

## ***The Process of Nation Building and State Construction under Arrest in Eritrea: Unmasking the Evils of the Rapacious Regime***

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**Part II**



As explained in Part I of this piece, over the last quarter of a century, Issaias has consolidated immense personal power through neo-patrimonial policies that encourage corruption, rent-seeking, nepotism and clientilism at the expense of nation-building and constitutional governance. He created a Rapacious Regime that

exists to extract resources from the Eritrean people in order to continue its own survival. The regime has the power of aggressing with impunity and its hunting field is not limited only on its subjects inside the Eritrean territorial boundaries. It also asserts its predatory and coercive activities on its subjects within the Eritrean Diaspora communities. Generally, the relationship between the regime and the Eritrean people is not different from the relationship between a “predator” and its “prey”. As a predator cares less about the welfare of its prey, Issaias and his Rapacious Regime care less about the Eritrean people.



The Eritrean people have become “**captive prey**” and its bare survival is under threat from excessive extraction of resources. The burden of tributes, forced labor, and conscription has become so unbearable that the Eritrean people have started to resist

against this excessive predation. Under this circumstance, the anti-predatory strategy options of the Eritrean people are “*flight or fight*”. Given the asymmetric power balance between the regime (predator) and the Eritrean people (prey), the principal anti-predatory strategy of the Eritrean people has, however, become “*physical flight*” rather than “*fight*”. The mass exodus of Eritreans (particularly the youth), business enterprises and entrepreneurs, and human and physical capital during the last two decades is nothing but an exercise of this anti-predatory strategy on the part of the Eritrean people (the prey).

The anti-predatory strategy which has a dire and lasting negative consequence to the survival of Eritrea as a sovereign state and people is the continuous flights of the young from the country. The most vital and dynamic force of the Eritrean society (the youth) is fleeing the country in droves. Considering the critical roles that the young play in any socio-economic and political development of a country, this phenomenon is worrisome and it should be reversed sooner than later. The youth is the most betrayed and the one, which endures the brunt of the injustices of the dictatorship in post-independent Eritrea. Forced labor and indefinite national service are imposed with detrimental effect to its future upon this group. For this group, fleeing the country has become the last resort and yet at the expense of risking its life and in the face of the “shoot-to-kill” policy of the regime. Many perished while crossing borders, great deserts, and deep and wide seas and oceans. Some are languishing in refugee camps of their host countries. Yet, the exodus continues unabated. In the language of cost-benefit calculus, this indicates that the discounted cost-benefit of staying in Eritrea far exceeds the discounted cost-benefit of fleeing the country. The choice is between staying and losing one’s future or taking greater risk of fleeing and reclaiming one’s future but with some probability of losing one’s life.

Therefore, the continued mass exodus indicates the degree and the extent of hopelessness among the Eritrean youth about their futures in Eritrea. To them, Eritrea is a country where promises are never met and dreams are never come true. A vicious cycle of hopelessness and stagnation is continuing in the country. From a socio-economic perspective, the exodus of the younger population is an indication that the Eritrean society is in danger of decaying and subsequent extinction. A country or a society without the young has no future, especially when those who are emigrating seem to be ambitious, more willing to take risk, hardworking, more educated, more open to new ideas, and more willing to innovate. Since socio-economic development and progress of any society squarely depends on the human factor, an educated and skilled youth is the most vital factor for the survival, growth and development of the Eritrean society. Unfortunately, Eritrea is losing this vital ingredient very fast with a dire consequence to the future survival of the “*Eritrean Identity*”.

To avert this danger and to reverse the process of societal decay, it is imperative for Eritreans to fully understand the nature and characteristics of the Rapacious Regime - “mother of all evils in Eritrea”. The synergies between extractive political and economic institutions of PFDJ have created a vicious cycle which seems to persist. Breaking this

vicious cycle and replacing it with a “virtuous cycle” – synergies between inclusive political and economic institutions – is the solution. It is strongly believed that the fundamental contradiction that should take precedence in our struggle for justice, rule of law and democracy in Eritrea is the one between those who want to continue to promote the “vicious cycle” and those who want to break the “vicious cycle” and replace it with a “virtuous cycle” – between the dictatorship and injustice, and pluralism and justice, respectively. Differences that emanate from other societal cleavages, such as religion, culture, language, region, historical background (ELF vs. EPLF), etc, do not and should not constitute as basic contradictions in the Eritrean society.

Since inclusive and plural political and economic institutions allow as well as encourage the participation of the great majority of the people; and they also distribute power broadly in society, such issues (differences) are addressed by the normal process of the democratic transition under the “virtuous cycle”. It is important to underline the fact that the solution to the Eritrean quagmire is to dismantle the Rapacious Regime and to replace its absolutist and extractive political and economic institutions by a pluralistic and inclusive political and economic institutions with a united front of the democratic forces of Eritrea, both inside the country and in the Diaspora. To safeguard the Eritrean Identity and Unity, there is a need for the Eritrean public to coalesce on the side of the democratic forces of Eritrea and hasten the demise of the ruthless Rapacious Regime in Eritrea.



It is also vitally important for the Eritrean people to pay attention to the fact that “opposing the Eritrean Government” does not amount as “opposing the State of Eritrea”. The State of Eritrea which includes four elements (the population of Eritrea; the Eritrean Land, Sea and Space; the Eritrean Sovereignty; and the Eritrean Government) is not equivalent to the Eritrean Government. The State of Eritrea is composed of all Eritreans. Whereas, the Eritrean Government consists of

only few selected individuals who run the organs of the government – executive, legislative and judiciary – where there is a strong overlap among these organs in Eritrea. Thus, opposing the Government of Eritrea would mean opposing these selected individuals and not the Eritrean people or the Eritrean Sovereignty. Actually, opposing this group of PFDJ elites is not only a legitimate action but also a necessary and the only way forward for the survival of Eritrea as a nation and Eritreans as a society. *Let the voices of reason and justice win over the voices of evil and injustice and for that to happen a “united front” of the Eritrean people is required.*