data including government policies, declarations, interviews of top officials, and updated discussion papers posted in different Eritrea related websites.

Key words: The idea of the state, nation-building, Eritrean nationalism, "one-people, one-heart", Eritrean national security predicament, Post-colonial African syndrome.

INTRODUCTION

The State of Eritrea, the latest African state next to South Sudan to join the UN family of nations, won its independence as a defacto state in 1991, and de jure state in 1993 through referendum. However, Eritrea had passed through historical ups and downs on the march to independence: first colonized by Italy and transferred to Britain as 'mandate territory' until 1952.

Upon the United Nations' decision, Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia as an autonomous region, a situation that soon deteriorated. The federation was not well-come by all actors including the Eritrean contending parties and Ethiopian government. After ten years, the federation was abrogated and Eritrea was re-integrated into Ethiopia in 1962. On the eve of the abrogation of the federation, the

E-mail: meressa21@yahoo.com or meressa21t@gmail.com.

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Eritrean, particularly the Muslim lowland Eritreans and later joined by the highlanders, declared the bloody armed struggle in 1961 that lasted for three decades.

The post independent state and nation- building process was framed to be the slogan “*Hade Hizbi, Hade Libi*”¹. Eritrea’s post independent state and nation-building process was not smooth even though the success of the liberation struggle sparked prospects for a strong, united and stable Eritrea. The crisis is not solely the result of the challenges of new state building process but also strongly related to the evolution of Eritrean nationalism and its foundation; the contradictions and divisions among Eritrean nationalists on the idea of the state of Eritrea and Eritreanism

Methodologically, the study examined the national security challenges of the post 2001 Eritrean in relation to the different theoretical approaches to national security, Eritrea’s historical trajectories, Eritrean identity formation, the nature of the nationalist movements and goals of the struggle, the post-independence state building processes and the policies designated to ensure the goal. Moreover, externally the national security of Eritrea would also be examined in relation to the challenges that evolved out of the 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia: as Eritrea’s national significant others.

This study to critically analyze the post-independence nation building project in Eritrea, and its subsequent dynamics with a particular focus on the post-Ethiopia-Eritrea war of 1998-2000. The study mainly uses secondary data including books, articles, government policies, declarations, interviews of top officials, and updated discussion papers posted in different Eritrea related websites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

National security, traditionally, has been exclusively defined as state’s ability to survive and prosper in the self-help anarchic international system (Wing, 2000). State’s security threats were viewed external in their origin, and militaristic in their nature. The instruments of defense were military capabilities, and wars were considered to be fought outside the jurisdiction of the state (Ibid). Therefore, national security was defined as phenomenon of war: focusing on the threat, use and control of military force (Walt, 1991).

However, the end of the cold war served as a major blow to the traditional schools, and led to the emergence of alternative voices within the security studies calling for “widening and ultimately deepening” of the subject (Hough, 2004). The Widening schools argued for horizontal inclusions of symmetric and asymmetric threats (both military and non-military) that could emerge both from outside and inside of the state, and instigated by both state and non-state actors (Ibid, Buzan, 1997).

The Deepening schools, however, argued for vertical actors’ redefinition of referent objects for security to include non-state actors mainly human beings (Williams, 2004). Accordingly, states are thus not only the referent and providers of security but also could be source of threats to their citizens. And the major threats to national security are emanating from within the state due to lack of agreed consensus on the idea of the state, that is, *the nation and its organizing ideology*, by all responsible actors though external threats are existential but could be easily deterred.

According to Buzan (2008), national security is basically about building an established legitimacy on the idea of the state by those who are claiming to be nation-builders and citizens of the state through establishing an imagined community. The idea of the state is thus the pillar to national security supported by defensive physical base (territory) and established institutions of the state. It is “needed to be firmly rooted in the minds its citizens and in the minds of other states, so that the idea of national self-rule is needed to have a high legitimacy in international system” (Ibid: 78).

Most states, however, are multi-ethnic nations as opposed to the traditional conception of nation-state which makes national security predicaments very complex especially to nation-builders in the third world. Cognizant of this, since the African states are creations of colonialism which makes them inorganic, failed to evolve from internal struggle, and incompatibly transplanted over pre-colonial primordial identities, the post-independent nation-builders therefore inherited the protracted and conflictual nation-building process (Meressa, 2013).

The decolonized states thus emerged as “part-nation-states” (Buzan, 2008) sharing the same ethnic groups with their neighbors, and such ethnic groups remain marginalized minorities which later paved a fertile ground for secessionist- irredentist movements to challenge the nation building process, and poses actual and potential national security threats (Ibid) .

The problem with “part-nation state” is that being ethnic groups living on the other side of the border are made to be minority, and the nation-builders of the process of becoming (states which are not full-fledged) designed their strategies of reintegrating ethnic groups on the other side of border as mobilizing instrument and eventual formation of relevant enemies of the national security. Moreover, such national security is naturally vulnerable to secession-irredentist obsession that weakens the very idea of national security (Meressa, 2010).

The failure to build strong idea of nation-state and national security of nonwestern mainly African states is further complicated by their late entrance to nation-state system and early stage of nation-building process that constrains nation-builders to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of their society (Ayoob, 2005, 1995). Besides, the simultaneous and contingent nature of nation-building process of African states also served the nation-builders to rely on the “idea of war makes state”, and their

¹ Tigrigna for “One People, One heart”, Eritrea’s Motto of nation building

preoccupations with war making, expansion and resource extraction as means of state making in hurry (Tilly, 1985).

Therefore, the national security challenges that new states face are, on one hand, the results of externalizing and overemphasizing on externally incoming threats and hence securitization and militarization of the nation-building process internally (Bundegaard, 2004). On the other hand, failure to cultivate, strengthen and build an integrative consensus of citizens on the idea of the state which ultimately results in winner-loser complex and negation of the core idea of the state (Medhane, 2004).

Eritrea's national security predicament: Historical antecedents

Colonial Legacy: Identity invention or imagination 1890 to 1952

Eritrean national security challenges are, partly, part of the broader African security challenge; imagining and building decolonized nation-state system, and neutralizing the colonial induced differences through forging mobilizing principles of commonly colonized and oppressed people, and ultimately forming new colonially created territorial identities (Bundegaard, 2004; Meressa, 2013).

In line with this, today's Eritrean nation-building challenges are basically the results of divergent conceptions of the idea of Eritreanism that traces back to post Italian periods, and the subsequent developments of divergent strategies of framing the future Eritrea and Eritreanism (Yosief, 2013).

Most literatures and informants indicated that the half a century Italian rule did not have a substantial impact on the Eritrean identity formation. Even though the Italians boasted the economic wellbeing of Eritrean in relation to Ethiopian, and were able to elevate the Muslim lowlander Eritrean (local known as *Metahit*) to the parity with the Christian Eritrean, it was not effective in forging new identity and western types of elites to lead the post-colonial nation-building process (Tekeste, 1997).

The highlanders (local known as *kebessa*) who were considered relatively politically conscious due to their access to the state system and modern missionary education were still with their pro-Ethiopian ties, and demanded unconditional union with Ethiopia (Ibid). Muslim lowlanders, in their demand for immediate independence, failed to convince the highlanders to form a collective post-primordial identity of Eritreanism. Instead, the Muslim League (later Eritrean Liberation Front) evolved into Islamic primordialist armed movement in 1961 (Meressa, 2013).

The parity system, however, laid the basis to the later politicization of Muslim/Christian, lowlander/highlander dichotomies of Eritrean politics and nationalism. And hence, Eritrean identity remains dominantly primordialist (Muslim/Christian, *Metahit/kebessa*) though they claimed

Eritrean identity was/is western industrial exposed modern identity when they pretend to view Ethiopian counterparts, as their relevant others, as uncivilized traditional societies.

The Italian period based modernist school of Eritrea identity, according to Abdulkader (2013), argued that the Italians introduced positive innovations, such as urbanization, a transportation system (especially the railways) and the development of the Massawa and Assab ports. They also encouraged the migration of peasants from Tigray to Eritrea, who settled in *kebessa* as labor force. In addition, the Italians recruited a large number of soldiers (*askari*) into their army who settled in cities and towns. This group contributed significantly to the urbanization process and developed a national consciousness due to their involvement in various colonial wars.

The British mandate period based modernist school of Eritrea identity, however, rejected the Italian thought and argued that Eritrean identity consciousness begun to surface onto the Eritrean political spectrum during the British mandate period (Yosief, 2013). The British in their attempt to prepare the Eritreans to decide their future allowed freedom of speech and association, and as a result the Eritreans began to structure and define their future state (Ibid; Tekeste, 1997). And hence, the pre-colonial and colonial (pre-mandate era) Eritrean identity was not historically and politically sufficient enough to justify their subsequently evolved colonial thesis (Meressa, 2013).

The 1946 Bet Georges conference was the first historically noticed intra-Eritrean gathering to debate on their future, and determine their identity consciousness. However, the conference ended up without agreement due to the divergent views of the existing Muslim and Christian political groups on future Eritrean state and Eritreanism.

The divergent outlooks were reflected in the organization of the contending groups and their mobilizations. Most of the Muslim lowlanders (ML) were organized around the "Al-Rabita al Islamiya al Eritriya" (the Muslim League) mainly since December 1946, and claimed independence of Eritrea on the basis of anticipatory fear and mistrust that the union would bring oppression under autocratic and Christian Ethiopia (Mesfine, 1988).

According to Ellingson (1977), the ML made a clear statement against unification in front of the Four Power Commission: "Is it just that a still barbaric and primitive nation such as the Ethiopians – whose government is unable to improve the lot of its own people – should come into possession of a territory which is far more disciplined, advanced and civilized than the Abyssinians?"

Conversely, most of the Christian highlanders were organized under the unionists on the basis of anticipatory hope that the union would bring dignity and freedom (Mesfine, 1988). And the remaining political groups were in between the two major organizations. From this,

possible to infer, that the absence of agreed consensus on the imagined or invented idea of the state and the endemic natures of the highland/lowland, Christian/Muslim dichotomies in Eritrean politics in which the establishment of inclusive Eritreanism require to properly integrate these realities .

The Inorganic federation: A hybrid solution and internationalization of the problem 1952 to 1961

Failing to provide an internally agreed solution, which evolved out of a half a century Italian colonial rule, to their future destiny made the Eritrean case to be decided from outside through federation that was not in the political vocabulary of Eritrean and Ethiopian in particular (Abdulkader, 2013; Tekeste, 1997; Yosief, 2013), and the colonized Africans in general. And hence, the federal concept, at least, it was not in the process -of- becoming in the continent of colonized states, at worst it was non-existing and alien to the recipients.

The United Nations (UN) imposed a quasi- federal liberal democratic constitution, the first internationally tailored inclusive constitution on Africa soil, on Eritrea². The federation was not, therefore, among the first, second and third options of real actors to the contemporary conflict, but none to all. The paradox was therefore Eritrea was entered into a federal marriage with a state of absolute monarchial political system which inherently antithesis to federal democratic culture. The Eritreans were, based on federal prescription, to accept the state and its leader which they labeled as “backward, feudal, uncivilized, primitive, archaic, and inferior” (Yosief, 2013) as their sovereign leader, one hand, Emperor Haile Selassie was awaited to accept and implement a federal democratic constitution on Eritrea which was ahistorical and apolitical to the organic foundation. The prevailing paradoxes and impracticalities of the federation were well summarized by Yosief Gebrehiwot’s article entitled “*Eritrea: the Federal Arrangement Farce*” under subtopic “*You cannot give what you don’t have*”:

“The farcical element in this deal can be teased out by asking this question: How was it possible for Imperial Ethiopia to let Eritrea have a federal system (and the democratic system that necessarily went with it) while it had none for itself? How was it possible for it to give what it didn’t possess? How was it possible for an absolute monarchy to accommodate an island of democratic enclave within its imperial domain? Anybody that entertained such an idea to begin with was either immensely naive or criminally irresponsible. While the former describes the state of mind of many Eritrean elite who have made that annulment their battle cry for half a

century (especially the nationalist historians), the latter description fits well the UN. Even as the UN architects knew that the federal arrangement under such a condition was unsustainable, they failed to come up with any other formula because they were anxious to get rid of the Eritrean problem from their hands as soon as possible” (December, 2013 retrieved from <http://awate.com/eritrea-the-federal-arrangement-farce/comment-page-2/>).

The federal -middle way solution- was therefore the result of Eritrean failure to provide convincing reasons to the international community, at least to the major powers of the time, that Eritrean question was colonial and its solution would be decolonization like all other colonies, and inclusive that Eritreanism was colonial creation, its people were commonly oppressed/colonized, and hence aspired to invent or imagine a collective independence or autonomy of colonially suffered people of Eritrea.

Moreover, the federation was result of international politico-legal processes of two major commissions established with a stated objective of “to gather information and to elicit the desires and wishes of the people in regard to the country’s future” (Abdulkader, 2013): *Four power commission and five member nation commission* in 1947 and 1949, respectively.

The first commission failed to provide solution, and it transferred the case to the United Nations General Assembly in 1949. The United Nations then sent a commission composed of five member nations (Burma, Guatemala, Norway, Pakistan and South Africa) to Eritrea in order to gather information and to elicit the desires and wishes of the people in regard to the country’s future. The mission, who stayed in Eritrea for two months (from 9 February to 9 April 1950) also failed to reach a common agreement to be presented to the General Assembly. Thus, the “General Assembly had to cast its vote over four proposals: First, Eritrea to be annexed to Ethiopia; second, Eritrea to be given independence status; third, the establishment of a trusteeship of the UN under Italian administration or another Western power; fourth, the partition of the territory between Ethiopia and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan” (Abdulkader, 2013).

The members of the UN commission did not come with a single conclusion. The delegates of Norway, Burma and South Africa proposed that “Eritrea should be a self-governing unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown” (Abdulkader, 2013), while the Pakistani and Guatemalan delegations argued “that due to the large Muslim population and the important Italian minority, Eritrea should first become independent under a Council of Trustees and should decide about its future after a period of ten years” (Ibid: 1394).

The United Nations General Assembly with support of the USA, France and the Soviet Union adopted the majority suggestion of the Commission in 1952 while British supported the partition plan of Eritrea in to Sudan and Ethiopia, as follows, “Muslim tribal areas adjoining to

²the 1952UN Federal Constitution on Eritrea titled “*Shaping a People’s Destiny: the Story of Eritrea and the United Nations*” published by United Nations Department of Public Information

the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan should be included in that country. The central Christian highlands with the port of Massawa and the Semhar and the Saho tribes should form part of a united Tigray state or province (...). The Danakil country with Assab should be assigned unconditionally to the Emperor" (Abdulkader, 2013).

The British position was based on the recommendation of Longrigg (1945:3), British military administrator of Eritrea, contended that Eritrea possesses "none of the qualities of geographical or cultural singleness which should entitle it to be a unit of territory or of government". And that "had the Italians not colonized Eritrea, which Eritrea would be partly, as always before, the ill-governed or non-governed northernmost province of Ethiopia" (*Ibid*). He further asserted that Eritreans were more resemble with Sudanese and Ethiopian counterparts than each other's. This idea also shared by Mensour (2002) in discussing the post-1946 intra-Eritrean divisions in framing the future Eritrea as "...the historical and cultural bondage of most Eritrean Abyssinians with the other part of historical Abyssinia was still strong. Sixty years of different socio-economic transformations had not been enough to cut or weaken the umbilical cord".

One major result of the federation, however, was the internationalization of the Eritrean crisis of identity formation, on one hand, and elevation of Eritrean consciousness as the federation gave them an autonomous status that had never been achieved before (Meressa, 2013, 2010). The federation also recognized that the existential bipolar natures of the Muslim/Christian, lowland /highland division of Eritrean politics which was reflected through equal representations of Muslim and Christian in the parliament and other governance structures.

More importantly, Arabic and Tigrigna were entitled equal official language status, and still remain as symbols of inclusion or exclusion (*Ibid*).

Militant Identity invention and territorial Independence

There is no common ground on the basic causes of the Eritrean armed liberation struggle that lasted for three decades. This part will assess the basic reasons that led the Eritreans to armed struggle, the characteristic features of militant nationalism, and finally to make a nexus on how the liberation based identity formation affected the post-independence Eritrean national security.

Following the consistent incursion of the Ethiopian government and the observable weakness of the federation, the Eritreans began to establish an underground cell called "Haraka al-Tahrir al-Eritrea" (Arabic for 'Party of seven member') or "Mahber Shewuata" in 1958 that evolved into Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) to pursue its goals "politically and diplomatically" (Tekeste, 1997). The major purpose of the ELM was "protecting the collapse of the federation, and its

members were composed of both Muslims and Christians who had sympathy for the federation" (*Ibid*).

When the Emperor abrogated the federal arrangement in 1962, many Christian Eritreans, just like their Muslim counterparts, felt that the regime was acting against their core interests as a form of colonial subjugation which was not different than from that of Italian or British colonialism (Sherman, 1980).

According to Gebru (2009), Mesfine (1988), and Tekeste (1987, 1997), Eritrean nationalism was based on grievances as a reaction to the enduring character of the Ethiopian state that caused the loss of Eritrea's regional autonomy. Sherman (1980) also argued that the Eritrean grievances towards the Ethiopian state was traced back to the 19th century Italo-Ethiopian agreements and war including Wuchale treaty 1889, battle of Adwa 1896, and Addis Ababa treaty 1896, and culminated in the abrogation of the federation as well as the subsequent harsh treatments of Eritreans by the Ethiopian governments.

After a failed two decade, post-colonial, search for an all-Eritrean identity formation and destiny determination, international community's effort to provide a lasting solution to the Eritrean problem, and the failure of emperor Haile Selassie either to maintain the federation until the unionist group got hegemony or convince the secessionist groups that the emperor and Ethiopian state was not anti-Islamist as it was stated, the lowland Eritrean started one of the longest armed struggle in Africa to invent a militant nationalist identity, that was not the case of Eritrean history of resistance before, in September 1, 1961 at Barka, by Idris Awate.

Eritrean liberation front, Islamic nationalism, and the future of Eritrea

The armed struggle for independence started in 1961 by Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) on the eve of the abrogation of the federation 1962. It was the continuation of the Muslim dissatisfaction with the federation because they used it as transitional instrument to their stated end; *independence*. The abrogation of the federation was thus pretext and indeed did not mobilize all Eritreans including the larger segments of Christian highlanders who lately joined it due to the failures of Ethiopian government to peacefully contain the highlanders (Mesfine, 1988).

The ELF, however, was criticized for its layering of Islamic nationalism over colonial thought while all Christian and Muslim Eritreans share the history of commonly colonized people. According to Akinola (2007), "the ELF lacked a clear ideological line and a political program that could safeguard the interests of the oppressed majority of Eritreans".

Instead, "through its organizational structure and its style of work the ELF fostered religious antagonism, and fanned backward differences and sentiments, of a regional and ethnic nature" (*Ibid*). This indeed negatively contributed

to the civil war and to the post independent “mutually exclusive and apolitical” Eritrean system (*Ibid*: 50).

In its ideology orientation, ELF was “pan-Arabism-Muslim revolutionary movement fighting to free Eritrea’s Muslims from persecution and domination by the local Christian population” (Saideman et al., 2005). According to the ELF’s National Revolutionary Vanguard of the Eritrean people posted in 1978 cited in Sherman (1980), the ELF’s relation with the Arab nations was:

... not an emotional or superficial, but militant, organic, historical, and cultural one based on bonds of the joint destiny, mutual and common interests, and solidarity in the face of menace and aggression.... The liberation of the Eritrean people is interrelated to the security of Arab nation.

The layering of Muslim communal identity over territorial identity secured for the ELF much-needed outside assistance from radical Arab states such as Syria, Libya, South Yemen, and Iraq—assistance that strengthened both internal and external perceptions of the group as an Arab-Islamic organization (*Ibid*). To the extent ELF declared its revolution as “the strike of the red Arab revolution in the black continent” (*Ibid*).

In its internal affairs, the ELF relied on the petty bourgeoisie orientation, and rejected the notion of a working-class vanguard (*Ibid*). Second difference was on the issue of “self-reliance”. The ELF has always relied on external material support. It strongly contended that a colonial and semi colonial nation “could not solve their internal and external problems on their own by following the principle of self-reliance” which is one of the EPLF’s unique rule (*Ibid*). The third differences was the economic orientation of the revolution. While EPLF was committed to a socialist path, the ELF has advocated a “non-capitalist road to development”. The ELF believed that the Eritrean society being part of the third world has to follow the non-capitalist road to development following opportunistic alliances with the capitalist and non-capitalist states (*Ibid*).

Generally, the sectarian policy of ELF and divisions within it based on religion, region and personal interests not only led to civil wars that ultimately drove out ELF from the armed struggle, but also aborted the democratic political culture of the liberation struggle (Gebru, 2009) and this also negatively affected the subsequent struggle to be controlled, mobilized and strongly xenophobic to democratic differences within the parties.

Eritrean people’s liberation front and territorial nationalism

Saideman et al. (2005) defined territorial nationalism as “a bond based on common residence within a particular region that is distinct from the core”. He further argued that “homeland identity is significant because

secessionists need first and foremost a territory they can claim as their own before they can legitimately call for territorial self-determination (*Ibid*). Establishing a territorial base is probably the most important strategic consideration for a movement’s organizer in order to distinguish itself from the host state and legitimize the “self” in need of “determination” in the eyes of both domestic and international audiences (*Ibid*).

In the selection of identity base for liberation struggle, Saideman underlined the importance of the ethnic compositions of the claimed territory. Accordingly, “if the territory is dominated by a single ethnic group, a salient territorial identity is less important for obtaining the support of its inhabitants” (*Ibid*: 29). This is particularly true of irredentist groups. For them, it is less important to establish a separate territorial identity than it is to establish a communal linkage with their homeland. Conversely, “if the territory is ethnically heterogeneous, a salient territorial identity is absolutely vital” (*Ibid*).

The EPLF was realistic in out maneuvering its predecessor by redefining the territorial conception of Eritrean nationalism over the communal (sectarian) conception of the ELF. Following the internal leadership crisis of ELF it was clear that sectarian based liberation struggle could not fit to define the objective causes of the Eritrean problems (Antonio, 2002). Indeed, the crisis paved the way to the emergence of new non-sectarian liberation front (EPLF) and re-conception of Eritrean nationalism based on territorial identity of the commonly colonized Eritrean people (Connell, 2001; Saideman et al, 2005).

The EPLF ultimately prevailed over the ELF for several interrelated reasons. *First*, the EPLF, in its 1971 manifesto “Our Struggle and Its Goals” (Nehnan, 1971), rejected the ELF’s communal identification, and self-consciously propagated a nonsectarian, territorial Eritrean identity that could accommodate everyone who supported independence (Connell, 2001 and 2005). As a result, EPLF abandoned the divisive zonal system, adopting a single command structure that reflected its emphasis on building national unity (Saideman et al., 2005; Sherman, 1980).

Second, the EPLF had layered an ideological identity onto its territorial identity. Its leadership was committed to social revolution as part of the liberation struggle, and it adopted a selective, pragmatic Marxist philosophy of conducting “revolution before unity”-emphasizing the principle of uncompromising struggle against Ethiopian state (Henze, 1985).

To this end, EPLF in its national democratic revolution of 1977 “calls for the establishment of a solid worker – peasant alliance and the formation of a broad National United Front under the firm leadership of a proletariat party that can successfully rally all patriotic elements against the common enemy of colonial aggression” (Sherman, 1980). Its lack of outside assistance and the negative implications of aid to the ELF’s crisis due to the

divisive conditionality of the Arab supports gave rise to the EPLF's emphasis on self-reliance in all aspects including political, military, and economy and inward-oriented development, that still remains the unique feature of the post-independent government of Eritrea (*Ibid*).

With regard to the evolution of EPLF's colonial thesis based territorial nationalism, there are still contending views, on one hand there are groups who argued that Eritrean identity as pre-existing realities that traces back to Axumit civilization (Bereket, 2010). On the other hand, groups included (Akinola, 2007; Clapham, 2000; Gebru, 2009; Mesfine, 1988; Tekeste, 1997) argued that Eritrean nationalism is a post-1960s phenomenon. Accordingly, Eritrean nationalism is neither the European type, i.e. nation as pre-requisite for statehood, nor African type based on common resistance to colonialism which was non-existent in colonial history of Eritrean. The second group contended that Eritrean nationalism not colonial but grievance based nationalism aggravated by consistent failures and crisis, and repressive means of the Ethiopian state.

In dating the origin of Eritrean nationalism, Mesfine denounced the pre-existing Eritrean nationalism, and claimed as of the post-1974 basically due to the Ethiopian revolution and its failure to manage the Eritrean problems. the growing influence of Christian elements in the field increased to unprecedented pace only after the Dergue regime's major military offensives including urban terror against Eritrean youth had a transformative quality on the Eritrean nationalist politics (Mesfine, 1988).

Cognizant of this, the EPLF effectively utilized the party's democratic centralism modeled on the Chinese Maoist principle. According to Mesfine (1988), in its mobilization and galvanization of the Eritrean people into a uniform, disciple, mobilized people who rally around a common cause; independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia, the EPLF "engaged in controlled social reforms from above in areas of land reform and gender issues". More importantly, through its internal security mechanism - "Halawa Sewura"³, "- Defender of the Revolution - EPLF was able to create a hierarchical and disciplined military organization of formidable historical significance.

The EPLF's effective mobilization of the Eritrean people to stick to the established cause was better summarized by Gebru (2009:65) as:

The techniques of organization, mobilization, propaganda, and combat were all based on Mao's principles of protracted revolutionary war. The Eritrean revolutionaries invented nothing, but they were excellent improvisers.... The EPLF organized its members and supporters vertically and horizontally, its vertical set up involved the regular and irregular fighters, and it stretched down ward through several levels to the villages, where the cadres created zonal administration and mass association to support the Eritrean People's Liberation Army (EPLA).

³ Tigrigna for EPLF's Intelligence organization, Defender of the Revolution

The party used to mobilize and organize the people through "combinations of promises, mostly land reform and focused on terror" (*Ibid*). Connell (2005) also argued that the repressive, secretive and arbitrary exercise of absolute power to make everyone in line with the discipline, traced back to the 1970s and 1980s. From that time onwards the EPLF was organized and led from within by a clandestine, Marxist core, chaired by Isaias Afwerki and strongly influenced by contemporary Maoist political currents – the Eritrean People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP).

Connell (2005) argument further strengthened by Gebru (2006) that EPLF "was more tightly and rigidly organized than its predecessor and used two techniques to ensure conformity, discipline and order: the first one criticism and self-criticism locally known as "gimgema", and the second instrument was coercion implemented by the "Halawa Sewura"-Defender of the Revolution" (*Ibid*: 66-67).

According to the first instrument, the party made sure that its fighters are discipline requesting them correct their defects via self-criticism if not get them criticized by other members. According to Gebru (2006), the 'gimgema'⁴ an instrument of control to "prevent mistakes, and cultivate openness, trust and comradeship", on one hand, it encourages "secrecy, hypocrisy, insincerity, self-censorship, and docility for fear of ridicule and humiliation in public sessions" on the other hand (*Ibid*: 66).

The second instrument was: 'coercion' implemented by the so called "Halawa Sewura" (*Ibid*: 67). The very function of the Halawa Sewura was "to protect the revolution from internal subversion and external infiltration" (*Ibid*), and it used written and unwritten codes to intimidate the targets so as to make them in line with the discipline. The most common instruments utilized by the party were "isolations and public humiliation" (*Ibid*). The degree of punishment varies from "mild warning, counseling, or reprimand to imprisonment in undisclosed isolated locations or hard labor including digging salt on the Red sea coast. The fate of the more defiant or unrepentant could be torture or liquidation" (*Ibid*).

However, such repressive controlling mechanisms were not only used to punish the ordinary fighters, EPLF like its predecessor used merciless mechanism to eliminate political and military figures who were considered to challenge to the ruling clique in particular and the party in general. The most noticed mechanism was known as "the Menkae"⁵ movement" -opposing group to the ruling clique came from the educated fighters who criticized the EPLF

⁴ Tigrigna for Criticism and Self-criticism

⁵ After the Tigrinya word for bat, and derived from the opposition's habit of mobilizing support through discussions and propaganda conducted with fighters at night (Pool, 1990:76). On every occasion, in every valley and hill-top, at the highest pitch of their voices they began spreading news that there was no democracy and the rights of the freedom fighters were violated (*Ibid*). According to Medhanie cited in Mekonen (2008:42), in the Eritrean Tigrinya/highland tradition, a bat symbolizes dishonesty. Remarkably, the Tigrinya word 'menkae' also stands for 'left,' denoting at the same time left wing conservatism.

leadership as backward and strived for scientific socialism as opposed to a national democratic revolution (Connell, 2005; Pool, 1990).

The challenge to the EPLF's controlled and undemocratic nature by the menkae resulted in summary execution of all members of the menkae movement in the mid-1970s, and the establishment of the Halawa Sewura – as defender of the revolution from internal division and external incursion (Mekonen, 2008). The repression of the menkae movement was also followed by the suppression of another opposition group from within the EPLF, known as the “Yemin” or rightist opposition” (*Ibid*: 44), with feudal and regionalist tendencies.

All the aforementioned structural traumas of intra-Eritrean conflicts and the subsequent repressive mechanism of eliminating opponent groups used by the liberation movements had resulted in, on one hand, the politics of exclusion and monopolization that turned the liberation war to be undemocratic which in turn has negative implications to the post-independent nation-building project. On the other hand, the recurrent pre- and post-independence Eritrean problems indicated that Eritrean nationalism was not established by an all-inclusive Eritrean consensus and agreements from the very beginning.

Externally, the EPLF's nationalism was based on grievances (Medhane, 1999) and establishment of an ever existing significant enmity of Ethiopia in particular, the international community in general. With regard to Ethiopia, EPLF defined it as an African colonizer (imperialist) (Nehnan, 1971). The grievance based nationalism against Ethiopia was framed, first, by denouncing Eritrea-Ethiopian ties: in the Nehnan (1971). Eritrea was defined as a separate unit politically, economically, socially and historically created by Italian colonialism.

Second, it considered Eritreans as betrayed people (Sherman, 1980) by Ethiopia due to Menelik's agreement with Italy from Wuchale to Addis Ababa treaties; the abrogation of the federation (1952 to 62); and the repressive military solutions of the Dergue regime. The failures of the Ethiopian governments further supported the nationalist movements to rally the Eritrean people against Ethiopian state. However, the grievance based nationalism has negative implication to the future Eritrean state, that is, the continuity of Eritrean nationalism and state always depend on either weak Ethiopian state, or strong but undemocratic state towards the Eritrean (Meressa, 2010).

In addition to the Ethiopian factor, the EPLF developed a xenophobic attitude towards the international community by inventing the doctrine of self-reliance. The policy of self-reliance stated that the support from international community has negative and divisive role to the Eritrean nationalism. EPLF also viewed the international community as betraying the Eritrean people at different historical realities in supporting the Ethiopian state following the Italian colonialism by imposing federation, the failure of the OAU and great powers to

prevent Haile Selassie's abrogation of the federation and to support their national armed liberation struggle. Therefore, the continuity of the intra-Eritrean relations and their national security is strongly based on the activities of external actors.

Beyond territorial independence: One People-one heart, post-colonial african nation-building syndrome

Robert Kaplan in the April 2003 Atlantic Monthly edition entitled “a Tale of Two Colonies” characterized Eritrea as “the newly independent, sleepily calm, and remarkably stable state”. He further argued that the country has achieved “a degree of non-coercive social discipline and efficiency enviable in the developing world and particularly in Africa”.

According to Kaplan Eritrea has achieved such a non-coercive social function “by ignoring the West's advice on democracy and development, by cultivating a sometimes obsessive and narcissistic dislike of its neighbors, and by not demobilizing its vast army, built up during a thirty-year conflict with Ethiopia...” (*Ibid*). Hence, Eritrea's clarified sense of nationhood is rare in a world of nation-states rent by tribalism and globalization (*Ibid*). However, Kaplan in the same edition put an opposite statement of President Isaias on the existing realities of Eritrea “...we have not yet institutionalized social discipline, so the possibility of chaos is still here. Remember, we have nine language groups and two religions...therefore we will have to manage the creation of political parties, so that they don't become means of religious and ethnic division, like in Ivory Coast or Nigeria” (*Ibid*).

The post-independence Eritrean nation-building is the continuity of the EPLF's controlled national mobilization of the armed struggle. The armed struggle that lasted three decades was effective in mobilizing all Eritreans all over the world, to use Kaplan's description as “an almost Maoist degree of mobilization and an almost Albanian degree of xenophobia” (2003:13), either willingly convinced by the stated cause: liberation of Eritrea, or coerced through the security apparatus of the EPLF mainly the Halawa Sewura (Gebru, 2009). The Eritrean people therefore made a remarkable history in rallying and supporting the armed struggle under the principle “Hade Hizbi-Hade Libi” (one-people, one heart), and finally achieved their “*first vision: independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia*” (Berhane, 2006).

The unity that was demonstrated during the armed struggle to achieve the first vision was also expected and made to be the pillar in achieving the “*Second Vision; to radically transform Eritrea to the Singapore of Africa*” (*Ibid*). The success of the second vision was stated to base on “national unity and self-reliance” as stated in the preamble of the unimplemented Eritrean constitution of 1997 while ‘sub national identity’ that promote any specific ethnicity and /or religion were strongly condemned (*Ibid*: 34).

Bereket (2010) and Kaplan (2003) argued that the post-independent nation building was an outgrowing of the liberation conception of Eritrean nationalism as “the ‘melting pot’ that united the disparate groups making up the nation and mobilized them against an alien occupying army, eventually leading to the country’s independence” through the process of “social engineering” (Berhane, 2006) of the multi ethnic Eritrean people.

However, the post-independence nation- building policy from above under the principle of ‘one people, one heart’ was criticized and considered challenging to the new state of Eritrea to consolidate a single national identity being none of the Eritrean ethnic groups are unique to it but rather Eritrea is characterized by an all-round trans-border community ties (Berhane, 2006; Ibrahim, 2010) which in turn makes Eritrea an all-round “part nation state”. This further indicated that the nation-building process not only depended on war induced unity but also on the acts of Eritrea’s significant other (Ethiopia and Sudan) as one defining feature of nation-state of becoming (Gebru, 2006; Medhane, 1999). An attempt to build a single national identity out of an all-round trans-border community ties, therefore, forced the government of Eritrea to frame contradictory policies which resulted in conflictual relationship with its neighbours.

According to Gebru (2006) Eritrea’s conflictual relations with its neighbours emanated basically from the aspirations of the leadership to forge a single Eritrean national identity within a short period of time taking the triumphant militant nationalism and the war induced mobilization leaping over the arduous and protracted paths of state formation neglecting the pre-independence identity conflicts among Eritreans. Gebru (2006) argument on the difficult nature of nation-building and the ambitious project of the new state Eritrean is further supported by Bundegaard’s statement as:

The Eritrean leadership has increasingly found itself in the hot water of state-making and nation-building “in a hurry”. While state sovereignty may be attained under dramatic circumstances, played out on the stage of world history, the craft of state-making and nation-building is often of a less heroic and even dull, bureaucratic nature (2004).

Gebru (2006) further went on to substantiate his argument that the leadership strategy was “conflicting and self-defeating, that is, fanning conflicts with neighbouring states in order to forge a strong Eritrean identity ,and tapping the resources and markets of neighbouring countries with the aim of achieving miraculous economic development strategies”(*Ibid*:11). This policy was aggravated by “the making Eritrean and nurturing Eritreanness as it demands self- definition and boundary delimitation which is inherently contrasts and needs relevant other” (*Ibid*: 57).

In line with the arguments, Berhane (2006) argued that the reason for the conflictual policies of the government of Eritrea was to differentiate Eritrea’s ethnic groups from

their counterparts in the neighbouring countries by involving them in wars to sever the ethnic ties with Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan ,and Yemen and ultimately to promote national unity.

Moreover, the ideal of nation-building from above is also contested and considered as an ambitious policy failing to grasp the internal objective realities of Eritrean social makeup, geopolitical, religious, and emotional values and differences (Amanuel, 2010) that has been developed through different historical realities(*Ibid*; Ibrahim, 2010).

Moreover, the continuation of the war induced militant policy to the peace time nation building is viewed as unrealistic and exclusionist as it failed to reconcile the pre-independence Eritrean divisions and consequence of the civil wars .The nation building policy thus resulted in the “proliferation of ‘loser complexes’ (Mekonen, 2008) and “mistrust” (Amanuel, 2010) among non-EPLF nationalists.

The growing politics of exclusion between the highlands and lowlands, Christian and Muslim Eritreans became visible and burning issues to delegitimize the principle of one-people, one heart following the Ethiopia -Eritrean war of 1998 to 2000. Moreover, the war ended up the hopes for political inclusion, reconciliation and multi-partism when the government declared national security as paramount priority (Yemane Gebremeskel in an interview with IRIN, 2004).

Connell (2003) characterized the postwar trajectory of Eritrea as familiar to “crisis of the postcolonial African state and the corruption of the political process” defined by the concentration of power within the executive branch of government, the marginalization of nominally independent parliaments and judiciaries, the imprisonment or exile of vocal critics, the sharp restriction of independent media and autonomous civil society institutions, the outlawing of rival political parties. The war therefore revitalized the historical division as a means to pressure and voices their grievances against political exclusion and injustices particularly by the Muslim lowlanders.

The Muslim lowlanders were also frustrated by post-independent political developments and constitutional making process, though it remains unimplemented, particularly their concern on the failure of the constitution to incorporate Arabic as an official language which is considered not only as medium communication but also symbol of liberation and political inclusion (Ibrahim, 2010; Mensour, 2010).

The Muslim also negatively responded to the replacement of ethno- religious territorial administrative identities of the pre-1991 that reflects the collective identity of the people for generations by the new geographic administration into northern, southern, western, eastern and central administrative units as part of the nation-building from above (Amanuel, 2010). The government explained the abolition of the historic names as part of the new nation building policy to defuse the ethnic and sub-regional sentiments (Bereket, 2010).

The Muslims however viewed the new geographic

division as part of the continuous incursion and eventual confiscation of their historical land by the highlanders in the name of resettlement (Amanuel, 2009; Ibrahim, 2010; Mensour, 2002). They further contend that the program of forcible settlement of highlanders in the lowlands is part of a long-term strategy of a massive resettlement of highlanders under the policy of demographic engineering on lands that should be reserved for lowlanders (Bereket, 2010; Tekeste, 1997).

In response to those historically evolved grievances and sense of exclusion, the Muslim lowlanders tend to negate the existing state of Eritrea (*Hadas Eritrea-new Eritrea*) and the principle of 'one-people, one-heart' as a cover-up to the legitimization of the Christian highlander domination. Amanuel (2010) provided popular proverbs of the lowlanders used to express their dissatisfaction with the post independent state of Eritrea:

"I am not seeing my image in the mirror of Hadas Eritrea".

In addition to this, there is also another proverb that indicate the extent of political exclusion and lowlanders attitude towards the national currency (*Nakfa*⁶) and the recognition of the camel on the currency as symbols of resistance: "the camel is in and the owner is out" (*Ibid*).

Even though the lowlanders expressed their grievances and viewed the state of Eritrea as dominated by the Christian highlanders, the later groups are not to accept the concerns of the former. The highlanders too are frustrating by the government's repressive measures mainly following the Ethiopia-Eritrean war and they defend the accusation of the lowlanders -that the state of Eritrea is Christian and the government is pro-Christian, being the government is becoming power of injustice for all (Bereket, 2010).

Leadership behavior and the emergence of police state

The current institutional decadence and totalitarian governance in Eritrea can be viewed as part and parcel of Eritrea's long march to independence and the way the nationalist conception and liberation struggle was framed. According to Tronvoll (2009) the 'seeds of dictatorship' in Eritrea were sown already at the embryonic stage of the EPLF when it faced an internal dissent movement from the leftist intelligential groups known as *menkae*. The internal rift later resulted in the elimination of the *menkae* accusing them of "individualism", "subjectism", and "destructive ultra-leftism" (Gebru, 2009).

⁶ Nakfa is the military and political base of the EPLF during the armed struggle. It is known in the history of Eritrean liberation struggle as symbol of resistance, heroism, determination of the Eritrean guerrilla fighters in their struggle against the Dergue regime of Ethiopia. It was the stronghold of EPLF where they defeat the Dergue's an all-inclusive military campaign known as "the red star campaign" in cooperation with the TPLF. The Eritrean national currency thus named after the place Nakfa.

According to Gebru (2009), the emergence and the elimination of the *menkae* subsequently exacerbated the politics of mistrust and fear, and aborted the political culture of rational dialogue and compromise (*Ibid*). Indeed he further argued that "the incidents have inaugurated instead a political culture of coerced consensus clocked in the trappings of national salvation and laid the foundation of cultism surrounding the much vaunted charisma of Isaias" (*Ibid*). The ultimate result was thus the instrumentalization of violence and arbitrary detention without due process as major means of dealing with internal dissent (Tronvoll, 2009).

Externally, the post-independence Eritrean leadership has been increasingly preoccupied with nation-building strategies to make Eritrea as Tiger of the Horn of Africa within a short period of time guided by the traditional principle of "war makes state" (Tilly, 1985) as Eritrea was the only example in post-colonial Africa that established through protracted war (Clapham, 2000).

Being Eritrea was to face Ayoob's Security Predicament of the Third world state of "late entry to the state-making project, and the simultaneous and contingent natures of the nation-building" (1995) with its neighbours, the leadership framed the nation-building strategies from above under the principle of "*Hade-Hizbi, Hade-Libi*" to continuously project the war induced mobilization through securitization of every sector, over-politicization of the nation-building and militarization of the young generation through national service (Bundegaard, 2004) which is too big and expensive for a war-torn small and young state of Eritrea .

National service and militarization of national security

The national military service, as one major component of nation-building, was introduced with the objectives as stated in the 1995 National Service Proclamation of Article5:

to establish of a strong defense force ;to preserve and entrust future generations the courage, resoluteness heroic episodes shown, in the armed struggle by our people in the past thirty years; to create a new generation characterized by love of work, discipline, ready to participate and serve in reconstruction of the nation; to develop and enforce the economy of the nation by investing in development work our people as a potential wealth; to develop professional capacity and physical fitness by giving regular military training and continuous practice to participants in training Centers; and to foster national unity among our people by eliminating sub-national feelings.

Taking into account that the state of Eritrea was born out of war, the national military service was primary aimed at ensuring the inter-generation transition between'

Yika'alo⁷ and 'Warsay'⁸ which in turn to accelerate the "Eritreanization of the nation building" (Connell, 2001) to fit the founding pillar of self-reliance similar to the armed struggle so that indoctrination and militarization of the new generation under the revolutionary slogan:

"An army without a revolutionary ideology is like a man without a brain. An army without a brain can never defeat the enemy" (*Ibid*).

According to national service proclamation of 1995, thus all Eritrean citizens aged 18 to 40 have the duty to fulfill the "Active National Service" of six month regular military training given at a base and the participation to a twelve consecutive months of active national service and development programs under the Army Forces for a total service of 18 months (Chapter- II, article 8).

In post-independent Eritrea, *Sawa*, the center of post-independence Eritrea's military training, is considered as the symbol of inter-generation transition (between Yikaalo and Warsay), nation-building and melting pot of collective identity of the existing diversity to the new generation-Warsay; as *Nakfa*-revolutionary base of armed struggle, was the symbol of resistance, heroism, protracted war and independence accomplished by the old generation-Yikaalo. The end result of the militarization and securitization was therefore a huge military buildup and militarization (both in human and material).

The militarization together with the longest protracted liberation war aggravated the superiority and the invincibility of the Eritrean army. This indeed contributed to conflictual policy towards all its neighbors based on border, religion, economy as well as its hegemonic and leadership tendency in the region. According to this study, Eritrea's all round conflicts with its neighbours seems to test the success of military indoctrination and transition to the new generation -Warsay under the supervision of the old generation-Yikaalo ultimately to redefine the Horn of Africa's power structure in particular ,and Africa in general.

According to Connell (2001) "the Eritrean leadership was obsessed with the problems of miscalculations about their reputation they had cultivated for years of being the best fighting forces in Africa as they were the longest guerrilla fighters". In the post independent period they persisted in their belief of having disciplined military that can easily bully the neighbouring countries, and therefore could be changed into economic power (Clapham, 2000; Connell, 2003; Gebru, 2009; Gebru, 2006).

Eritrea 's last war; Ethiopia-Eritrea war 1998 to 2000, however, resulted in a negative repercussions to its national security as it signified the failure of the

invincibility of the Eritrean army, the inter-generation transition, and negative implications to the historical intra-Eritrean divisive factors. Furthermore , the war forced the leadership to redefine new policies: internally the government issued national emergency with tight control in order to contain internal problems signaling that the state would be swallowed by its neighbours mainly Ethiopia; externally the state also engaged in proxy wars in order to contain the internal challenges, and to maintain its external power balance.

Even if the Eritrea's direct war making capacity is deterred, it continues to engage in proxy wars by supporting Islamic groups in order to contain the internal divisive factors and to continue regional power projection. However, this further aggravated Eritrea's isolation from regional and international actors.

Post-Ethiopia-Eritrea war: National security in structural crisis

Kaplan (2003) in his comparative analysis of Yemen and Eritrea argued that "Eritrea has achieved a degree of non-coercive social function by ignoring the West's advice on democracy and development, by cultivating a sometimes obsessive and narcissistic dislike of its neighbors, and by not demobilizing its vast army, built up during a thirty-year conflict with Ethiopia..., hence,...Eritrea's clarified sense of nationhood is rare in a world of nation-states rent by tribalism and globalization (*Ibid*).

Conversely, Connell (2003) characterized the trajectory of the post-independent Eritrean state as a familiar path of the "crisis of the postcolonial African state" and concluded that "the corruption of the political process ...a giant step backward for the objectives, the values, and the vision...Eritrea was (and remains) a contradictory reality..."

There is a common agreement that Eritrean national security and the leadership acting behaviour was radically relapsed to one of the most totalitarian state following the Ethiopia-Eritrean war of 1998to 2000.The worst impact of the war was the erosion of leadership legitimacy and invincibility of President Isaias from with the party and the critical Eritrean mass, particularly from the top political figures and the academician. The first criticism to the President's leadership inability came from the intellectuals known as "the G-13" and their petition manifesto known as "the Berlin-Manifesto" (Bereket, 2010).

In the first part of the petition entitled "a hard-Won independence was nearly lost" (2000) criticised the conduct of state both domestic and foreign affairs, and about the nature and style of the leadership in the post-independence period.The manifesto also criticized the policy of self-reliance as senseless arrogance. Finally they expressed their frustrations on the concentration of power in the hand of the President and the eventual one-man leadership.

⁷ Tigrigna for "able". It refers to the guerrilla generation of Eritrea who achieved the first Eritrean vision: independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia. It mainly refers to the EPLF fighters. It is also called "the Nakfa" generation.

⁸ Tigrigna for "heir". It refers to the post-independence Eritrean generation who is expected to ensure the second Eritrean vision: making Eritrea the Singapore of Africa. It is also called "the Sawa" generation.

The Ethiopia-Eritrea war ended-up Eritrea's military invincibility and weakened the leadership's arrogance of power projection and instigating instability against its neighbours. Economically, the war ended up Eritrea's vision of "*Singaporization*"- to "*be Horn of Africa Industrial Houses*" (Gebru, 2006). The port-based national economy (Massawa and Assab) lost its comparative and competitive advantage to Djibouti for decades to come, and the policy of "self-reliance" proved to be a structural failure to a poor war torn state in era globalization. Indeed, the war made Eritrea a contained and isolated state in era of global interdependence.

Since 1998 Eritrea government is at unwinnable hot and cold wars with its neighbours and international community, harboring proxy warriors via supporting terrorist groups like Al- Shabab. Torture and imprisonment of its citizens are aired as endemic identity of the regime; the critical young generation is either in the military trenches indefinitely or fleeing the state as a result it remains with under and over aged people, no constitution, no parliament, no judiciary, no election, no functioning institution (Yosief, 2013).

Eritrea is called the North Korea of Africa that makes it functionally 'failing' state to use Yosief Gebrehiwot expression that Eritrea is in the process of Somalization, hence potentially a "failed state" in the war hotbed region of the Horn of Africa. The process of Somalization of the Eritrean state is reaffirmed by President Isaias Afewerki in his New Year (January 1, 2015) address to nation that in the past fifteen years Eritrea was under national state of emergency due to the declared war from Ethiopia, and political and diplomatic sanction by the USA led UN security council as result Eritrean development is paralyzed, it loses its young labor forces due to the externally induced migration and the remaining citizens are forced to stay in military trenches indefinitely. In generally Eritrea is in "Hostage and freezing".

CONCLUSION

The young and small war born state of Eritrea is facing all-round national security predicaments from its inception. The national security crises are the results of complex historical evolutions and protracted conflicts both against external actors and among the Eritrean themselves. The national security crises are basically centered on the lack of agreed consensus among the Eritreans themselves on the idea of Eritrean state and the feature of Eritreanism. This is also related to the existential division of the people of Eritrea into highland/lowland, Christian/Muslim as the prior defining features of Eritrean politics. These divergent outlooks are the results of historical evolutions that traces back to the European colonialism, federation with Ethiopia and armed liberation struggle. The nature of national mobilization during the armed struggle has also its own contribution to the current challenges as it was based on both internal as

well as external enmity.

Moreover, the post-independence nation-building from above under the principle of "one people, one heart", which is the continuation of the armed struggle, also have grave challenge as it failed to integrate the existential realities of Eritrean multi-ethnic societies and their historical dichotomies. The nation-building strategy also failed to take into account the basic feature Eritrea's an all-round "part-nation-state". Hence its attempt to forge a single national identity through melting down diversity and erecting artificial borders with its neighbours through war encouraged by the invincibility of the guerrilla army based on the traditional national security principles "war makes state" and militarization as guarantees to defeat external threats strongly affected the very idea of national security. Hence, the conflictual relation with its neighbours and exclusionist internal policies ultimately results in grave national security crisis and emergence of totalitarian leadership and police state.

The post-2001 Eritrea is repeatedly viewed as North Korea of Africa: young and small state with arrogantly isolationist foreign policy that could not burden totalitarian police state, that the port-based national economy (Massawa and Assab) lost its comparative and competitive advantage to Djibouti for decades to come, and the policy of "self-reliance" proved to be a structural failure to a poor war torn state in era globalization, that the critical young generation is leaving the state and the remaining population is in a military uniform waiting for an imaginary enemy, that all the critical state institutions are decayed, the only state with no constitution, that the core security apparatus are in crisis that the regime is relying on forces recruited from neighbouring states, like Democratic Movement for Liberation of Tigray.

In general, Eritrea is in the process of becoming second Somalia in a region where fragile states is pervasive, and terrorism is becoming epidemic , and the neighboring states mainly Ethiopia should thus develop a road map to contain the worst case scenario: state collapse on the red sea.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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