

Twenty Years of Independence Series –No. 7

Eritrea: The Land of Determination, Perseverance, and Sacrifice

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“The Eritrean war of liberation is unique among African movements the Eritrean revolution has already transformed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and brought political and social betterment to a degree rare anywhere in the world.”-- Roy Pateman

According to the predictions of the so-called western political observers, analysts, and thinkers, Eritrea was not supposed to be independent. Nevertheless, against all odds, and in spite of myriads of hardships, Eritrea, thanks to its determination, perseverance and sacrifice became independent on 24 May 1991. In May of 1993, after its successful referendum (where 99.8% of its people voted for independence) Eritrea took its previously denied place in the assembly of nations. Grudgingly, some nations accepted the fait a compli of Eritrean independence!

After being politically, economically, and socially oppressed and subjugated for centuries by the Turks, Egyptian, Italians, British, and the Ethiopians, the people of Eritrea, in September 1st 1961, started an armed struggle to liberate their country. They wanted to be the champions of their own future and destiny. The armed struggle continued until 1991. Thirty years of tenacity, dedication, and commitment paid off and Eritrea was liberated.

During the 30 years of armed struggle for independence, Eritreans showed three pillars of steadfastness. Three exemplary qualities: **determination** to be free, **perseverance** to continue until the finishing line, and the commitment to pay the ultimate **sacrifice** to be free and independent.

According to the recollections of many Eritreans, Turkish rule was brutal; Egyptian administration was ugly; Italian rule was racist; British administration was maliciously armed with “divide and rule” tactics; but Ethiopian occupation was the worst of all, the culmination of every brutality. It was as worse as it comes. Ethiopian successive rulers had killed, tortured and brutalized Eritreans. They were able to commit such untold brutality because they acquired unfettered access to Soviet and United States assistance. In short, the two “super powers” were fighting against the determination, perseverance, and sacrifice of Eritreans. Hence the two, in one way or another, were responsible for the destructions, losses, and sufferings that befell Eritreans.

Despite Ethiopia’s brutality and its super power allies, Eritreans were determined to put an end to Ethiopian occupation. They endured hardships for 50 years and resisted until the end. They never gave up! They persevered

and paid the ultimate price of more than 65, 000 gallant fighters and attained the highest prize, their Independence! During the war, more than 200,000 civilians were killed, close to half a million Eritreans became refugees, more than 15,000 freedom fighters (**tegadelti**) were disabled and close to 90,000 children became orphans.

Determination helped Eritrea and the Eritrean people to have a vision for the future. They did not remain docile and did not allow themselves to be trampled upon by foreign rulers or powers. They fought with vision, determination, and higher goal. Their determination was as strong as steel! They achieved what they sought to find and fought for and were determined to achieve full independence, and they did that through blood and sweat.

Perseverance has taught Eritreans how to survive under severe natural and man-made conditions. With meager resources, with less food and other commodities, Eritreans have learned how to endure hardships, share resources, work smarter, and focus on the prize.

The ultimate price any person can give to his fellow citizens is life. Eritrean freedom fighters gave their lives so that other Eritreans would live to be free and Eritrea would become independent. They were neither selfish nor greedy! How we wish these selfless citizens would be able to see the Eritrea they died for is now independent. Every living Eritrean is proud of these gallant freedom fighters. It must be noted everyone who joined the national struggle, those who paid the ultimate price during the war, those who are disabled in the war, those who sacrificed their youthful years, and those who in one way or another fought for the noble cause of independence have the utmost respect of their fellow citizens. Those of us who are alive should always pay homage to these young men and women who made Eritrean independence a reality. The legacy of determination, perseverance, and sacrifice they left us with must be preserved, maintained, and protected. We must carry on the torch of this legacy and let it burn forever.

Today, the very same traits of determination, perseverance, and sacrificing are phenomenally working for Eritrea. There is tangible and fundamental change taking place in the infrastructure of the country. Within 20 short years, Eritrea has met most of the Millennium Developmental Goals of the UN. Self-reliance has become the pillar and goal of the Government and the Eritrean people. The government of Eritrea and the people abhor dependency on others. Their choice is to learn how to fish rather than live on fish supplied by donors. With their own skills, know-how, ingenuity, and experiences, Eritreans are performing miracles. They will continue to improve on their short comings, and will perform more as the years go by. Within 20 years, a lot has been achieved to revive the sub-zero economy. Rural and urban Eritrea has witnessed things that did not exist for decades or centuries. The scourges of society, illiteracy, diseases, and poverty are being tackled by coordinated efforts. Adult illiteracy rate is down to 30% from 80%.

Perpetual common diseases such as malaria are under control or are eliminated.

The government of Eritrea is also working on food security. It has put more emphasis on modern farming. It is determined that Eritrea will not be a beggar nation. It does not also want the country to be a debtor nation. If a nation is a debtor to a creditor, it becomes the slave of the creditor. If that happens, a nation allows itself to be subservient to the greedy and unscrupulous master and independence becomes meaningless. Eritreans are determined to make their hard-earned independence meaningful; they will persevere again to see their vision become reality and are willing to work hard to guarantee a secure and prosperous future.

Eritrea is also determined to see the Horn of Africa be a place where friendly neighbors live in respect and dignity. Eritrea, The Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda and many others need to work for unity and peaceful co-existence. Foreign forces should not be allowed to make the neighbors fight against each other. Foreign elements do not have the best of intentions for the area. No nation in the neighborhood should be forced to be an anchor for alien powers that come only to play chess with the neighbors, and then allow them to manage any crisis that might develop. If any misunderstandings and problems arise, the neighbors must work diligently to solve their own problems amicably. There should be an African solution to African problems. Eritrea wants to see a strong relationship of nations flourish in the Horn of Africa.

Through strong determination, unwavering perseverance, and unyielding sacrifice, Eritrean unity has been maintained. The unity has become very strong. In Eritrea, there is no missing link in the common desire, aspiration, and the spirit of self-reliance. The social fabric is very strong. The value of Eritrean determination, perseverance, and sacrifice is very precious. The young generation of dedicated Eritreans will not trade this priceless value for any cheap common market commodity.

Eritrean determination, perseverance, and sacrifices call for a just world, where there is no distrust among nations, peoples and citizens. The people of Eritrea call for a new world order and a political reorganization where the bigger fish does not eat the smaller fish. Eritrean national interests, territorial integrity, and independence are not less worth than those of any nation, whether it is big or small! Eritrea requests the member states of the United Nations to have a sense of respect for each other, and to let justice prevail where there is injustice, and to maintain international rules, laws, and norms equitably, without any preferential approach.

The determination, perseverance, and sacrifices of Eritrea, and the Eritreans call the members of the Security Council of the United Nations [UNSC] to think logically, critically, and morally, and lift the unjust, illegal, and immoral

sanctions they imposed on Eritrea in December 2009. Eritrean Sanctions Must be Annulled and Repealed Today!

Happy Birth-day, Eritrea!

Congratulations to the Eritrean people for 20 years of determination, perseverance and sacrifice!