

The Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation to Cairo .. Analytical Vision

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"Public Diplomacy" deals with the impacts of public positions on the formation and implementation of foreign policy. It, also, has dimensions of international relations that lie beyond mere traditional diplomacy, where governments form a public opinion concerning other countries, besides the interactions between special groups and their interests with another country. Later, the term "Public Diplomacy" developed to describe the communication, whether directly or through media by individuals or by governmental and non-governmental institutions, with public opinion in foreign countries in order to minimize the negative and traditional impressions as well as the prejudices lingering in the minds of individuals or groups about another country or people. Also, to sympathize with and to understand the ideas, goals, foreign policies or cultures of any other country so as to give a positive image of such country to the public opinion in other countries and to contribute to the achievement of its objectives on the political, economic or cultural level.

To this end, many countries worldwide used Public Diplomacy as an effective means in the convergence of views between the peoples, and to change the misconceptions people have about the other aiming to achieve convergence between them.

The Egyptian Public Diplomacy Delegation to Ethiopia:

In this regard, during the 25th of January Revolution, Cairo recognized the importance of public diplomacy in achieving communication between peoples and convergence of views among them. Thus, Egypt dispatched the first public diplomacy delegation to Ethiopia in April 2011, which comprised

more than 50 persons covering the fields of politics, media, culture and economy.

Ethiopia warmly welcomed the Egyptian delegation on both the official and public levels. This reflected Ethiopia's aspirations to turn the page of the past concerning the mutual relations between the two countries and start supporting as well as strengthening its relations with Egypt "the Revolution", especially after it had found, during the era of its late prime minister "Meles Zenawi", that Mubarak's regime was an obstacle in the way of these relations hindering to reach any positive development for the benefit of the two peoples.

Successfully, the visit made a big difference as it melted the ice between the two countries that used to exist over at least the two decades of Mubarak's rule. In this respect, the delegation met with the Ethiopian Prime Minister, "Meles Zenawi" who confirmed that the Renaissance Dam, which was officially launched by Ethiopia on April 2nd, 2011, shall not inflict any harm to Egypt and its people pointing out that the main goal is to contribute greatly to the achievement of the accelerated development in Ethiopia. The delegation, also, met with the President of

the Republic at the time, "Girma Wolde Giorgis," who predicted that the positive interaction between the two countries shall continue to grow and develop in the future, which was actually fulfilled later as regards the positive developments in the relations between Cairo and Addis Ababa. In addition, the delegation met with the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the late "Father Pauwels" who was keen to reassure the Egyptian people by emphasizing that Ethiopia will not deprive Egypt of the Nile waters, and that its main goal is to lift its people out of poverty.

The Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation to Egypt.

The Ethiopian public diplomacy delegation to Egypt in December, 2014 represents a new positive development in the Egyptian-Ethiopian relations since it is the first visit ever to the Ethiopian delegation to Cairo. President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi announced in his inauguration speech that he would not let the Renaissance Dam to become a reason for fabricating a crisis or a problem or to become an impediment to the development of Egyptian relations whether with Africa or Ethiopia. Such announcement had a major impact on ending the state of tension

that marred the relations between Cairo and Addis Ababa, in the past. Also, Ambassador "Dina Mufti", the Spokesman of the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry said that the Ethiopian delegation's visit to Cairo aims to strengthen and promote the relations between Ethiopia and Egypt in various fields. It, also, confirmed that Addis Ababa reacted positively with the current developments in the Egyptian-Ethiopian relations since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has assumed power in Egypt, highlighting that the relations between the peoples of the two countries have always been far away from the political disputes between their governments and thus were not adversely affected by the tensions that have marred such relations all over the last three decades.

The Ethiopian media reacted with this visit in a way that made us recognize its importance in mitigating the atmosphere between the two countries and in boosting the relations between Cairo and Addis Ababa to wider horizons. The Reporter newspaper commented on the delegation's visit by saying that "Egypt and Ethiopia are linked by deep historical and religious ties, however the Nile issue remained a matter of concern for the two countries until President Abdel Fattah al-

Sisi assumed power, where the relations between the two countries turned to love and cooperation instead of hatred and loathing. This represents a positive development in the vision of the Ethiopian media as regards the relations between the two countries. Also, "Addis Zemen", a daily Ethiopian Amharic newspaper published by the federal government through the Ethiopian Press Agency, praised the warm hospitality which the Ethiopian delegation has received in Egypt and which exceeded all expectations. In addition, an Ethiopian writer said that "the delegation's visit to Cairo crowned Ethiopia's commitment to a real and a serious regional cooperation over the past three years."

Similarly, the Ethiopian delegation carried a message to Cairo that Ethiopia does not intend to inflict any damage to Egypt and that its main objective is to achieve development and to lift its people out of poverty. The same was emphasized by the head of the Ethiopian Government during his meeting with the delegation of the Public diplomacy after his return from Cairo adding that Addis Ababa is, also, keen to develop overall relations with Cairo.

In his meeting with the Ethiopian Public diplomacy delegation, Presi-

dent Abdel Fattah al-Sisi confirmed that Egypt begins a new era of openness in Africa, particularly in Ethiopia, stressing his willingness to visit Ethiopia and address the Ethiopian Parliament to assert that Egypt wishes to Ethiopia and its people all the best, development and prosperity.

Besides, the Egyptian Prime Minister reconfirmed the right of Ethiopia to achieve development and the right of Egypt to maintain the source of life, The River Nile . In this respect, the members of the Ethiopian delegation assured that Ethiopia shall not undertake any action that would inflict harm to the Egyptian people emphasizing that the waters of the Nile suffice everyone to achieve development and to overcome poverty. In addition, Pope Tawadros the Second assured love between the two countries thanks to the Nile River, which always reminds Egyptians with Ethiopia as the source of the great river. Moreover, Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, the current Grand Imam of al-Azhar and former president of al-Azhar University, highlighted in his meeting with the Ethiopian delegation that both Egypt and Ethiopia have the right to benefit from the Nile River without inflicting any damage to each other by reaching a compro-

mise that ensures the interests of the two countries and their peoples.

A Vision of the Future:

Undoubtedly, the continuous serious dialogue that aims to reach suitable solutions for both sides and the active visits of public diplomacy delegations between the two countries shall play an important role in correcting disseminated misconceptions , which claim that Egypt does not want Ethiopia to achieve development and that the latter seeks to deprive Egypt of the Nile water. However, the most important issue is not to confine the Egyptian-Ethiopian relations to the waters of the Nile or the Renaissance Dam. Actually, Egypt and Ethiopia can together make a huge economic market since the population of the two countries are about two hundred million people. Also, both countries are so rich in their economic and human resources that they can together develop their Mother continent 'Africa', if there is a serious political will, hard work and sincere efforts. The African countries succeeded, in the fifties and the sixties of the last century, to unite their efforts forming a spearhead against colonial expansion through supporting national liberation movements and they, also, succeeded to unite

their word through the foundation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 to become a serious platform for African brothers through which they can form an appropriate vision of the future able to achieve the hopes and aspirations of their peoples whose lands although rich in everything yet have fallen prey to destitution and poverty. Similarly, countries can now exploit their mutual potentials to achieve real economic integration between them which will not only benefit the peoples of the two countries, in particular, but also the peoples of the Nile Basin countries in general.

Although public diplomacy is one

of the successful tools in bringing about a rapprochement between any two peoples, especially when there are common bonds and a deep historical heritage such as those between the Egyptian and the Ethiopian peoples, however it should be mixed altogether with efforts on all the political, economic, social, cultural and media levels in order to bring about the desired change and achieve communication. It is also necessary to deal with media in both countries in a responsible way as regards the developments taking place in their relations in order to "enlighten" the two peoples and highlight the positive aspects.