

ELF-RC DEMOCRATIC PROCESS ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

Study Conducted By Eritrean Conflict Resolution Team (ECRT)

Overview

In the short annals of Eritrean nationhood, implementation of misguided policies and unrelenting government mismanagement at the local, national, and international levels have caused or contributed to violent conflicts, human misery, and enormous human tragedy. It is a sad commentary on the Eritrean leadership when Eritrea's very leaders have neither the capacity nor the skill sets to deliver the nation from the state of hopelessness and political dead end they have immersed the nation in.

It's apparent that no nation becomes poor or prosperous by accident. There are negative processes and policies that lead a nation to poverty and hopelessness, and there are also progressive or forward-looking processes and policies that lead the same nation to prosperity. Based on the policy choices, a nation ends up being bankrupt, on one hand, or prosperous on the other. Eritrea has been stuck in the negative cycle of 'bad policies' begetting misery after misery since 1991. The current leaders in Asmara chose the road that led the nation to utter poverty and misery. This vicious cycle of poverty, violence and misery continues to be induced on the people by the current regime as a tool to control the very people who made independence of Eritrea possible. Contrary to what the Isaias' propaganda machine would have us believe, there wouldn't have been an independent Eritrea today without the selfless and ultimate sacrifices of our people... God bless their soul!

Concurrently, the Eritrean opposition has been ineffective by way of delivering respite to the long hoping and long suffering people of Eritrea. Lately, the opposition camp has been torn asunder by internal squabbles and sinister conflicts. Most notably, the recent internecine conflict within the ELF-RC that transpired a couple of years ago, has been disturbing and destructive to the overall struggle for democracy. This is not the first time that an organization split asunder violently. Bringing peace and prosperity to Eritrea while such destructive forces are at work is an impossible task. We had to understand the root causes of such an intractable problem.

Members of ECRT have truly devoted a sizeable time and energy to develop a scientific approach and tools to assess and resolve conflict. This is unprecedented indeed, both in scope and future implications. The tools developed in this project will definitely serve Eritrea to embark on its democratic journey and guide it effortlessly towards modernity. No nation anywhere around the globe has come close to what ECRT has accomplished in this project. It is possible nations declare themselves democratic and never bother to verify if they

The ELF-RC crisis, and the consequent split of the organization into the ELF-NC and ELF-RC itself made such a daring project possible. We commend the ELF-RC for their courage to be the first test case for this promising metrics. In this project, participants attempted to bring the two factions of the ELF-RC to negotiate and settle their differences. Unfortunately, the ELF-NC team dropped out of the talks prematurely. Be that as it may, we succeeded in this glorious endeavor, because the ELF-RC and ECRT teams saw to it that we had to, in order to break the vicious cycle of splitting as a solution for serious disagreements within the same political organization. We commend the ELF-RC for their courage to be the test case for this promising metrics.

The nation has suffered immensely every time a political organization breaks up leaving adherents helpless and powerless. How can we expect different results when we keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again for the last four decades? When the causes of such a conflict are not addressed, the potential of its reemergence is great. A culture of tolerance, respect for diversity, inclusiveness and reconciliation must therefore be paired with an understanding of the points of disagreement that spur the conflict in the first place.

Sooner than later, the concepts of “left wing,” “right wing,” and “middle of the road” opinions have to be a reality in the Eritrean political lexicon. The world out there is not black and white; black and white is only found in the movies, not in the real world. We have to remember that there are gray, red, yellow, green, etc., areas in between. That is what we commonly refer to as the power of “unity with diversity,” but has, yet to be a common practice in our political culture.

The most challenging diversity is not the diversity of ethnicity, religion or region; the most challenging diversity is the diversity of ideas. Are we good at respecting or valuing ideas that are sometimes contrary to our own? The diversity of ethnicity, religion or region can be managed with relative ease. The hardest diversity to manage is the diversity of ideas. The day we succeed to manage the diversity of ideas within the Eritrean political landscape, will be the day when most of our troubles will be behind us. We must understand that peace building and democracy should go hand in hand. Therefore, conflict resolution and peace building are the “glue” of political settlement in a democracy.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ELF-RC’s HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As we explore the crisis that engulfed the ELF RC, and search for pathways beyond the wreckage, we must necessarily begin with diagnosing the historical background of the organization. The ELF RC derives its legacy from the ELF, a nationalist organization that declared the Eritrean armed struggle for national independence in September of 1961.

In its early stages, the ELF mainly focused on developing its armed wing and launching heavy damages against the occupying government of Ethiopia. This role has evidently played to raise the political awareness of the Eritrean people and to generate limited international attention.

The developing armed struggle however, lacked a well-defined approach in dealing with inter-organizational relations. As a result, it was exposed to political and organizational crises culminated in a split, PLF factions were formed by 1970 and subsequent civil war erupted among national forces.

In 1971 the ELF conducted its first national congress and adopted a political program, more developed organizational structure, and a strategy for victory.

After the emperor in Ethiopia was deposed and a new dictatorial government under Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam was established, the struggle for Eritrean national independence took a new dimension. All sections of the Eritrean people including some generals and high ranking officials who served the Ethiopian government joined the revolution.

In 1975, considering the new developments in the Eritrean struggle, the second national congress was conducted and more advanced political and organizational program was adopted. The form of leadership, legislative and executive, was decided, the democratic process of electing leaders were ratified, the policymaking process was clearly acknowledged and modern ELF started to emerge in the arena.

The ELF was the first Eritrean organization to recognize the independence of mass organizations.

- General Union of Eritrean Students (GUES)
- General Union of Eritrean workers (GUEW)
- General Union of Eritrean Women (GUEW)
- General Union of Eritrean Peasants (GUEP)
- Eritrean Democratic Youth Union (EDYU)
- League of Eritrean Refugees (LER)
- Eritrean Journalists Union (EJU)

Except for the students union, all mass organizations were established in 1973 through 1977 following the programmatic declaration of ELF congresses. These mass organizations altogether grew to more than 300,000 members by the end of 1979 and contributed hugely to the development and democratization of the organization.

With regard to the conflict resolution function, congresses were generally seen as institutions for resolving conflicts within the organization. Independent political thinking, different economic or ideological interests, even ethnic, racial, regional and religious concerns were looking on each congress as an access point for airing grievances, and possibly for stimulating decisions. Congress was the appropriate venue to resolve differences among competing sections by passing resolutions and accommodating competing interests.

Collective leadership was the kernel of administration in the ELF and executive leaders were always accountable to the legislative organ whose right include to promote members to an executive position or demote from it need it be necessary.

Congresses were taken as norm in the Eritrean arena and since 1976 other organizations also started to adopt the idea and enter into their own respective organizational congresses.

As for the ELF, the experience is a live witness that in all mass organizations and even on district and village levels leaders came elected and not selected as it was exercised in EPLF.

It was however sad that the ELF's organizational experience has also witnessed divisive realities. Congress decisions were not always respected. Hurui T. Bairu tried to establish his own organization in 1976 when he lost his leadership position in the second national congress, Abdella Idris launched a coup d'état against the establishment when he lost his position as a head of military Office, and Ibrahim Toteel chose to split, to form a faction and join the EPLF after he lost his vice chairmanship at the 5th RC session in 1981.

By the beginning of 1983, a major split within the ELF took place and four separate organizations who claim their roots to the ELF (the ELF RC led by Ahmed Nasser, the ELF EC led by Abdella Idris, the ELF CC (Sagem) led by Tewelde Gebreselassie and The Eritrean Democratic Movement (EDM) led by Hurui Bairu began to exist in the Eritrean political arena.

It was widely perceived that the ELF RC, emerged the largest, participatory and representing the general trend of ELF. It represented a wide range of Eritrean social and political interests. It was sometimes referred to as the "*teyar Al'am*" (an Arabic term meaning the general trend). It was believed that the body politic of the ELF RC reflects all Eritrean ethnicities, religions and a variety of Eritrean political interests.

The ELF RC continued in line of taking congresses as the main venue for resolving conflicts and electing leaders

Following the crisis of the beginning of eighties, a broad organizational conference was held in 1983, and a leadership was elected, the 3rd national congress was held in 1989, the

4th in 1995, and the fifth in 2001. In all congresses peaceful transfer of power was a norm. In 1995 in the first session of RC after the 4th congress, Ahmed Nasser lost his chairmanship to Ibrahim Mohammed Ali. In 2001 Ibrahim Mohamed Ali lost his chairmanship because he was elected as an alternate member of RC and in the first RC session Ahmed Nasser regained his chairmanship replacing Ibrahim Mohamed Ali.

In the Second RC regular session in 2002 Ahmed Nasser lost his chairmanship to Seyoum Ogbamichael. This change however did not follow the norm. Arguments between those who support the transfer of power and those who oppose it began to surface in the arena and consequently deep organizational and political crisis started to engulf the big ELF RC.

THE PUBLIC AND THE ELF-RC FACTIONS

After thirty years of bitter struggle, The Eritrean people paid heavy sacrifice and achieved National independence. However, due to the absence of democracy and rule of law, the nation has been going through painful suffering perpetrated by the repressive dictatorial regime of the PFDJ. Parallel to this, the struggle to replace the brutal dictator with a democratic system has been in process by a coalition of traditional opposition forces. This camp is composed of different organizations, civic movements and political parties that has just crafted a national charter and a unified leadership structure.

Responding to a popular call for national unity by the Eritrean People, about a dozen of organizations in the Diaspora formed a national alliance and manifested a charter in 1999. This beginning shed a ray of hope that captured the Eritrean people's attention and the world as well. Unfortunately, due to many reasons we can imagine, this alliance had to go through upheavals of crises and credibility issues from within itself and the public at large. This phenomenon became a source of contradictions and breakups for member organizations. Hence, ELF-RC suffered a split in July 2003 followed by accusations and counter accusations. This unexpected occurrence plunged the opposition camp into chaos and confusion.

At this point in time, about a dozen of concerned Eritreans took the initiative to form themselves as a team, Eritrean Conflict Resolution Team (ECRT) and stepped up to look into the matter as a fact finding mission. Ultimately, ECRT escalated the mission and pursued the purpose of sorting out the facts that caused the split and attempted to resolve the conflict. Moreover, it is our firm belief that applying conflict resolution tool is not only limited to resolve conflicts, but will also help curb unjustified and heart breaking chronic split ups to a halt.

ECRT used the information super highway as a tool to conduct its communications and discussions. Hence, ECRT commenced its plan by appealing to both leaderships of the ELF-RC factions.

TO ALL ELF-RC COMPATRIOTS:

I am deeply saddened by the latest ELF-RC fratricidal encounter. As you very well know, I am not part of your organization, but we belong to the same camp and trenches. This was not the kind of a grand finale well-wishers like me were waiting to see from a formidable political organization like the ELF-RC. After reading some of the raw details that are coming out from both sides, I am of the opinion that an earlier confidential expression of such opinions would probably have minimized the gap of misunderstanding. Alas, that is like water under the bridge now. As your compatriot, I would like to offer my advice: Please resist and desist from further elaboration of “he said” and “she said” type of point and counter-point exchanges.

If neither side is prepared to take the other side seriously, what is the point of inflaming the encounter any more? Instead, a committee of independent and level-headed compatriots (voices of reason and moderation) from both sides need to prevail and huddle together and get to the bottom of the crisis. This effort could be done in two phases:

1. Each side can form a committee and generate its respective report.
2. Then, both committees can huddle together and iron out the primary, secondary and tertiary issues out of which a sober and balanced report can be generated.

We can identify level-headed compatriots, voices of reason and moderation, to coordinate and moderate the meeting before the final report is generated. This is politics in action. I believe there is a solution if you are willing to capture the moment and seek the truth. Please tell me you can do it. Every political problem has a solution, unless you are saddled with a convoluted mindset of Isaias. Instead of solving the problem, Isaias would rather kill the problem. Prove to the world you are made of a far superior stuff. I hope you are flexible enough to take this challenge. Thank you.

With best regards,

Dr. T. A. Tadesse, Aug. 14, 2003

WHAT IS PROCESS?

As part of our noble effort in identifying the existing process within the ELF-RC, we figured we had to be on the same page when it comes to understanding what a process is. Democracy is a process. Without understanding what a process is, we cannot have a full grasp of what democracy is.

So, what is process? A process is a stable and repeatable sequence of steps performed for a given purpose. The nemesis of process would be ad hoc. More simply stated, process is what you do to accomplish a task. The repeatability of the process ensures that if you apply the same process to the same task, you get the same results every time. The key components of process are: People, Tools, and Procedures. Hence, process is what people

do, using procedures, methods, tools and other equipment in order to transform "inputs" into "outputs" that is of value to each and every member of the organization. The formula for process is then:

$$\textit{Process} = \textit{People} + \textit{Procedures} + \textit{Tools}$$

DEMOCRACY DEFINED AS A PROCESS

If the above formula is applied to democracy as a process:

$$\textit{Democracy} = \textit{People} + \textit{Procedures} \text{ (transparency, accountability, etc.)} + \textit{Tools} \text{ (elections)}$$

In a democratic nation, the rightful owners of the government are the people. That is why they (the people) are in the equation. People in government are public servants; that is why politicians are not reflected in the equation. As outsiders to the equation, their job is to make sure the equation works as it is intended to. Therefore, since the business of government is conducted to the satisfaction of the people by the people, of the people, and for the people, politicians should never try to tinker with the ownership of government in a democracy. The duty of civil servants is, therefore, simply to serve the people.

A process description is not a process. A process description is only spoken or written; it is not practiced. Only when activities are "practiced" or methods and procedures are "used" is it accurate to talk about a process. If an organization has methods and procedures (rule book) that it does not practice, then such a practice is called ad hoc. Unfortunately, process and process description are used interchangeably most often.

AN ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS

An organizational process can be described by its key elements. Process comes in two flavors:

1. *Immature or ad hoc process*
2. *Mature process*

To be precise an ad hoc or immature process is the absence of a defined process. A mature process, on the other hand:

- is based on a well defined and practiced process
- reflects the best of the state of the practice
- reflects the needs of the individuals participating within the organization
- is documented, and
- publicly available

When a process is followed consistently, the end result achieved will always be the same no matter how many times it is applied, and is fair enough when executed fairly.

THE IMMATURE ORGANIZATION

The immature organization is reactionary (reacts, not plans), and its leaders are usually focused on solving immediate crises (better known as fire fights). These organizations are routinely exceeding or falling short of membership expectations because their activities are not based on well defined and widely implemented process. Members have little insight into the final outcome until the final delivery of the decision. These types of organizations are characterized as ad hoc, and occasionally even as chaotic. A classic example of an Immature Organization is the PFDJ, Eritrea's official single political party. In these organizations, success depends on individual effort or heroics, not on a well defined and widely practiced process. When the individuals and heroes are removed, the rest of the membership is at a loss.

Hence, at the immature or ad hoc level, the organization does not provide a stable environment for sustainable development of the organization. Making promises and over-committing is a typical characteristic of the ad hoc organization, and such organizations have difficulty making commitments that the members can deliver with an orderly, repeatable and predictable process. The promises of transforming Eritrea into Singapore and Hong Kong are examples par excellence. Such thoughtless promises result in a series of crises.

During a crisis, programs and initiatives abandon planned procedures and methods, and revert to short cuts in order to complete tasks. Since there is no practiced process in this scenario, success depends on having an exceptional leader (with a whip) and a seasoned and effective team. But when such leaders and heroes leave their leadership positions their stabilizing influence leaves with them. Therefore, success in immature organizations is a characteristic of the individual leaders, not a characteristic of an existing and well defined process within the organization.

THE MATURE ORGANIZATION

A mature organization, on the other hand, possesses the capability for executing the development and maintenance of decisions. It is so transparent it openly and accurately communicates its process of doing things to all its members, and carries out work activities according to the planned process. This process is mandated by its membership and documented for all to see and practice on a day-to-day basis. The process is user-friendly and consistent with the way the work actually gets done.

Roles and responsibilities within the given process are so clear, no member has a problem or confusion across the organization. In general, the mature organization follows a disciplined process. Members in a mature organization are so well informed they have no problem predicting the final outcomes way before the decision or product is delivered. A mature organization is therefore an organization where a well-defined process is in place characterized by its readiness criteria, standards and procedures that its members are well

acquainted with. The process also includes verification mechanisms such as peer and membership reviews, with clearly defined negotiating and project completion criteria. The process in a mature organization can be summarized as standard and consistent, because both the leadership and membership activities are stable and repeatable.

DEMOCRACY AND THE ELF-RC ORGANIZATION

Democracy is a viable process with its inherent elements of transparency, inclusion, accountability and checks and balances, among other things. Like all processes, democracy expresses itself in different maturity levels. In general, the European and North American democracies are more mature than Asian democracies and Asian and Latin American democracies are more mature than African democracies. If the ELF-RC is defined as a democratic organization, we have to verify that its democratic nature is:

- based on demonstrable and consistent practices
- a reflection of the needs and wishes of each member
- documented, and
- complemented by a readily available document to the public

The rule of law simply strengthens the growth and evolution of democracy as a process. Strictly speaking, the factors that would influence the continuing and healthy evolution of the democratic process are the rule of law, peer reviews and membership feedback. But for members to provide useful feedback, they have to be free and well-informed apriori.

Criteria of a Mature Democratic Organization

To qualify the ELF-RC as a democratic organization, the following or equivalent principles have to be documented in its constitution and also practiced in its day-to-day activities:

- Leadership decisions about policy is empowered and constitutionally vested in elected officials.
- Elected officials are selected in periodic and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is relatively absent.
- Every member has the right to vote in the election of officials.
- Every member has the right to run for elective office of his or her choice.
- Members have the right to express themselves without the danger of reprimand or marginalization.
- Members have the right to seek alternative sources of information.
- Members have the right to freely associate with other organizations or groups.

- Elected officials must be able to exercise their constitutional powers without being subjected to overriding opposition from unelected officials.
- Basic human rights must be respected.
- The powers of the elected executive must be checked and balanced by elected committees or organizational watchdog group.

THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION (CR) PLAN

The Conflict Resolution Process

The motive of revenge and getting even has always been the primary driver in Eritrean politics. Cyclically, winners become losers and losers become winners depending on the political temperature. In the mean time, the ultimate losers are the people and the nation. It is often stated that when Isaias and his group broke ranks with the ELF, they went their way and formed the EPLF. Instead of resolving the conflict with the ELF, they opted for the path of least resistance to power. Since the EPLF ended up being in a position of military strength, it forced a military solution on the ELF in order to support the vested interests of Isaias Afwerki and his cohorts. Strange as it may seem now, the TPLF fought on the side of the EPLF to tip the balance against the ELF. It makes one wonder why remnants of the ELF are working hand and glove with the TPLF now. Remember, brothers and sisters fought each other in this fratricidal and ugly war between the ELF and EPLF, that culminated in the early 1980's.

In the short run, the end result was the EPLF "won" and the ELF "lost." The EPLF awarded Badme and its environs to the TPLF for its contribution to the demise of the ELF, without thinking for a moment that it was planting the seeds of future conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. More importantly, the EPLF learned the hard way that the use of brute force could not make the ELF go away.

The idea of playing the zero-sum game, where one party wins and the other losses is inimical to the concepts of conflict resolution and nation building. Besides being characterized as ad hoc, the problem with an unjust solution like this is that the "losers" will regroup to haunt the "winner" in the long run. It is with this historical perspective in mind that we can correctly define the current conflict within the ELF-RC. Indeed, the unjust mindset of "winner takes all!" has been ingrained in the psyche of the various political Eritrean factions. In such a political climate, tolerance and dialogue have never been utilized for purposes of conflict resolution and nation building.

The list of participant teams from both the ELF-RC and ELF-NC is as follows:

ELF-NC	EMAIL	ELF-RC	EMAIL
Iyob Beserat	ayob.beserat@telia.com	Menghsteab Asmerom	asmermen@yahoo.com
Negash Osman	osman.n@telia.com	Woldeyesus Ammar	Menhot20@yahoo.com
Sahle Tesfai	satesfai@wiz.uni-kassel.de	Amanuel Habte	Mmeng39902@aol.com
Samuel Daniel	sequina@gmx.de	Gerezghiher Tewolde	Ghebar11@hotmail.com
Habte Tesfamariam	habte@emirates.net.ae	-	-
Beyene Kidane Ahmed Nasser	dabra@hotmail.com amna091949@hotmail.com	Tesfai Woldemichael Seyoum Ogbamichael	tesfaihl@aol.com demoselam1@aol.com

The Conflict Resolution Team

Expertise and knowledge base was primary in the selection process of team members. Communication was conducted via telephone and the Internet. Women who were approached were not willing to participate. The list of names of the Conflict Resolution Team (ECRT) is depicted in the following Table:

ECRT MEMBER	LOCATION	EMAIL ADDRESS
Berhan M. Ahmed	Australia	berhan@greatcircle.net.au
Ghebremedhin Habte	USA	Habte452@aol.com
Haileab Kahsay	USA	haileabk@aol.com
Laine Araia	Germany	araia@gmx.de
Mussie Ephrem	Sweden	Mussie.ephrem@telia.com

Solomon Tesfatsion	USA	solomonandehaimanot@hotmail.com
Tzegai Negash	USA	tsawa@aol.com
Tzeggai Yohannes	UK	tzeggaiy@evelynoldfield.co.uk
T. A. Tadesse	USA	ttadesse@yahoo.com
Antonio Tesfay	Sweden	antoniotesfay@chello.se
Fessehaye Hagos	USA	hagosna@cs.com

Team Leadership and Synergy

Each deliverable is represented by a team leader and the corresponding team members. Each team leader defined a clear process by which his particular work will be done. The inputs to the study were determined to be: Internet articles, reports from each group, and individual interviews. What the participants have to work on are the respective reports and individual interviews. The following table depicts the respective leaders and their corresponding members:

TEAM/DELIVERABLE	LEADER	Members	INPUTS FROM
<i>DOCUMENTATION</i>	TZEGAI	ALL	ALL
<i>INPUT REPORTS</i>	LAINÉ	Antonio, Berhan, Tadesse, Tzeggai, Solomon, Fessehaye	ELF-RC
<i>INTERVIEWS</i>	TADDESSE	Haileab, Mussie, Solomon, Tzegai, Laine, Tadesse, Fessehaye	Questions to clarify gaps in: -ELF-RC reports -Internet articles

<i>INTERNET ARTICLES</i>	BERHAN	Tseggai, Gere, Antonio, Laine, Fessehay	Eritrean websites
<i>STATUS REPORT (weekly)</i>	TZEGGAI	ALL	ALL
<i>TELEPHONE CONFERENCE</i>	TBD	TBD	TBD
<i>FINAL REPORT</i>	MUSSIE	Taddesse, Haileab, Tzegai, Berhan, Laine	ALL

NOTE: TBD is an acronym for “to be determined.”

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

This is the segment where the rubber hit the road. We had to define the process and identify the inputs, schedule and deliverables. We also had to define the objectives. We had to justify how this conflict resolution process is directly related to pluralism and democracy. We also delineated the conflict resolution process, and its attendant requirements.

Defining the Problem Correctly

It has been said, “Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” Eritrean history is replete with instances of betrayals, defections and relationships of deception. The most recent history and fratricidal conflict among the ELF and EPLF is a prime example from which lessons could be drawn so that we do not fall into the same pitfalls again.

The current political impasse within the ELF-RC calls for a radical departure from past practices. Any panacea advanced must of necessity provide a universal solution by adequately considering and balancing the interests of the two factions within the ELF-RC. That is, employing the power of balance, not the balance of power. That is why defining the ELF-RC problem correctly would be half the solution. In other words, once we construct the problem statement correctly, finding a solution becomes much easier. What is more, defining the problem cannot be done without the active participation of the disputants.

Conflict Resolution and Democracy

Conflict resolution and nation building are an integral part of the democratic process. It is apparent that resolving conflicts as they happen and in a systematic and rational way will enhance and even accelerate Eritrea's transition toward a genuine democratic state. In our transition from a system of dictatorship to democracy, we have to go through three phases:

TRANSACTIONAL

This is the current phase where national debate, negotiation and mediation dominate the political discourse.

STRUCTURAL

This pertains to our next phase where the implementation of the rule of law and democracy highlights civil society building, safeguarding human rights, building rule of law institutions, etc.

TRANSFORMATIONAL

This phase is dominated by authentic dialogue, confidence building, rapprochement, reconciliation, peace initiatives, etc.

Conflict resolution is critical to each of these phases and at all levels of society, contributing to sustaining a culture of democracy. Democracy in the current fast changing global arena means pluralism. Conflict resolution addresses the needs of pluralism; it can be a slow process, but it helps to ensure equal rights, a fundamental principle of democracy. Besides, as stated above, it accelerates our transition from the current dictatorship to the implementation of the rule of law and democracy effectively. Addressing the root causes of conflict must be inherent in the conflict resolution process. When the causes of conflict are not addressed, the potential of its reemergence is high. A culture of tolerance, respect for diversity, inclusiveness, and reconciliation must therefore be paired with an understanding of the points of disagreement that initiate the conflict in the first place such as ethnicity, gender, or religion.

Each member of our team must commit himself to the long-term endeavor of sensing and changing unfounded perceptions and stereotypes, teach tolerance, and establishing the principles of inclusiveness. The Eritrean websites and other media outlets need to be pillars of democracy and report equitably, completely and without bias. Such instruments of communication have the potential of undermining conflict resolution initiatives and democracy through hidden "hate" reporting that fan the flames of conflict, or by providing selective coverage that is incomplete or biased.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CR PLAN

The Schedule - Updated

Each team leader has to show a breakdown of tasks for each team. The work process flow for each team also needs to be defined. Both the breakdown of tasks and the process flows need to be discussed among the respective sub-teams. Tseggai will see to it that all deliverables are completed on time, in his weekly status report. A follow-up interview is designed to address the outstanding issues that will be raised in Laine's and Berhan's teams. The template for the final report is the table of contents of the report and what needs to be included in each section. If the leaders of each sub-team divide up the jobs to be accomplished into reasonable tasks and assign them to their respective members, I call that "working smart." There is a difference between "working smart" and "working hard," as all of you know. You can work hard (with sweat & tears) without ever accomplishing your goal. Let's all work smart. The next Table depicts the schedule and activities of the study:

DELIVERABLE	OWNER	START-DATE	DUE-DATE
Checklist of Tasks (Reports/Internet/Interview)	Each Leader	Oct. 1/03	Oct. 20/03
Work Process flow/sub-team (Reports/Internet/Interview)	Each Leader	Oct. 1/03	Oct. 20/03
Defining Ground rules	Each Leader	Oct. 1/03	Oct. 20/03
Overall work process flow	Tadesse	Oct. 1/03	Done
Reports/Documents from ELF-RC	Tseggai	Oct. 1/03	Oct. 20/03
Interview Questionnaire	Tadesse	N/A	Oct. 20/03
First Interview	Tadesse	N/A	Nov. 15/03
Reports Evaluation Criteria	Laine	N/A	Oct. 20/03
Interview Evaluation Criteria	Tadesse	N/A	Oct. 20/03
Internet articles-Eval. Criteria	Berhan	N/A	Oct. 20/03
Follow-up Interview	Tadesse	N/A	If needed - TBD
Status Report Methodology	Tseggai	Oct. 1/03	Oct. 20/03

Weekly status reports	Tseggai	Oct. 1/03	Nov. 30/04
Analysis/conclusion on ELF-RC Reports	Laine	N/A	Nov. 15/04
Analysis/Conclusion – Interviews	Tadesse	N/A	Nov. 15/04
Analysis/Conclusion – Internet articles	Berhan	N/A	Nov. 30/04
Template for Final Report	Tadesse	Oct. 1/03	Oct. 01/04
Final Report – Inputs from ALL Leaders.	Tadesse	ASAP	Dec. 30/04

LOGO:

Ground rules: Rules of engagement among the parties.

Checklist of tasks: A list of tasks that make up a deliverable.

Interview questionnaire: A list of questions intended to clarify issues.

Template: The template for the final report is the table of contents of the report and what needs to be included in each section.

MID-COURSE CORRECTIONS

Since ELF-NC withdrew from the initiative only days after submitting its statement of authorization and readiness, the study could not be objectively conducted as designed. Adjustments had to be done. The fact that ELF-NC did not hand over its report implied there was no comparison to be made with the ELF-RC report. Therefore, the mid-course correction we came up with was to scrap the interviews, the Internet documentation study and the reports. The target dates were also revised commensurate with the demands of the survey activities. We ended up relying on the more universal documentation assessment and the survey data. Hence, the purpose of the Mid-course correction was to determine if the parent organization (ELF-RC) was indeed a democratic organization.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT/RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Assessment Approach

How does one assess the organizational process that he or she is not a part of? The answer to this question goes to the heart of what the criteria of a mature process is, and also the professionalism of the assessor. Applying professional judgment leads to the issue of the “goodness” requirements on the process. A process that is mature is effective in building organizational capability and satisfies the requirements of a defined process. Hence, as a process, a mature democracy is defined, documented, trained, practiced, supported, maintained, controlled, verified, validated, measured and able to improve over time.

When a professional is invited to assess an organizational process, he or she has to make three demands, as follows:

- Tell me about your organizational process.
- Do you practice your organizational process?
- If you do, show me the evidence that you practice the process.

The first and second criteria were met after the ELF-RC delivered to ECRT all its organizational documentation prior to the December 15, 2003 due date. ELF-NC failed to meet the same challenge. The third criterion is met when a select ELF-RC membership participated in a survey designed and conducted directly by ECRT.

DOCUMENTATION ASSESSMENT

As stated above, document assessment is performed in three steps: documentation assessment, process implementation assessments and providing evidence of process implementation. In the case of the ELF-RC, documentation and process assessments have been executed. The result of these assessments are depicted in Table 1.

Criteria of a Mature Democratic Organization

As stated above, mature democratic organizations have to meet the following criteria as a minimum requirement:

1. Leadership decisions about policy is empowered and constitutionally vested in elected officials.
2. Elected officials are selected in periodic and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is relatively absent.
3. Every member has the right to vote in the election of officials.
4. Every member has the right to run for elective office of his or her choice.
5. Members have the right to express themselves without the danger of reprimand or marginalization.

6. Members have the right to seek alternative sources of information.
7. Members have the right to freely associate with other organizations or groups.
8. Elected officials must be able to exercise their constitutional powers without being subjected to overriding opposition from unelected officials.
9. Basic human rights must be respected.
10. The powers of the elected executive must be checked and balanced by elected committees or organizational watchdog group.

Documentation Assessment

As stated above, process assessment is performed in three steps: documentation assessment, process implementation assessment and providing evidence of process implementation. The ELF-RC provided the ECRT with the following organizational documentations:

➡ Organizational Structure Document

➡ Political Programs Document

Using both documents, documentation and process assessments have been carefully executed. The results of these assessments are depicted in Table 1.

CRITERIA	SOURCE	REFERENCE	GAP	CLOSING GAP
<i>Criterion 1</i>	Organizational Structure Document	Page 7, Article 1 Page 17, Article 9		
<i>Criterion 2</i>	Organizational Structure Document	Page 8, Article 2 • Page 12, Article 4 • Page 16, Article 8		
<i>Criterion 3</i>	Organizational Structure Document	Page 4, Article 3 • Page 8, Article 2		
<i>Criterion 4</i>	Organizational Structure Document	Page 4, Article 3 • Page 8, Article 2		

Criterion 5	Organizational Structure Document Political programs Document	Page 4, Article 3 Page 14, Article 1, Human Rights		
Criterion 6	Organizational Structure Document Political programs Document	Page 3, principles • Page 17, Article 9 Page 14, Article 1, Human Rights		
Criterion 7	Organizational Structure Document	Page 2, Objectives 12 and 13	Absence of an explicit “Freedom of Association” statement.	Add “Freedom of Association” statement explicitly in Article 3, page 4
Criterion 8	Organizational Structure Document	Page 3, principles		
Criterion 9	Organizational Structure Document Political programs Document	Page 1, Objective #5 Page 14, Article 1, Human Rights		
Criterion 10	Organizational Structure Document	Page 17, Article 8 Page 18, Article 9	Absence of an explicit “Checks and balance” statement.	Add “checks and balance” statement explicitly in Article 9, page 17.

Table 1: Document Assessment Results

DOCUMENT ASSESSMENT RESULTS - 1

As stated above, process assessment is performed in three steps: documentation assessment, process implementation assessment and providing evidence of process implementation. The two input documents to this portion of the assessment were provided by the ELF-RC leadership. Based on the document assessment data, the average score for each criterion was computed to be 92%. The qualification of ELF-RC as a Democratic Organization is one step away in the assessment. So far, ELF-RC has met all the requirements of a democratic organization when it comes to document assessment.

DEMOCRATIC PROCESS SURVEY DATA

Criteria of a Mature Democratic Organization

This survey was conducted via fax and online. Only members of ELF-RC who have email addresses and fax numbers participated in this survey. Participating member email addresses and fax numbers were provided by the ELF-RC leadership. As stated above, mature democratic organizations have to meet the following criteria as a minimum requirement:

- Q-1.** Leadership decisions about policy is empowered and constitutionally vested in elected officials.
- Q-2.** Elected officials are selected in periodic and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is relatively absent.
- Q-3.** Every member has the right to vote in the election of officials.
- Q-4.** Every member has the right to run for elective office of his or her choice.
- Q-5.** Members have the right to express themselves without the danger of reprimand or marginalization.
- Q-6.** Members have the right to seek alternative sources of information.
- Q-7.** Members have the right to freely associate with other organizations or groups.
- Q-8.** Elected officials must be able to exercise their constitutional powers without being subjected to overriding opposition from unelected officials.
- Q-9.** Basic human rights must be respected.
- Q-10.** The powers of the elected executive must be checked and balanced by elected committees or organizational watchdog group.

Based on the survey data, the average score for the criteria is 95.996%. Hence, members of ELF-RC believe that their organization claims and practices democracy as measured by the ten criteria (Pillars of democracy) listed above.

Respondents	Q-1	Q-2	Q-3	Q-4	Q-5	Q-6	Q-7	Q-8	Q-9	Q-10
N=92	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
YES	97.83	97.83	96.74	92.39	97.83	100.0	96.74	92.39	98.91	89.3
MAY BE	0.00	0.00	2.17	3.26	2.17	0.00	1.09	2.17	0.00	4.35
NO	2.17	2.17	1.09	4.35	0.00	0.00	2.17	5.43	1.09	6.52

Table 2: Process Assessment Survey Results

SURVEY RESULTS - 2

As stated above, the survey assessment is performed in three steps: defining the process, process implementation assessment and providing evidence of process implementation. The input data was ELF-RC member response to each of the Criteria of a Mature Democratic Organization. Based on the survey assessment data, the average score for each criterion was computed to be 95.996%. The qualification of ELF-RC as a democratic organization is concluded based on the two assessments.

LESSONS LEARNED

It is true that the political and organizational crisis manifested within the ELF-RC has changed some parameters of Eritrean politics. When the crisis culminated in a split, it logically became a precursor to other fragmentations within the Eritrean opposition camp. Yet in our 30 years of armed struggle and following 13 years of independence, there has been little or no opportunity to learn from such experience due to absence of openness in many organizations. The ELF-RC has to be universally commended for volunteering to open its doors wide to be examined; As a result, we are able to draw the following lessons:

1. Inside the ELF, especially since the front's first national congress, democracy was seen as a weapon both in the struggle for independence and in laying down the ground rules for the democratization of the nation. Inside the EPLF, however, democracy was a promise that was never going to be fulfilled. The ELF has come a long way towards consolidating democratic principles. It is, however, sad to see

the democratic tradition of the ELF progressively diminish leaving a political opportunity for external manipulation.

2. The political and organizational programs of the ELF were the cornerstones for its democracy. They served the organization's essential functions of the rule of law. They provided a mechanism to jointly draft the rules of the game and to act as a confidence-building device. Now we learn that the split in the ELF was mainly a result of the lack of abiding by the rule of law. It became obvious that the faction who refused to play by the rules of the game took an option of a split instead of sticking to the principles of the organization.
3. Splitting has been a widespread practice within African politics when a leader chooses to blame others on ethnic, religious, or regional grounds. Such reality has also made its way in Eritrean politics to include the ELF and many other organizations. Many were seen to cross the line of their political affiliation and to identify themselves with organizations that reflected their ethnic or religious background.

The members of the organization and the Eritrean people at large, need to challenge leaders to vacate their seats whenever they lose in a democratic competition. Those who took the choice of a split instead of abiding by the rule of law need to be confronted and asked to account for their behavior.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

With an average score of 92% on the document assessment, and 96% on the survey assessment, the qualification of ELF-RC as a Democratic Organization is confirmed. Hence, the study confirmed that ELF-RC is democratic in its statement of principle of democracy (92%) and in its practice of democracy (96%). The combination of both sets of data verified that democracy is alive and well within the ELF-RC organization. Consequently, members of the ECRT came to the conclusion that the splinter group (ELF-NC) walked away knowing full well that they could have exercised their democratic rights to challenge any issue of concern within the parent ELF-RC. That was unfortunate.

Having stated the above, recent developments have confirmed that the two factions have come full circle to enlist and work together under the same umbrella organization, the Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA). If that is the case, what was the point of the split in the first place? In retrospect, what end justified what means if the two factions were going to end up working together barely two years down the road? Again, by prematurely withdrawing from the ECRT talks, the ELF-NC has deprived its constituents and the nation as a whole from identifying the root causes of the ill advised split. That is why ECRT members are of the opinion that only individual vested interests, not national interest, have been served by the split. Again, the ELF-RC has to be universally

commended for volunteering to open its doors wide to be examined and evaluated. Without a doubt, the ELF-RC leadership and membership have proven to be farsighted and absolutely cooperative in this project.

The bulk of the acknowledgement also goes to the members of ECRT. Irrespective of the requirements of their daily living, be it their career or family lives, they saw in this project an opportunity to make a statement about a negative phenomena (splitting organizations) that has bedeviled Eritrean politics for a long time. Now that they had their say, they are now back with their families and their careers 100%. Eritrea Conflict Resolution Team members: thanks a million for the sacrifice and a job so well done.

If you have any question or a need for more information, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Berhan M. Ahmed at: berhan@greatcircle.net.au, for all survey related issues, and Dr. T. A. Tadesse at: ttadesse@yahoo.com, for all document assessment issues. Thank you.

ATTACHMENT

RESPONSE FROM THE TWO ELF-RC FACTIONS

The leaders of the two factions responded by sending their respective statements of authorization and readiness for the initiative.

Statement of Authorization and Readiness

Statement from Mr. Seyoum Ogbamichael: Received in Mid-September

September 2003

ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT/ ELF – RC

CHAIRMAN OFFICE

Dear members of the Eritrean conflict Resolution Team (ECRT):

Please, accept my greetings.

We in the ELF RC are pleased to announce our readiness to deal with the Eritrean Conflict Resolution Team (ECRT) as an independent organ striving to help understand the root causes of the contradictions that led to the recent split within the ELF-RC. We understand the aim of the ECRT above all to put differences in their proper perspective in the way of promoting democratic dialogue among opposition groups and enhance the prospects for the formation of a secular, constitutional, democratic Eritrea.

We expect the team would keep up its high motivation level and its honest and dependable work ethic in offering its insightful ideas. We are also pleased to confirm that this letter shall authorize the ELF-RC delegation, composed of Menghisteab Asmerom, Ibrahim Mohamed Ali, Woldeyesus Ammar, Gherezghiher Tewolde, Amanuel Habte and Tesfai Woldemichael, to discuss and in any other way communicate with the Eritrean Conflict Resolution Team (ECRT) in all aspects relevant to the recent split of ELF-RC and the shadow that such phenomenon has cast on the ongoing struggle for the institution of the rule of law and democracy in Eritrea.

This letter shall further authorize our ELF-RC delegation to clarify our position and enter into dialogue and agreement with concerned parties.

Signed: Seyoum O. Michael

Germany

Statement of Authorization and Readiness

Statement from Dr. Beyene Kidane: Received after the first week of October, 2003

Date : 08 /10 / 2003

ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT – RC

CHAIRMAN OFFICE

Ref. No :EC.CH /0 3 / 013

To members of the Eritrean Conflict Resolution Team (ECRT)

Dear Compatriots:

Though much late in coming, and was very much absent during our year-long upheaval when it was needed most, we nonetheless appreciate your belated concern about the crisis that led to the final split up of the ELF-RC. Whatever bearing it may have on the current status quo, your claim of neutrality and impartiality in exploring the root causes and chain of events that shook our organization to its very foundations is well taken. We strongly believe that any deviation from this line will have failed to serve the intended purpose of your pursuit, that of promoting tolerance and understanding within the opposition camp, which is crucial in the fight against the rogue regime in Asmara.

In the course of your search and analysis of the crisis, and its negative consequences for the opposition, we would like you to be able to shed some light as to why we have not yet succeeded to do away with the emergence of some self-styled emulators of Isayas and his ilk's from our midst, despite our long and arduous experience in the struggle for national liberation, democracy and justice. Worse still, why there is increasing tendency for herd mentality among few of their supporters rather than having the courage to stand for proven principles, or using their faculty of reasoning in seeking the ultimate truth and justice on their own. Moreover, why are such elements bent on with mindset of not only exploiting backward sentiments of our society, but are always prone to accuse their political contenders of tribalism, regionalism and religious fanaticism without having any

proof or shadow of evidence to their claim, and doing all that in the name of *instituting the rule of law and democracy*, but much against the interests and well-being of the very people they claim to be serving and representing. One cannot simply claim to stand for the unity of our country and people while spreading such ruinous and damaging propaganda. It is very disappointing that such things are happening in our times against the background of exemplary tolerance, democratic traditions and egalitarian practices of our great ancestors.

To this day, starting from Isayas, we have not seen or heard of anyone among those types who have not used the noble causes of democracy and justice as cover while pursuing their narrow political ambitions and power calculations to the disadvantage of many. Our Society will not have been freed, nor shall we succeed to achieve democratic culture to prevail in our midst, unless we rid ourselves off of such hindrances and shortcomings that are standing in the way of achieving peace, stability and democracy in our country. For heavens sake, why can't we at least learn to respect and tolerate each other, even if we differ?

Whatever reservations we may have against Western culture, why couldn't we at least learn something worthwhile from those failed Western governments that subject themselves to the vote of confidence of their constituencies who are, in the final analysis, the legitimate source and mandate of their power, and abide by their verdict. The overwhelming majority of ELF-RC members have sought or done nothing different.

Finally, I would like to inform you that Ahmed Mohammed Nasser, Dr. Yusuf Berhanu, Dr. Sahle Tesfai, Iyob Beserat, Samuel Daniel, Dr. Habte Tesfamariam and Negash Osman are authorised to help you in any way they can in your search for the underlying causes of the crisis with which our organization has come to grips during the chairmanship of Seyoum Ogbamichael. I suggest also that you be able to sift the wheat from the chaff while sorting and compiling the voluminous material of recriminations,

accusations and counter-accusations that has been bombarding the electronic media by the two camps in arriving at objective conclusions.

With best regards,

Dr. Beyene Kidane

Chairman of the Executive Committee

ELF-RC

Note: E-mail addresses of our colleagues:

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