

**PARTY YOUTH LEAGUES CONFERENCE ON EMOCRATIC VALUES
OF
POLITICAL PARTIES IN EASTERN AFRICA.**

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**TOPIC: REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN EAST AFRICA AND THE
ROLE OF
POLITICAL PARTIES.**

**BY
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According to Professor Baregu and Bashiru Ally, in their work on Participation of Political Parties in the East African Integration process, they identified circumstances that compel the Integration process.

First, where there is a strong party that imposes the Federal or the Integration process by force of arms. Examples are Prussia and German unification, and the Northern Federalists in the USA who by force of Arms brought Southern Confederals into the USA Political Union.

Second was the Russian model which was born out of fear of disintegration.

Third was the Tanzania model which was a result of fear both within and in the broader world, of the consequences of the Zanzibar Revolution in 1964.

Fourth is the Europe Union model which is described as incremental. It started as European Coal and Steel Community. This was as a result of the experience of both World Wars. It was to prevent future wars over coal and iron resources.

To integrate there must be a need to get away from the small units into a bigger one for safety and prospects for a better future.

In the case of Africa in general and East Africa in particular, the African is the most despised, down trodden, downgraded, humiliated, oppressed and vulnerable race on earth whether at home or abroad and by both domestic and foreign forces.

The Question is this; will the Africans overcome this, regain their Self confidence, pride and respect in the small States alone or in bigger units. Another aspect is that African emotions are misplaced. When Africans, are killed it is not big news both in foreign news and local. For example we grieve and mourn for people killed in Second World War in Europe than we do for millions of people killed during the hunting for capture and transportation of Africans in horrid conditions as slave labour.

During the Mabira riots, a ministerial delegation was sent to India to the family of the Indian who died but we don't know the Africans who died, where they were buried and what happened to their dependants. They were simply dismissed as looters yet CT scans had been installed all over for the CHOGM Conference.

As if the above was not enough, all the calamities of the world are domiciled here with their maximum impact. Disease, poverty, hunger, drought and its impact, floods, illiteracy, life expectancy, climate change impact, are all resident here. Though we are still a source of supplying abundant cheap raw materials, like cotton we are also a market for cheap discarded second hand goods all over. "Twali Twenkana".

African countries are ignored in most International fora even over decisions affecting them directly. Small, weak and poor nations have no room, respect or voice in the world, where might is right. Either we pull together for our own survival or perish or just exist as the rest of the world moves on.

One would have thought that our Leaders, Political, Religious, business intelligencia etc would see these common afflictions and work a way of pulling our human and material resources to overcome them. Apparently the strong, informed and affluent ones value pulling resources for a better life, than the weak and uninformed ones. It is, in my opinion, that the informed, should form pressure groups, political or otherwise, to bring to the attention of the people and inspire them to realize the necessity to pull together for a better life.

History is rich with examples of successes against apparent insurmountable problems, when our people have been inspired to fight oppression and have succeed. The slaves in America put up a stiff resistance. The Africans pulled resources against Colonialism, Apartheid in South Africa and minority rule in Zimbabwe. Here at home, a few political intellectuals and informed ones together with the masses put up a struggle and over threw an oppressive regime. In 2007 stiff resistance was put up against the giveaway of Mabira Natural Equatorial Forest.

President Mpaka told us a story of a manufacturer who sent his sales man into the field. On return, the sales man had sold little. The boss asked him why he hadn't done well. The sales man responded by stating that he took the goods but people didn't buy. He added, *"Sir, you can take the horse to well, but you cannot compel it to drink"*. The boss replied, **"your job is not to take the horse to the well, it is to make it thirsty"**. The Hottentots in the Kalahari desert, when they failed to find where water is they get hold of a monkey and tie it for long enough till it is thirsty. Then they realize it and surely it leads them to water.

So the role of the informed, through parties etc is to know, spread the knowledge, education, skills and awareness that we are endangered, and that it is our collective responsibility to create a better life for ourselves and future generations. Create the thirst for pulling our region and continent together out of these calamities, indignity and disrespect.

On the issue of Democracy, Good Governance, Rule of Law, Human rights and Accountability, on which parties are based, what is our experience. In pre colonial Africa, there was Autocratic rule where centralized states had been established but there was no democracy. There were wars of territorial expansion which the colonial regimes deliberated termed tribal wars.

There was promotion of advances in medicine, tools of production and war that were locally produced. The African Industry was flourishing. During the colonial period there was no pretence to Democratic values and practices.

However, the colonial administration first, trained local people to assist in the management of the colonial administration so they got some education and knowledge. Second, some Africans were trained as artisans and small scale businessmen. Third, some Africans were sent abroad to get education in order to come back and assist in Education, Administration etc. They were exposed to European way of life, education values etc. Fourth during the Second World War a lot of Africans were recruited to fight the Hitler war machine. Apparently for freedom and against domination. They came with new ideas on self determination and oppression. These combined to form pressure groups, independent movements and demand for independence. So the African independence parties were formed by those trained abroad, local traders demanding more space, war veterans, workers in the few industries. They were faced with two options. Succumb or Rebel.

Parties at independence were broad in outlook, Pan Africanist, and were largely nationalistic. They were stronger than their leaders. Within a relatively short period, after independence, the leaders became stronger than the parties. Secondly the leaders took over State Houses, with all paraphernalia and titles. While Governors were transferable within the colonial empires, the independence leaders became permanent and fixed. The colonial machine and laws were in full force. Even more draconian ones were added

As one British philosopher said, “the road from obscurity to prominence should not be so short”. The parties that were Pan African and nationalists became narrow and ethnic or tribal in most states. Multi partism gave way to one party rule. Where there was collaboration between parties, became collaboration between leaders. And when one leader died or was overthrown that was the end of the relationship between the parties.

The African state became so oppressive to both its own members and opposition that survival became a daily engagement and the broad thinking took a back stage. The strategy of leaders to stay in power became more important and took center stage.

EASTAFRICAN FEDERATION.

The first attempt at the East African federation just before and after independence, was very vibrant and engaging. Unfortunately it was largely involving the Political leaders and not the parties. Foreign donors behind the scene had more to say than local parties, civil society and private sector although there was more debate among the intellectuals, largely on Ideological issues. Whether a socialist country could federate with a capitalist one.

When the old Community collapsed the spirit and feeling of East Africaness through common services, common syllabus, free movement of people, and the spirit of East Africaness suffered a huge set back. Instead entrenched national feelings and defence of national sovereignty in international fora became entrenched.

The second attempt is less vibrant but involves more actors like private sector, civil society, professional bodies etc. Unfortunately political parties both ruling and opposition are not playing their rightful role. Even the involvement of National Parliaments is peripheral. The creation of Ministries for East African Community is supposed to cure this. It is Politicians who ultimately take the final decision. So we need to involve all political thinkers whether in government or opposition. The federation of East Africa is not for political leaders or parties in power but for the benefit of all East Africans. On the political front, there is a need to involve all political actors.

For example, when negotiations to revamp the East African Community started, in Tanzania President Mwinyi was in Power. We have had President Mpaka now President Kikwete. In Kenya it was President Moi and KANU. Now we have President Kibaki and a coalition of ODM and PNU. So there has been a change of leaders and parties in the two countries and yet the spirit and effort continue. So a policy formulated by all is important for continuity.

In my experience governments work under: - i) Own policy
ii) Lobbies
iii) Pressure

You cannot implement a policy you don't fully comprehend. You cannot lobby unless you have specific interest that are valued by many for them to succeed and last.

For Political Parties to actively participate in the integration process they need to look at some corner stones of the integration process and work out how to make them more effective. By the Treaty, the Community is people centered and private sector driven. Are the people at the center of the integration process or do Governments and bureaucrats do it on their behalf with occasional consultations. Have we ever had a referendum on any major decision.

Secondly, how strong is our private sector to drive the Integration process. Can Governments really leave this important matter to the relatively weak and nascent private sector. Economies whose main source of revenue is customs, cannot have a vibrant private sector. Therefore, there is need for State interventions in areas like infrastructure, electricity generation and education and skills development.

There is also the issue of sovereignty of the Partner States. Are we really sovereign, weak as we are? These borders and boundaries we worship and cherish are mill stones around the necks and prison walls surrounding the people they purport to protect. As one African writer put it, *a tiger does not sing its tigreness.*

For the parties to succeed in pushing the Integration agenda, there is need for a Coordinating Centre in Arusha. Organizing at national level is hard. First at national level, survival in the

turbulent waters is dominant. Second there is a lot of mistrust of the organizational structures because of the way governments come in power. Allegations of violence, intimidation, rigging, political intolerance among and between parties and biased electoral commissions are common in all the Partner States. There has been lack of respect for human values and lives of citizens at various stages in a number of the Partner States. There is a general belief that fair play and justice are achieved far better at the Regional level than at State levels.

Professor Baregu and Ally have proposed the creation of the East African Democracy Centre based in Arusha. In the same conference I had proposed the creation of Think Tanks at National and Regional levels. I said, **“The Integration Process should not be a part time engagement. We need bodies of informed objective and committed persons to research analyze, think and rethink and propose concrete ways forward for decision makers,”** to take into consideration.

We should also look into ways and means of having the East African Legislative Assembly elected directly. This will force parties to think East African and sell their proposals to the electorate which in the process will be enforced.

Is there pressure or threat, external or internal to our very survival that will drive our leaders in Public, Private sector etc to make us push for unity as a matter of urgency and survival?

Do actions of leaders match what they promise or say? Or are we small fish in small ponds that are quite comfortable the way things are? Do our leaders feel the pinch?

Foreign ameliorations to our populace make us fail to see clearly our real conditions and our own energy and capacity to work tirelessly for our survival and dignity.

Political Parties on their own will not do the needful to push for East African Federation. Some of our political leaders in the Region, in power or opposition, don't believe in democracy of parties. They just use them as vehicles to get in or stay in power.

Political parties have a big role to play in the Integration process. They have not played a big role so far and are not likely to do much better left on their own. They need **an Anchor** at the Regional level for a freer organizational environment. They need a push from the civil society and intellectual community both at the national and regional level.