

Lessons for NRM from Nyerere



IDEOLOGY
With
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Every leader stands on a good theory they have seen practiced or the 'shoulders' of another to craft a new way of constructing a nation. There is no formulae, as Lee Kuan Yew once said, to building a nation. Simply learning and improving, based on a good ideology, makes all the difference, especially if a leader puts premium on service and not just power.

Julius Kambarage Nyerere was one such capable leader, who created an ideologically-thriving nation inspiring millions of young Africans from 1961 when his nation was granted self-government.

He opened the doors of his nation to every African, who wanted to fight for the liberation of their country from colonialism. In December 1968, Nyerere said: "When every avenue of peaceful change is blocked, then the only way for positive change is by channeling and directing people's fury — that is by organised violence; by a people's war against their government. When this happens, Tanzania cannot deny support, for to do so, would be to deny the validity of African freedom and African dignity. We are naturally and inevitably, allies of the freedom fighters".

This ideological outlook to the unity of Africa attracted young people across Africa, who would eventually become leaders of their nations.

Passing through Tanganyika in 1962 before his arrest on October 9, 1963 that kept him in prison for 27 years, Nelson Mandela wrote: "...I met Julius Nyerere, the newly-independent country's first president. We talked at his house, which was not at all grand, and I recall that he drove himself in a simple car, a little Austin. This impressed me, for it suggested that he was a man of the people. Class, Nyerere always insisted, was alien to Africa; socialism indigenous".

It was perhaps Nyerere's simplicity and ideological clarity about Africa that appealed to many young revolutionary groups. Before Mandela, there had been Eduardo Mondlane, the Mozambican intellectual who would lead the first form of resistance to the Portuguese and later killed by a parcel bomb in 1969. Mondlane would later be followed by Samora Machel in 1963, who eventually led Mozambique to independence in 1975.

Nyerere helped bring together all factionalised Mozambican fighting groups to form one organisation — the Front for the Liberation of



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Mozambique (Frelimo). Then came Augustino Neto of the Movement for the Liberation of the Angolan people (MPLA) in 1967 who would be the first President of his country after Independence in 1975. He was followed by Amílcar Cabral from Guinea Bissau (of the African Party of independence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde), who would be assassinated by the Portuguese a year before his country won her freedom in 1974.

Then, a young Yoweri Museveni, who came as a student in 1967 and eventually led his country in 1986. John Garang in 1969, who would eventually fight for the liberation of the people of South Sudan and Robert Mugabe, who would eventually lead Zimbabwe to independence in 1980.

Nyerere turned over an abandoned British sisal plant on River Ruvuma in Nachingwea district of south of Tanzania into a teaching, training, recruitment and ideological mentorship centre for the African groups fighting for freedom.

Samora in 1982, seven years after Frelimo, had taken power in Mozambique, spoke so fondly of Nachingwea: "We entered Nachingwea as Makondes, Makuas, Nyanjas, Nyungwes, Manicas, Shangans, Rongas, Senas; we came out as Mozambicans. We entered as blacks, whites, mulattos, Indians; we came out as Mozambicans... Nachingwea was the filter and the mould of consciousness, the laboratory and forge of the Mozambican nation". It is the same Nachingwea that hosted FRONASA, the precursor to the NRM's fighters in 1972.

Just taking a look at the list of people, who later shaped the history of their nations, tells us a lot about Nyerere's world view (ideology) of Africa. A strong Pan-African leader, who would stand with the people of Uganda on the matter of the removal of Idi Amin in 1979.

That Nyerere welcomed all these groups with no fore knowledge of

NYERERE ASSURED THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY STABILITY OF TANZANIA AT A TIME WHEN AFRICA WAS TORN APART BY MILITARY COUP DE ETATS

what the leaders would become, is a warning to all Movement leaders today to be careful how they conduct themselves. Many people are watching our actions and not just our words. Our good actions, locally and nationally, can reverberate across generations or retard the work of the Movement.

Lessons from Nyerere

Nyerere provided leadership on three key things that remained indelible lessons to the young people then who would eventually lead the Movement.

First, a fully demonstrated commitment to African unity at whatever cost it meant to his young nation. He asked the British colonialist in 1961 to delay the independence of Tanganyika so as to allow both Uganda and Kenya to be free on the same day as one nation. In doing this, Nyerere did not seem bothered by the fact of 'who' would be leader of the Union as long as the 'what' was necessary to be done was achieved.

He also remains the only leader in East Africa, who translated the intention of unity into reality by reaching out, convincing and eventually bringing into existence the Union of the Island of Zanzibar and

mainland Tanganyika, forming present day united Republic of Tanzania. He followed this with the merging of the Tanzania African National Union (TANU) — his independence party, with the Afro Shirazi party of Zanzibar to form present day Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM).

The second authentic leadership lesson that Nyerere provided to the Movement was the dismantling of the colonial state structures, such as the army and truly starting a new social, political and economic base for the country.

Tanganyika had been left with a badly trained colonial army as in all former colonies; three battalions for the whole country that accounted not to the people, but to their masters, the British. It was called the Tanganyika Rifles. In 1964, they mutinied demanding a higher pay. Nyerere moved quickly and skillfully, initially asking the British to quell the mutiny and eventually dismissing the army and recruiting a new one that was accountable to the people of Tanzania.

In Uganda, when Idi Amin killed civilians in Kenya, fighting the Mau Mau movement on behalf of the British in 1954, or stole gold from Congo and was reported in Parliament by Daudi Ochiengh in 1965, prime minister Obote promoted him to the rank of colonel and made him Army commander. Obote continued to reward bad conduct cementing the role of a bad army in our politics.

By walking in virtue against the vice of incompetence and abuse of the institutions of state, Nyerere provided a rallying ideological base for the future leaders of the Movement. It took 20 years for Uganda to eventually do what Nyerere achieved in 1964 — dismantling colonial structures and giving our nation from 1986, a fresh breath of military discipline, sound military — civil relations that our nation had never enjoyed, thanks to the Uganda People's Defence Forces and its precursor the National Resistance Army. By destroying a

neo-colonial army, Nyerere assured the political and military stability of Tanzania at a time when Africa was torn apart by military coup de etats.

The third lesson Nyerere provided to the Movement was his intense focus on the neglected sections of society; the peasants. He worked with peasants as a basis for both social and economic liberation.

He said: "...pay attention to the peasant. He is the producer of the food for the majority of the people in Africa today. Take a peasant and treat him like a god".

While many elite independence leaders paid lip service simply using peasants for rhetoric purposes, Nyerere translated his understanding of the peasant into a form of collectivisation of food and living, modelled on the Chinese communist type, but called it Ujamaa or 'familyhood'.

Even with intense criticism of what the West saw as forced settlements and social disruptions, Nyerere pushed on unbowed. The social harmony, a deliberate destruction of sectarianism based on religion and tribes in Tanzania today, bears deep statement to the wisdom of Nyerere in uniting his country and giving it one language for 35 million people (Swahili) and deep sense of social cohesion.

He believed in the power of a politically-conscious peasant to liberate himself.

He said: "It is impossible for one people to free another people or even defend the freedom of another people. Freedom won by outsiders is lost to those outsiders. However good their intentions or however much outsiders desired to free their oppressed brothers.

Of course others can help a people who are struggling for freedom; they can give refugee facilities for action, and they can give moral and diplomatic support to an oppressed people. But no group or nation — however powerful, can make another nation or people free. The struggle must be waged by those who expect to benefit from it".

Finally, Nyerere speaks directly to us today. He sounds a good and timely warning to the shape in which the Movement in Uganda is today. He clearly shows us that good leaders have a capacity to duplicate themselves across time and generations, even when they are long gone. He said, in the Arusha declaration in 1967 about TANU: "... We have chosen the wrong weapon for our struggle, because we chose money as our weapon. We are trying to overcome our economic weakness by using the weapons of the economically strong — weapons which in fact we do not possess. By our thoughts, words and actions it appears as if we have come to the conclusion that without money we cannot bring about the revolution we are aiming at..."

We ought to take heed in the Movement.

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Next week we will bring the second leader from the sixties, who helped shape the thinking and ideology of the Movement