Leadership Vacuum and its Destructive Impact on the Cultural Dimension of Nation Building: The Illustration of the so called "Peoples' Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ)" Central Office in Eritrea

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Applying a qualitative case-study research approach, the purpose of this article is to examine the cultural dimension of nation building in Eritrea. Some of the main conclusions drawn are that the current leadership has destroyed the dynamic value-based Eritrean culture, deeply rooted in the uniqueness of the people, and that it has developed an inhumane militarist culture of liquidation, terror, intimidation, silence, blind obedience, unaccountability, mendacity, large power distance, time mismanagement, uncertainty, distrust, division, ambivalence, hailing the criminal and criminalizing the innocent to secure the one man rule, i.e. an absolute and unique dictatorial leadership in the history of mankind.

INTRODUCTION

Referring to various organizational theory literature such as (Kotter, 1999 & 2001; Yukl, 2001 & 2005; Adei, 2004; Bloisi et al. 2003; Warren & Burt, 1985 and Northouse, 2004); Abraha (2009) defined, recapitulated and linked the concept of leadership, the specific roles and qualities (characteristics) of developmental (effective) and legacy-building leadership with nation building. Thereafter a model (conceptual framework) of developmental (effective) leadership which is presented in Fig. 1, page 4 is developed. In Abraha (2009) effective leadership is defined as managing changes by setting a direction, i.e. creating a vision, setting goals, promoting values, formulating strategies, mobilizing people, managing changes, developing other leaders, making decisions and solving strategic problems.

In the same work, nation building is defined as "the systematic implementation and achievement of the political, economic, social and cultural visions and goals articulated after independence in light of what was promised to the Eritrean people during the liberation struggle and in the aftermath of liberation. By applying the developed model, figure 1 page 4, Abraha (2009) examined the social dimension of nation building which is one of the four main components of nation building. As a continuation and based on the recommendation of Abraha's (2009) article, applying the same model, the main purpose of this (current) article is to examine the cultural dimension of nation building and the role of leadership in the management, development, implementation and achievement of the cultural vision and goals as an important component of nation building. Moreover, the current study assesses whether the cultural dimension of the nation building was successful or not and why. Finally, it concludes by assessing the appropriateness of the leadership to the cultural dimension of the nation building.
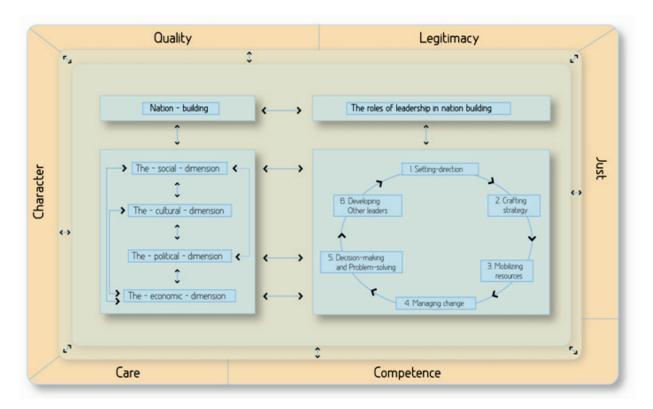
There are two main reasons to conduct this study: (i) there are widespread crises of developmental (effective) political leadership in Africa in general and Eritrea in particular. Considering this problem, this article endeavours to deepen and broaden our knowledge of the nation building process and the specific

role of leadership in the process and thereby to make a contribution to the solution of the crises which are endemic in the continent and (ii) there are conflicting views among Eritreans regarding the cultural dimension of nation building and the quality of the leadership in Eritrea. The proponents of the government claim that the quality of leadership is very high, whereas the opponents attribute the current saddening situation of the nation to the lack of appropriate, i.e. developmental (effective) and quality leadership. Thus, this work endeavours to bridge the gap which exists among Eritreans in the issue examined which in its turn can facilitate the nation building task by highlighting the main characteristics and qualities of the current leadership. Moreover, it sheds light and thereby makes a contribution to solve, or at least improve, the serious leadership crises which are endemic to the African continent.

A MODEL OF DEVELOPMENTAL (EFFECTIVE) LEADERSHIP IN NATION BUILDING

A model which contains three groups of variables is presented in Figure 1 below. The three groups of variables are: (i) the four dimensions of nation building, (ii) the six roles of leaders that build modern nations, and (iii) the characteristics by which developmental (effective) and legacy-building leaders are marked in nation building.

FIGURE 1
A MODEL OF DEVELOPMENTAL (EFFECTIVE) LEADERSHIP IN NATION BUILDING

THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF NATION BUILDING

Engendering a dynamic value-based culture rooted in a people's uniqueness; developing appropriate economic infrastructure and policies; building a matured, progressive, stable and participatory political pluralism; and building social unity and cohesion are the four dimensions of nation building. This article addresses the first dimension, i.e. engendering a dynamic value-based culture, specifically the cultural dimension of nation building in Eritrea.

The Cultural Dimension of Nation Building

Culture is defined as the values, beliefs, orientations and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society (Schein, 1985). The first scholar to notice the relationship between progress and culture is Marx Weber, as he postulated that the pillars on which Western capitalism, initially was built upon was the Calvinistic Protestant ethic of hard work, frugality and better time management, etc. (Weber, 1905). In a broader sense, according to Jobber & Fahy (2009), the three social influences on consumer behaviour are: culture, social class and reference groups.

Likewise, Hofstede (1992) applied the following five dimensions of culture to explain how cultural values influence various types of business and market behaviour (i) Individualism versus collectivism, (ii) Power distance that measures the tolerance of social inequality, that is, the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally, (iii) Uncertainty avoidance that measures how much members of a society tolerate uncertainty, (iv) Masculinity versus femininity deals with the division of roles between men and women and (v) Long-term versus short-term time orientation.

The author argues that the five cultural values presented above and other aspects of culture influence the citizens' behaviour and mode of life in any country which in its turn affects how a nation is built and progresses. This is because all those elements of culture serve as pillars in building and determining the social, political, economic, ideological, legal structures and in determining a society's behaviour and way of life which makes them of vital concern to nation building. In other words, all the main elements of culture in any country or society are some of the vital determinants of the nation building process and national progress. To conclude, the nation building process and national progress can be achieved, i.e. be successful or fail, be promoted or retarded based on the prevailing and developing cultural values in any country.

In this article, the impact of the following elements of culture in nation building will be addressed. *Power-distance* can either be wide or narrow. It measures how much a society and its members tolerate an unequal distribution of power in the society as a whole and in organizations in the society (Usuiner and Lee, 2009). In a society where power distance is wide people tolerate whatever the over ordinates do irrespective of whether it is good or bad. Do people react or remain passive whenever their leaders violate e.g. the rule of law, human rights and justice. If people accept whatever leaders do, power distance is wide, however if they oppose when something goes wrong power distance is narrow. *Individualism* versus *Collectivism* in determining national as well as other issues of common concern. In the case where individualism is a dominant culture, the issues of national and common concern are decided on the basis of individual wishes and whims and in the case of a collectivist society, the national and common issues are decided by the decisions done collectively by the concerned authorities (Adei, 2004). *Masculinity* versus *Femininity*. The emphasis on masculine societies is on assertiveness, money, showing off possessions and caring less about the welfare of others (Usuiner and Lee, 2009). According to the same source, the emphasis in female societies is on nurturing roles, interdependence between people and caring for others (who are seen as worth caring for, because they are weak). It also refers to how much and to what extent duties and responsibilities of men and women are properly determined in a society. *High* versus *low level of uncertainty avoidance* measures the extent to which people in a certain country are risk-takers or risk-averters in their everyday life (Hofstede, 1992). *Long-Term* versus *Short-Term Time Orientation* measures people's attitude to work and time management (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 2010). If people discuss issues of common concern and take the necessary measures in the immediate and right time one can say there is a short-time orientation in a society, however if people simply postpone national as well other issues of common concern for an indefinite period of time, long-term orientation is a typical feature. *Neutrality (Ambivalence)* versus *Active Participation* measures how people react in the case of wrong doings such as human rights violations. In such occasions do people remain passive or actively participate? The degree of acceptance of *Evidence based* versus *Unsubstantiated Allegations*. This is a measurement of to what extent people expect and demand their leaders to present evidence before and or after any measure/s at the individual, organizational or national level are taken. *High* versus *Low Level of the love of a country*. This concept measures whether the level of the citizens' love of their country is high

or low. If people are ready to pay the necessary sacrifices to promote national interest high level of the love of country can be said to be prevailing in a certain society. However, if people are not ready to make the necessary individual sacrifices to promote national interest, the level of the love of a country is low. **Truth Versus Mendacity, Open versus Closed Mindedness** and **Inventiveness versus Lousiness** in everyday life are the cultural elements to be dealt with in this work.

DEVELOPING APPROPRIATE ECONOMIC POLICIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC PROGRESS

This one deals with improving the standard of living, specifically the material welfare of the citizenry. The economic dimension should put more focus on wealth creation, on poverty reduction and on a combination of both depending on the situation prevailing in a certain country. If poverty is at a very low level wealth creation should get the priority and less emphasis should be done on poverty reduction. However, if there is a wide spread poverty in a country priority should be to poverty reduction and less focus on wealth creation. However if both there is moderate level of poverty, both poverty reduction and wealth creation should get more or less the same emphasis.

Building a Participatory, Pluralist, Stable and Progressive Political System

Developing a participatory, pluralist, stable, matured and progressive political order based on the people's traditions and customs is a prerequisite to a successful nation building. According to Basil (1992), one of the main errors of post-independent Africa has been the total rejection of people's traditions and customs in favour of the capitalist and socialist ideologies.

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The social aspects of nation building includes education, health, water, and sanitation, information, communication and technology infrastructure which can be categorized under "socio-economic infrastructure", Adei (2004). These factors can be considered as almost the preconditions for modern nation building. The other aspects of the social dimension of nation building, addressed by Adei (2004) are: Building social cohesion, which incorporates sustained efforts to build social capital. Conflict prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts, these issues necessitate dealing with various factors such as ethnic politics, inequity, and human rights abuses. Additional aspects of the social dimension of nation building include Continuous efforts to build trust, consensus, and dialogue and Promotion of justice, equity, basic freedoms and the reduction of bureaucratic corruption. Abraha (2009) examined the social dimension of nation building in Eritrea by incorporating the above issues in the model, i.e. Figure 1 in page 4.

THE SPECIFIC ROLE (TASK) OF LEADERS

Setting the Direction

Leadership provides direction to nation building by formulating a national vision, by defining national development goals, by promoting right national values, and by being living models of their conviction (Yukl, 2006). To support a radical change, people need to have a vision for a better future that is attractive enough to justify the sacrifices and hardships the change will require. The vision can provide a sense of continuity for followers by linking past events and present strategies to a vivid image of a better future for the organization. To be the driving force of national efforts a vision has to be translated into S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound) goals (Adei, 2004 & Bloisi, 2003).

Crafting Strategy to Fulfil the Vision

Be it governmental, non-profit, or a business to achieve the development goals that flow from the vision, every organization – needs to craft multiple strategies (Bloisi, 2003). The development of

strategies is also applicable to nation building as Adei (2004) discusses it in detail. Leaders have to put together effective growth strategies translated into effective policies and programmes that, over time, enable the realization of national goals.

Mobilizing the Whole Nation behind the Vision, Goals and Strategies

Mobilizing people to achieve a development invariably starts with a competent and trusted national economic management team, such as the Korean Development Institute, and mobilizing the indigenous business community (Adei, 2004). Mobilization can be derived from a clear vision, credible strategy, demonstrating a commitment to improve welfare and being demonstrably zero-tolerant as far as corruption is concerned. Mobilizing people is different and it is more of a communications challenge than a design problem (Kotter, 1999)

Managing Change Effectively

Leaders have to develop the national capacity necessary to manage the chosen path to change and development (Adei, 2004). Kotter (1999) draws two lessons about change management. First, change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time. The second is that critical mistakes in any of the phases can have a devastating impact, slowing momentum and negating hard-won gains.

Decision Making and Problem Solving

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

Developing Other Leaders

According to Kotter (1999) and Kul (2005), one of the main duties of leaders and managers is to develop leadership and management skills. To perform the duty of nation building, a great number of other leaders are needed under the leader of a nation. A successful national development leader should not hesitate to develop a competent leader to function as his successor with a similar vision to continue the ongoing national building process.

DEVELOPMENTAL (EFFECTIVE) AND LEGACY-BUILDING LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

National deterioration occurs if a nation lacks quality, legitimate and just leaders (Munroe, 1993). According to Adei (2004), the three central elements of leadership are quality, legitimacy and just. *Quality* means to be competent in the task of nation building. *Legitimacy* is winning an election. The third is *Just*. If a country has just, competent and legitimate leaders, within a certain period of time that every country is put on an irreversible path to socio-economic development.

Effective leaders tend to possess three important features, i.e. *Character*, *Competence* and *Care* (Janis, 1982).

THE RESEARCH METHODS

Both primary and secondary data are used in this article. The secondary data applied in this work is collected from both the PFDJ charter and other unpublished articles which deal with the Eritrean culture. It is only the data from the PFDJ charter which is included directly in the empirical findings as a secondary data. However, the information in the other articles is not included in the empirical findings and is only used to verify and or to secure the validity of the information collected by interviewing the government officials. The information in the various unpublished articles is not included in the empirical findings as the articles were not published in per-reviewed journals. However, the information in those articles has been seriously considered when the interview questions were formulated, when the interview

was conducted, in transcribing the information collected through interviews and in the analysis of the data and in drawing conclusions when it corresponds with the information collected in the interviews and with the authors knowledge, observation and experience of the Eritrean culture. This shows that the author has checked the validity and reliability of the primary data by comparing it with the information in the unpublished articles and his own knowledge and experience.

The primary data is collected by interviewing previous government officials. The information collected through interviews are included in the empirical findings and their trustworthiness is confirmed as they do correspond with the facts in the articles mentioned above as well as with the author's personal observation, knowledge and experience of the Eritrean culture an Eritrean who is well versed about the Eritrean culture. The author has not included his own personal observation, knowledge and experience in the empirical findings but has used them only as corroboratory evidence to the primary data collected through interviews together with the information from the unpublished articles. The author decided to exclude his own personal observations, experience and knowledge from the empirical findings to avoid the bias that it can introduce to the research. The approach described above increases the validity of the study however the reliability can be moderate like any other qualitative study. Moreover, the number of the respondents was small as it was not an easy task to find other people who were ready to be interviewed. The author is very aware of as to how the very limited number of respondents can affect the reliability of the study but did not have a choice rather than to describe what could be obtained. To increase the validity of the results of this article the author contacted 20 former government officials to provide him with information about the Eritrean culture, however it was only three of them who were ready to be interviewed and to provide the necessary information.

The following procedures are followed to collect primary data. (i) Selection of interviewees: The author identified twenty people who were holding leadership positions during the liberation struggle and after independence. Moreover, others from the academia who possessed knowledge about the Eritrean culture are also identified and contacted. (ii) Formulation of the interview questions: The interview questions are formulated by strictly following the research issues and purpose of the article, the information on the PFDJ charter as well as the information in the unpublished articles. (iii) The research proposal, research methods and interview questions were read and commented by two researchers on cultural issues. Their comments were used to develop further the research issues and interview questions. (iv) Thereafter, the interview questions were sent to three interviewees some days before the interview so that they would read the questions and get prepared for the interview. Even the other seventeen officials who refused to be interviewed have read and commented on the interview questions. Before asking the interviewees the specific interview questions, the three interviewees were asked to provide information about the general Eritrean culture and how it has changed and been developed during the armed struggle and after independence. All three interviews were recorded. The information collected was compiled and sent to the interviewees for their comments and some changes were done on the basis of the comments received. Some of the information was deleted and some additional information was also provided. The author has also asked the other seventeen people who refused to be interviewed to read and to comment on the transcribed interviews and they have made substantial contributions, however they were not ready to be interviewed as the main sources of information. (v) Presentation of the empirical findings: In this section the primary and secondary data collected from the primary and secondary sources were presented in a natural setting; (vi) Data analysis: The analysis was done by linking the empirical data with the various concepts, variables and sub-variables of the conceptual framework in order to address the research issues. Finally, conclusions are drawn and future research implications are drawn considering the contributions and limitations of the current study.

THE CHOICE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODEL

In the applied model five more dimensions of culture have been added to those of Hofstede (1992) and the applied model contains ten dimensions. The author developed the additional five dimensions of culture considering the secondary data presented in Section 5.1 and the primary data in Section 5.2. The

reason for developing five additional dimensions is because the five cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1992) were not found out to be adequate enough to analyze the empirical findings, i.e. both the primary and secondary data. The additional five dimensions of culture are not literature based and are developed by the author in order to be able to make the analytical tool adequate enough to make a comprehensive analysis of the empirical findings so that it will be possible to arrive at credible and reliable conclusions. Both the primary and secondary data contain information which can't be analyzed with the five dimensions of Hofstede (1992) and it is considering the gap among the model and the empirical findings that the author has developed additional five dimensions in order to make the model an adequate and appropriate analytical tool. Hofstede (1992) model is deemed to be relevant to analyze a country's culture by the author and moreover (Usuiner and Lee, 2009) work shows that Hofstede dimensions of culture can be applied in studying a society's and organizational culture. The work of House et al. (1999) was also considered to be applied in this work. However, House et al. (1999) examined cultural influences on leadership and organizations, i.e., the extent to which specific leadership attributes and behaviours are universally endorsed as contributing to effective leadership and the extent to which the endorsement of leader attributes and behaviours is culturally contingent. However, as the problem and purpose of House et al. (1999) differs from the problem and purpose of this article, the author has considered it to be less relevant to this work. To make it clearer, the main purpose of this (current) article is to examine the cultural dimension of nation building and the role of leadership in the management, development, implementation and achievement of the cultural vision and goals as an important component of nation building.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Secondary Data

In the PFDJ NATIONAL CHARTER, adopted by the 3rd Congress of the EPLF/PFDJ, (1994) under section 2, our vision for a future Eritrea and under the sub-section our vision can be summarized into six basic goals and specifically under number 5 which deals with cultural revival, one finds the statement below:

> "5 Cultural Revival: Drawing on our rich cultural heritage and on the progressive values we developed during the liberation, to develop an Eritrean culture characterized by love of country, respect for humanity, solidarity between men and women, love of truth and justice, respect for law, hard work, self-confidence, self-reliance, open mindedness and inventiveness."

Primary Data

The primary data is collected by interviewing three former government officials who are now in the Diaspora. They prefer to remain anonymous and are named as respondent one (R1), respondent two (R2) and respondent three (R3).

R1 described the power distance development and situation as follows: "Whatever is being said and done by the leaders is not at all questioned irrespective of whether one agrees or disagrees. This is something that started during the armed struggle and continued to be wider and wider and it can be said that it has reached an extreme width at present." R2 continued the discussion confirming what was said by R1, narrating that "Silence by the subordinates in the front and the people are tactically created by the leadership through coercion, intimidation and terror. Objecting and questioning what is being said by the leadership in the front and thereby in the country is not at all allowed and those who object are isolated, terrorized, labelled as traitors and different measures can be taken upon them depending on the situation." R3 continued the discussion as follows: "The power distance is not only large but it is getting larger and larger in due course of time and what one can find now in the country at present is an absolute and complete dictatorship in Eritrea which is unique in the history of mankind. Disappearances and languishing in prisons for an indefinite period of time without facing any trial are some of the typical consequences of objecting orders and maintaining and airing out divergent views contrary to what is

coming from the leadership." As an Eritrean, the author's observation is that "Opposing whatever the leaders do is regarded as treason. Isolation, freezing, and imprisonment for an indefinite period of time can be the measures against those who oppose."

Individualism versus collectivism in decision making is said to be in current Eritrea as follows. According to R1, "In the Eritrean society, there was a collectivist way of thinking, decision making, mode of behaviour and mode of operations in almost everyday life. But, the collectivist structure started to change towards an individualist one in the armed struggle following the power distance which was created by the leadership as a means of creating a one man rule." R2 does not differ at all from R1 in his answers. Accordingly, "decisions are made in advance by the individual at the top and a sort of collectivist discussion is conducted to only formalize or ratify what is already single-handedly decided and to present it as a collectivist decision. The president chairs the meetings and discussions are carried out in a very manipulative manner and he does not at all give participants the chance to present and air out divergent views. The loyalist and conformist behaviour of people is secured before they are given the position that allow them to participate in the artificial decision making process. Thereafter, the one man decision is made public in the name of the so-called decision making authority." To R3 individualism versus collectivism in Eritrea functions as follows: "The typical collectivist Eritrean culture is eradicated by the leadership as it does not serve or tolerate the one-man rule. It is replaced by the individualist militarist culture as it serves as one of the main pillars of the illegal regime which does not at all understand the rule of law. What is funny, accordingly, the regime claims to have developed and created a collectivist culture and mode of life which is diametrically the opposite of the prevailing situation in Eritrea. The regime definitely knows that its claims are not at all accepted or shared by anyone in the country however it has the audacity to brag about the collectivist mode of life it has established in the Eritrean society. This clearly shows that the culture of mendacity is being developed starting from people who are holding very positions in the current illegal and lawless regime."

Both masculinity and femininity do exist at present in Eritrea, according to the three respondents. "The president himself is very assertive in all his expressions whether he believes in whatever he says or not and whether his assertions are accepted or not. He very well knows that people do not trust whatever he says but he does say it as he knows that nobody would dare to oppose. He can thus be said to portray a masculine character and expects everyone else either to make the same assertions as he does or to remain silent. In sum, he is assertive and others can also be assertive conforming to whatever he says and does not refuting his 'deeds' and words."

There is an extremely high level of uncertainty avoidance in the Eritrean society at present, according to the three respondents. R1 narrates that "people prefer to be silent in order to avoid the consequences of being active and to take a stand whenever crucial issues are taken up for discussion. The main reason for silence is that people are most of the time doubtful when some issues which are considered to be critical are included in the agenda set for a discussion. As an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust dominates the prevailing situation in Eritrea which means that people do not exactly know why certain issues are discussed, to avoid all the subsequent ifs they remain quite. Of course, remaining silent is not at all appreciated by the authorities but it is much safer rather than to be active and take a stand. Remaining silent leads to suspicion and interrogation as it is considered by the leadership to be related to some new developments which are not to its favour." R2 explains this situation as follows: "If things develop positively in line with one's arguments and positive results are achieved, the results are said to be the fruits of the hardworking leaders' efforts and one will not face any problem as long as one can attribute his contributions to the president and his henchmen. However, if things develop to the contrary and the results are a failure, those who were active and took a stand are kept accountable for the failures and they can face severe punishments. To avoid bearing the consequences of failures, people try to remain quiet and that is why a high level of uncertainty avoidance is a typical feature in Eritrea at present." R3 fully agrees with R1 and R2 and said that "it will make too much sense to make comments in connection with the issue following the cultural dimension long-term versus shor-term time orientation."

R3 discusses the fifth dimension long-term versus short-term time orientation by relating it to uncertainty avoidance as follows: "Depending on the situation, a combination of both long-term and

short-term time orientation characterizes people's daily life during the armed struggle and after independence in present Eritrea. However the attitude to work and time management has changed after independence in line with the notorious PFDJ militarist culture which is typically characterized by mendacity and denial of the truth. In independent Eritrea the attitude to work and time are two of the mainly mismanaged resources. When a high level of uncertainty avoidance prevails in a society there cannot be a positive attitude to work and proper management of time." After confirming R3s position, R2 presents the following explanation as to why there cannot be a positive attitude to work and a proper management of time. Accordingly, "what is rewarded is on the first hand confirming to whatever position the leaders take and if that is done one has to remain silent and obedient to whatever instruction comes from the above. Proper management of time and attitude to work are not as such very important. What is in the priority list of the authorities is to hail and accept whatever the leadership does, i.e. to follow it blindly and such an approach and attitude is rewarded best." R1 concludes this aspect of culture with the following statements: "The person who mismanages the most critical resources time and work is the president by postponing whatever question is raised to an indefinite period of time. Whenever the president wants to avoid answering questions he tells his listeners/audience that the concerned people will come up with the appropriate information or decision in the appropriate time. Such promises or statements are done by the president since he came to power in 1970 and none of the promised explanations or answers are given by anybody up till now. Moreover, all those who are maintaining high positions in this illegal regime are those who followed the same resource or time mismanagement model and who have blindly followed the presidents orders not those who maintain a positive attitude to work and to the management of time. The very fact that time and work are extremely mismanaged by the president can be explained by his method of freezing highly qualified and experience people from their ordinary job for a number of years and to get paid their usual salary though they sit idly. It is those who oppose the leadership that get frozen from their job not those who are blind followers."

The sixth dimension of culture is neutrality/ambivalence versus active participation in case something goes wrong. R1 commented as follows: "the PFDJ leadership has developed a culture of ambivalence, i.e. to remain neutral whenever crimes are committed or anything goes wrong in the behaviours and actions of the leadership. Alternatively, it is safe for people to show their support whenever something goes wrong or when human rights are violated. This is tantamount to not to question whatever the leaders do and it does not concern people whenever things go wrong. Consequently, people have developed a culture of pretension as if nothing has happened or taken place which makes it possible for the leadership to use its whips in achieving its whims." R2 has made the following comments on this issue: "Various groups are organized by the leadership in different periods of time to spread this poisonous culture. Whenever, the leadership has made or intends to make some serious blunders, it activates these groups among the people or the army to preach for neutrality and indirectly to make legitimate and acceptable any illegal measures." "The fact that people do not participate actively and do not try to find out what has taken place and why and simply remain dormant as if nothing has happened, when it actually has happened can be observed in the daily life in Eritrea. It is not only that people remain neutral in such instances, some people actually hail the illegal and criminal acts of the leaders as such opportunistic behaviours are highly rewarded by the leadership. It is such type of people that one can find holding various key positions at various levels in the PFDJ regime, which is characterized with a typical inhuman militarist culture, according to R3." The existence of the militarist culture in the PFDJ regime is confirmed by R1 and R2. Accordingly, "the ruling clique terrorizes, intimidates, pacifies its opponents, however if those measures do not bear the intended results it finally imprisons and or liquidates its opponents, i.e. those who maintain divergent views that question and can threaten its political and leadership position. This clearly shows that it has created an inhuman militarist culture characterized by terror, intimidation, demoralization, isolation, liquidation, silence, blind obedience, secrecy, unaccountability, distrust, division and mendacity."

The degree of acceptance of evidence based versus unsubstantiated allegations is also another cultural dimension discussed in the conceptual framework. R1, R2 and R3 have fully agreed that "people have started to accept the president's unsubstantiated allegations against some elements without asking any

evidence. The president whenever asked as to why certain measures are taken and what is happening the usual answer is to tell people that the concerned elements will give the right explanation about this issue or those issues when the time is ripe. Asking a concrete evidence whenever people are punished or some measures are taken against them is considered like a treasonous act and it can cost someone, whatever the president or his henchmen consider to be appropriate. Such an inhuman and harsh approach makes people remain silent, actually when they should agitate in public and ask for substantiated evidence as to why such measures are taken." The author's experience is that "a culture of ambivalence to secure his own existence, mendacity, pretension, justifying the unjustifiable to satisfy the leaders, the culture of why should I get bothered when those who oppose injustice suffer, the culture of denying the truth and the culture of reversed reality replaced the typical Eritrean culture of tell the truth and sleep in the railway line. Instead of saying/telling the truth, pretending as one has neither seen nor heard the suffering of the innocent or supporting injustice to secure self-promotion is observed to occur in the people's daily life in current Eritrea."

Making true versus mendacious statements whenever serious explanations and concrete evidences are needed in critical junctures or public meetings and interviews is the another dimension of culture considered in this study. According to R1, R2 and R3, "Say the truth and sleep in a railway line was the typical Eritrean culture. But, truth has lost its value after independence" according to all three respondents. "What is important or of value now is how to climb in the ruling clique's hierarchy. It is not the one who tells the truth who can get or consolidate power in the current Eritrean regime. Denying the truth and telling something which is totally a lie has started to become a reality in the country which is highly valued. The person who is well known for denying the truth or the reality and telling something which is a pure lie is the president. In various occasions he has been heard saying something which does not reflect the reality in the ground. The president has made mendacious statements by denying the truth in televised interviews, public meetings and occasions such as a New Year address. Nobody dares to expose the lies as it can have grave consequences and, to the contrary, people blindly accept the lies and it is really frustrating to listen to people repeating the white lies of the president. Such coward behaviour is rewarded with promotions and different types of benefits. In sum, it can be said that tell the truth and sleep in a railway line is replaced by repeat whatever the people in power say even if you definitely know that they are denying the truth and you will get some temporary benefits."

High versus low level of the love of country is also another cultural dimension discussed incorporated in the applied model. R1, R2 and R3 agreed that "there was a very high level of the love of the country among Eritreans during the armed struggle and during the early years of independence." R1 explains "the high level of the love of the country of Eritreans could be measured by the readiness and willingness of both the youth and the elder generation both the male and female showed to join both liberation fronts during the armed struggle. On top of that Eritreans sacrificed their precious life to liberate their country which shows the high level of love of the country." R2 compared the proportion of Eritreans who joined the revolution with those who were going to the Diaspora before and after independence to show the change which is taking place in the level of the love of country by Eritreans. Accordingly, "The level of the love of country has declined sharply as the number Eritreans who were going abroad was a very small percentage of those who were joining the liberation struggle to sacrifice their life for the cause of the people. However, at present the number of Eritreans who want to live in the country is a very minor percentage of those who want to go abroad a change which clearly shows how the love of country is changing from time to time after independence." R3 explains the situation as follows. "Actually, it cannot be said that the love of country is declining but it makes more sense to say that people have lost hope in the leadership which is bleeding the country into death and people try to leave the country to search for a better life in the Diaspora as they do not see a promising future in the country. Moreover, most of those veteran fighters of the liberation struggle are not properly rewarded by the leadership and people have started to develop the attitude of why should I, i.e. an attitude which has a negative impact on the level of the love of country."

Open versus *closed mindedness* as well *as inventiveness* versus *lousiness* is the last cultural aspects discussed. R1, R2 and R3 said that "those two issues are closely related and argued that it is better to

address them jointly rather than deal with them separately to avoid confusion." Specifically, according to R1 "open mindedness and inventiveness are well appreciated and encouraged by the Eritrean leadership as long as they can contribute to the development and consolidation of their political power. However, by being open and inventive if one can challenge the leadership excessive illegal and unconstitutional power and if one can disclose their failures and misuse of power it is not at all tolerated and it can have very serious consequences and one can be labelled as a traitor or be accused as a treasonous individual." According to R2, "open and inventive minds are in the process of being replaced by closed mindedness and lousiness as a means of avoiding uncertainty and the thereby following harsh measures that can be taken against those who are involved." R3 made the following comments: "A person who is open and inventive and who tries to find out mysterious things and facts that can lead to the disclosure of the leadership failures is not at all tolerated by the leadership as that can threaten its position. Such an act can be punished and to be on the safe side people have chosen to remain passive by being blind followers of the developments which are initiated and appreciated by the leadership."

DISCUSSION

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

The main problem is not to assess how credible and realistic the cultural vision is and how it is implemented. The problem is due to the absence of a properly defined cultural vision and goals of nation building. Of course one can find a cultural vision in the PFDJ charter which was adopted in 1994. The ruling clique calls this charter a national charter and the author argues that this is unconstitutional and illegitimate as the PFDJ party is by itself an illegal and unconstitutional organization which is not the legitimate representative of the Eritrean people. This proves that the PFDJ has imposed its inhuman and militarist cultural vision, views, values and goals which are discussed in the previous section on the whole country and its population.

This is a top-down approach rather which means that leadership sets a party direction and vision and imposes it to be a national vision and the people participate only by accepting what is imposed on them with no consideration of their vision, views, values and goals. The approach denies to the people the right to determine theirs and their country's future and destiny. This is a leadership failure as it does not differentiate a party's vision from a national vision, and at the same time as it imposes its party's militaristic vision on the whole country. The other leadership failure is its inability to understand that a nation cannot be built in the absence of well defined and articulated national direction and vision developed with the full participation of the people. The third failure is the development of the non-participatory and top-down approach which does not consider the views, core values, principles and will of the people.

The contents of the cultural vision enshrined in the PFDJ charter under ´cultural revival´ are also based on false premises as to what are promised to be developed in that section are cultural values which were possessed by the Eritrean people even before the beginning of the revolution. To claim that those values are developed during the armed struggle and will be developed further after independence makes the vision itself incredible, unrealistic, non-measurable and unachievable. Actually, the primary data has clearly illustrated that the clique in power has destroyed the dynamic value-based culture rooted in the people's uniqueness as such a culture does not tolerate the one man rule. Let us consider another aspect of the cultural vision that the charter promised and, i.e. to develop an Eritrean culture characterized by love of country. About one hundred thousand Eritreans are martyred to liberate the country and to defend its independence. If the love of country was not deeply rooted in the cultural value of the people, Eritreans would not fight for thirty years to liberate the country and they would not have continued to do so to defend the liberated country. This clearly shows that the leadership has miserably failed to be a living model for its conviction as it is not convicted at all.

To be the driving force of national efforts a vision has to be translated into S.M.A.R.T. goals. However, as the vision was not at all realistic and credible it could not be converted into S.M.A.R.T goals and this makes it a major handicap in nation building which is one of the major failures of the leadership.

Actually, the major leadership failure is that it destroyed the Eritreans love of their country and replaced it by the militarist culture to secure personal aggrandizement and personal interest of the leaders. At present everyone starting from the president has become self-centred and promotes his own interest at the expense of the people and the country. Anyone who gets an opportunity leaves the country and does not want to return as one cannot see a better future that is attractive enough to justify the sacrifices and hardships the change will require.

The primary data provides a clear evidence that the leadership destroyed the Eritrean culture and replaced it by its militarist culture that serves its hidden vision and goals and this is one of its serious cultural blunders and worst failures in the cultural dimension of the nation building process in particular, and in the Eritrean history in general. The main aim of replacing the Eritrean culture by the militarist culture is to implement the PFDJ vision, i.e. the undeclared and hidden vision at the cost of the Eritrean official vision of building a peaceful, developed, democratic and constitutional government that respects human rights and the rule of law.

The cultural blunder committed by the core leadership created one of the serious in-depth division at various levels in the party in 2000 (http://news.asmarino.com/PFDJ/membership/Introduction.asp). The division had and has a catastrophic impact on the nation building process. One of the main reasons for the division in the party is because there was no unity about the vision of nation building in general and the cultural aspect in particular. It is also a clear illustration of the fact that the party charter was not even fully shared by the leadership and the other members. This further shows that a certain core faction of the leadership has imposed its vision and values not only on the party members and on the population as a whole, but also on another leadership faction, i.e. a peripheral faction of the leadership. Imposing the minority's cultural vision on the other leadership members in particular and on the population in general is a serious cultural blunder and a measure leadership failure in nation building.

Crafting Strategy to Fulfil the Vision

The primary data has clearly illustrated that that there was no credible cultural vision developed by the PFDJ. Moreover, the PFDJ vision was not set to be implemented but to mobilize various types of resources and to make the people rally behind the clique in power and to finally use the resources and the people to support the hidden vision and goals of the one man built and owned regime and its leadership. Instead of developing the said vision, the leadership developed a militarist strategy to destroy the existing value-based culture and to replace it by the PFDJ militarist culture that can serve the implementation of the vision of the one man unconstitutional regime. The militarist culture prevailing in Eritrea today and the strategy applied to build it is a long range process that started during the armed struggle. After independence, the same militarist strategy and militarist culture in a modified form camouflaged by some seemingly civilian values are applied though the objectives and the strategies of the leaders have remained the same.

Mobilizing the Whole Nation behind the Vision, Goals and Strategies

Some of the prerequisites to mobilize people behind the vision, goals and strategies are a clear vision, credible strategy and a demonstrated commitment to improve welfare and being demonstrably zero-tolerant of corruption. All these prerequisites are nonexistent in Eritrea and they cannot be used to mobilize the people to rally behind the hidden militarist vision, the accompanying deceptive militarist strategies and the thereby following hidden militarist goals.

The current leadership applies various militarist tactics such as coercion, deception, denial of the reality, diversion, confusion, distortion, terror and intimidation to mobilize the people, as it cannot mobilize people by motivation and inspiration. It cannot at all motivate and inspire people to motivate them in the implementation of the militarist vision as it never did or attempted to satisfy basic human needs for achieving a sense of belongingness, recognition, self-esteem, a feeling of control over one's life, and the ability to live up to one's ideals. It has committed a militarist cultural blunder and a leadership that has scored a worst failure in the cultural dimension of nation building cannot motivate people to rally behind the vague militarist vision, the thereby following militarist strategies and hidden militarist goals.

Managing Change Effectively

Nation building is mainly a matter of managing change effectively. The PFDJ clique in power is not ready to make any change that does not serve its power interest. If it notices that a change can weaken its position it takes militarist measures which are diametrically the opposite of the change needed. Those who take initiatives for change can get punished with extremely harsh measures which are beyond imagination. In 2000 two groups of Eritreans took initiatives for a positive change when they clearly understood that the nation building process was jeopardized and was moving in the wrong direction. The ruling cliqued denied this reality and totally rejected the change demanded by accusing both groups of committing treasonous acts. The clique in power promised to build the existing Eritrean cultural values which is incredible and unrealistic. Finally, it destroyed those cultural values and replaced them by the militarist culture which can facilitate the implementation of the hidden militarist vision and militarist goals.

Decision Making and Problem Solving

It is already illustrated that the leadership has failed to perform the first four tasks of leadership. These failures prove how poor and incapable the leadership is to make decisions and to solve problems. Actually, making underground, unpredictable and incomprehensible militarist decisions, creating problems and a sense of uncertainty, insecurity and tension typically characterize the leadership rather than making rational decisions and solving problems. It is not leadership by decision making and problem solving that typically operates in Eritrea, it is rather leadership by tension, uncertainty, insecurity, intimidation, interrogation, terror, distortion, disinformation, confusion and denying the reality. Such type of an atmosphere enables the leaders to cover up their weaknesses and past failures and to put the blame of the failures on others. Actually, the decision to destroy the Eritrean culture and to replace it by the militarist culture is a very clear evidence of the lack of the proper quality of decision making and problem solving. The other typical example which shows how poor the quality of leadership is in terms of decision making and problem solving is how the president and his 'yes-boss' clique has dealt with the border issue with Ethiopia from 1998-2000.

Developing Other Leaders

One of the main duties of the PFDJ central office is to develop blind followers of the president and at the same time to destroy any leadership quality that exists in the country to demonstrate that the president is irreplaceable. Instead of strengthening the existing leadership quality immediately after independence, the president started to destroy, defame and underestimate the leadership capacity of the liberation struggle veterans and that of the civilians. Anyone who possessed a leadership quality in the country was either frozen or imprisoned or isolated and demoralized by the clique in power. The fact that the president has destroyed and is still destroying the existing leadership quality instead of developing new leaders and multiplying the existing ones is another remarkable chapter in the series of his failed chapters in the Eritrean history. According to the myth in the country which the people are made to widely believe, the only person who possesses leadership quality in the country is the president which is completely false.

DEVELOPMENTAL (EFFECTIVE) AND LEGACY-BUILDING LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

The fact that the leadership has systematically destroyed the typical Eritrean culture and at the same time national deterioration is occurring and getting worse continuously is a clear indication that the country lacks quality, legitimate and just leaders. Moreover, the fact that the leadership has done to the contrary of what it promised to do in the cultural dimension of nation building is a clear evidence that it does not possess the character, competence and care of developmental (effective) leadership.

CONCLUSIONS

This article both theoretically and empirically illustrates that the Eritrean regime has committed a cultural blunder and scored one of its main historical failures in the cultural dimension of nation building. The justification for this conclusion is that this work has clearly demonstrated that the current leadership has systematically and in a well-planned approach destroyed the dynamic value-based Eritrean culture which is deeply rooted in the uniqueness of the people. The other justification is that the main reason for destroying the Eritrean culture is that the leadership has from its early existence realised that such a value-based culture cannot serve as a pillar or building block for the illegal PFDJ regime. The other conclusion is that the one man built, owned and controlled leadership has replaced the Eritrean culture by a militarist culture of liquidation, terror, intimidation, silence, blind obedience, unaccountability, secrecy, mendacity, large power distance, time mismanagement, uncertainty, distrust, division and ambivalence to secure the illegal and unconstitutional one man rule. The other conclusion is that the cause for the failure in the cultural dimension of nation building is the lack of a developmental leadership and this is justified by the fact that the leadership does not possess quality, legitimacy, justice, character, care and competence to accomplish the task of nation building successfully. Moreover, it developed an incredible, unattractive, unclear, unspecified, non-measurable, non-achievable, unrealistic and not time bound militarist vision, goals and values that derailed the nation building process instead of providing proper direction for nation building as it promised. It further developed inappropriate militarist strategies which are inappropriate to mobilize people behind the nation building process. The other leadership deficiencies are its inability to deal with development challenges, to make vital decisions and to develop other leaders. The final conclusion is that a leader that can match the task of a nation building is a visionary and interactive leader that possesses quality, legitimacy, justice, care and competence none of which the Eritrean leadership possesses.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Firstly, the vision of nation building has to be developed with the full participation of the population from the very early stage. Secondly, the leadership has to be honest to its people and should not promise a vision that it is not committed to and that it never intends to implement. Thirdly, developing a hidden party vision and mobilizing resources in the name of the official vision to be used in the implementation of the hidden vision creates only confusion and nothing can be achieved from this mysterious way of leading nation building. Fourthly, such an approach makes people suspicious and makes it very difficult to make them rally behind any vision in the future. Fifthly, for the leadership to win the trust of the people again adequate explanation should be given of the underlying causes for failure and the lessons drawn and how they will be incorporated in the future course plans. Finally, an action plan should be developed by the leadership to bridge the competence gap that exists among the current leadership and the leadership that can conduct the task of nation building successfully, i.e. a developmental (effective) leadership in nation building.

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