

## **Proceedings of a Youth dominated Discussion Held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

**Topic: "The Role of Political Opposition in the Democratic Transition in Africa"**

**Venue:** Seascallop Restaurant in Kitante – Kampala

**Organized by Pan African Club**

### **Content Outline:**

- Presentation by **Dr Sallie K. Simba**, Senior Lecturer – Department of Political Science, Makerere University;
- Presentation by **Hon Charles Rwomushana**, Former Member of the Constituent Assembly of the Republic Uganda;
- Participants' Views;
- Comments by **Mr. Kasacca Henry**, the Executive Director of Dialogue and Democracy Training Centre;
- Comments by **Hon David Pulkol**, Former Director General of External Security Organization;
- Comments by **Prof Edward Kakonge**, Former Minister of Local Government;
- Responses by the main Presenters i.e. **Dr. Sallie Simba** and **Hon Charles Rwomushana**

### **PRESENTATION BY DR SALLIE K. SIMBA, SENIOR LECTURERE – DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, MAKERERE UNIVERSITY**

#### **Definition of Political Opposition**

**Dr. Sallie Simba** defined political opposition as legitimate organizations or individuals whose views cannot fit in the existing political establishment / mainstream. He explained that in a functioning democracy, Political Opposition is a mechanism for smooth change of power.

#### **Types of Political Opposition**

**The Senior Lecturer** said that opposition is natural and that there are two types of political opposition i.e.

1. **Individual political opposition;** this is where an individual decides to be critical of a political system in place. He gave example of Prof Chomsky of USA who has been consistently critical of the USA politics in regard to the nature of

both the Republican Party and Democratic Party. Dr. Simba reasoned that this individual kind of opposition is a bit problematic in a sense that you are one person against the State, which is an organized institution.

2. **Collective Political Opposition;** this includes political parties and / or pressure groups, says Dr. Simba. He revealed that whereas political parties aim at taking power, pressure groups do not but are inspired by gauging that certain things are not going on right and thus come up to demand for redress. The Lecturer explained that Collective Political Opposition can be Constitutional but sometimes it can take extra Constitutional means such as taking up arms. He added that this is against the law but the circumstances may at times provide no other realistic option to effect change. He stated that some struggles against colonialism and apartheid took a combination of political and armed means.

### **The Rationale of Political Opposition**

Dr Simba explained that the Theory of pluralism is based on a number of assumptions one of them being that however much we would like to be the same, we cannot. People by nature have different thinking, interpretations thus diversity is natural, and the best way is to allow all the diversities to exist. He emphasized the strength of diversity using the analogy of fingers; his father one time asked him that what would happen if his fingers were of equal size! The answer was that he would be regarded disabled. Dr. Simba explained well that being different is normal and should be accommodated as much as possible.

The Guest Speaker called for national broad-based inclusiveness explaining that the opposite is unnatural and thus unrealistic. He revealed that no matter how good you are, there will be people who will hate you for even your goodness because some will find it a stumbling block to their other endearing interests. That on the other hand, no matter how bad you are, there will be people who like you because your badness provides them an opportunity in some ways. Dr. Simba reasoned that in countries where you find a leader getting so many votes like say 99%, it shows there is something wrong.

### **The history of political opposition / political parties in Africa**

Dr. Sallie Simba disclosed that in Uganda, we got independence with a number of political parties namely; UPC, DP and KY. He said that even the UNC was still existing but limping. In Kenya, there was KANU and KADU while in DRC; there was confusion with 100 political parties, the strongest of which was the MNC which in 1959 split into two with the splinter group led by **Mr. Tshombe Kalonji** while Patrice Lumumba continued to be the leader of the mainstream MNC. He expressed disappointment that Mr. Tshombe Kalonji played a role in the death of Patrice Lumumba who was a Pan Africanist and focused leader.

The Lecturer stated that independence political parties in Uganda set off on wrong footing partly because of the sectarianism they exhibited. He gave example that the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) was viewed as *United Protestants of Canterbury* while the Democratic Party (DP) was seen as *Dini ya Papa* due to Protestantism and Catholicism evident in the two parties respectively.

The presenter submitted that in the African traditional value system of governance, people would sit to discuss and allow disagreement but could not institutionalize opposition.

He said that the independence multiparty system in Africa was replaced by one party States with exception of three countries i.e. Mauritius, Botswana and Senegal. He revealed that in Mauritius for example, since their independence in 1968 with the Labour Party and Mauritius Militant Movement, they maintained a functioning multiparty system to date.

Dr. Simba mentioned that between 1952 and 1954, two African sons were deported i.e. Seretse Khama from Botswana and Sir Edward Mutesa from here. He added that Mr. Seretse Khama utilised his popularity in Botswana to establish a multiparty system constructed on traditional African values which gave it a strong foundation.

On the other hand, Dr. Simba stated that the most popular individual in Uganda just like Seretse Khama was in Botswana was Sir Edward Mutesa. He said that even seeing the footage of Mutesa visiting areas of Teso and elsewhere, you see a very popular leader. That when Musazi formed the UNC, the first person he had in mind to lead the struggle for independence was Sir Edward Mutesa but this did not come to pass because of claims that Mutesa being a Kabaka (king), he could not participate in politics. This denied Uganda a popular leader, analyzes Dr. Simba. He said that unlike in Botswana where there was a mixture of modernity and tradition, in Uganda there was attempted delink of the two.

He revealed that in Senegal, there was effort in 1968 by Leopold Sedar Senghor to make a one party state, thanks to students' activism who went on the streets and forced him to reverse this effort. That however like any other tricky leader, he declared that every political party must have its own ideology and then picked the best, the ideology of Social Democracy and his party was Senegalese Social Democratic Party.

Dr. Simba remarked that from the late 1980s, Africa went back to multiparty system especially in 1989 – 1992. He said that this was a result of two forces; external and internal pressure. He analyzed that because of our economic problems, the Western powers took the opportunity to put pressure on African governments to return to multiparty. More still, the Communist System had collapsed and this meant that single party system had no 'God Father'. He argued therefore that multiparty system in Africa is not organic but rather externally imposed.

Furthermore, Dr Simba told participants that sometimes, multiparty was a result of a combination of external and internal dynamics playing at the same time. Internally, you had the Civil Society especially the Church which was demanding for democratic reforms. He disclosed that only Eritrea stands out in this connection; she has made no pretence about elections that is a mere legitimizing process in many African countries. He concurred with the Eritrea route wondering why waste time and resources in elections yet the outcome is predetermined / already known!

Dr. Sallie Simba mentioned that Museveni was exempted to some extent for some time from pressure to return multiparty because he had positioned himself as a regional actor. In addition, Uganda was being projected as a success story of World Bank policies that the Western powers did not want to be interrupted. He revealed that the likes of him however had reservations on the World Bank policies.

### **The nature of the multiparty systems in Africa**

**Ideological weakness;** Dr Simba said that unlike UPC and DP whose ideologies were known, some political parties in Africa are lacking in ideology. He said that UPC had Social Democratic Principles while DP had Liberal Democratic Values but in places like Zimbabwe, Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai's struggle against Robert Mugabe lacked ideological grounding and this is why people like him thought that they would rather remain with a bad Mugabe than Tsvangirai who is a stooge of imperialism. He said that the role of Western interests is playing a negative part in Africa's political parties and wondered that some opposition leaders proudly say that foreigners are backing them yet this pushes the likes of him away because he believes in Africa's independence.

The other issues he raised were institutional weaknesses in political parties including limited visibility on ground and lack of internal democracy for some.

Dr. Sallie Simba commended the existence of extra territorial political parties, which were common in the 1950s in Africa. He noted that the FDC for example is a member of the International Democratic Union adding that this is good because we need such regional interconnections of political parties as opposed to just territorial based parties.

He pointed out elements of social structure that are still a challenge in some political parties in Africa. Some parties have not outgrown ethnic influences. He gave example that in Kenya, political calculations are ethnic arithmetic; it is always about if you add tribe this to tribe that equals this! This is what political strategists in Kenya base on to make their plans.

He explained that political groupings in Uganda are trying their best to be national compared to most other parties in Africa. He said that in critical analysis, the FDC is a national movement and the NRM is trying too. DP is up and down, it used to be in the entire country when it was still catholic based but later on, it became regional and now

it is further divided. Gone are the days when Obote would say from Arua to Kabale is UPC which was true but today, the UPC is manifesting as a Langi party but it can still reproduce itself.

Dr. Sallie Simba reasoned that the experience in Africa is very disappointing despite embracing multiparty and gave three reasons:

1. The opposition possibility of winning elections is very thin. He said it is in about less than 6 countries in the whole Africa where opposition parties have a chance to win because the ground is more level. Examples of these include Zambia, Malawi, and Ghana.
2. For historical reasons, we have dominant political parties such as the ANC. In spite of this, they have established term limits internally.
3. In regimes which acquired power through armed struggles, the leaders have a sense of entitlement and that it is them and no other that should lead. In such countries, they have a semblance of democracy but the whole process is mere legitimization because elections cannot change the regime. He disclosed that he used to support North Korea because he thought she cherished Marxism but upon discovery that power there was hereditary, he was disappointed because this was against the Marxist principles he studied at school.

Dr Sallie Simba also disclosed that in Ethiopia today, the ruling party has 100% of the MPs in Parliament while in the previous Parliament, the opposition had only one MP. He said that what is happening in countries such as Rwanda, Angola and Burundi is not surprising; it is all about the 'we fought mentality'.

### **PRESENTATION BY HON CHARLES RWOMUSHANA, FORMER MEMBER OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC UGANDA**

**Mr. Rwomushana** said that the history of the management of the African State is that it has been hereditary. This was overthrown by the colonial powers, which were in turn overthrown by independence movements establishing neo-colonial States. Things like opposition and multiparty parliament are tenets we get from the colonial and the neo-colonial behaviour. Colonial States were pirate states, which in essence were robbers; a country like Spain is built on stealing.

He also said that the African State was inferior militarily. For example, Capt Lugard was too powerful for the Kabaka because he had a maxim gun that the Kabaka did not have. He defined the State as an authority over a given territory and of a sovereign (the people). He reasoned that what we have in many parts of Africa today such as Uganda are usurped States because they no longer belong to the sovereign and thus those who have not been chosen will oppose. Those who are rulers have fused with the State and have become the State themselves.

Comrade Rwomushana clarified that if the State belonged to the sovereign, then the sovereign would cede power to the State, which in turn would work on behalf of the people (the sovereign), would involve the people, tax the people with their consent but in usurped States like Uganda, everything belongs to the ruler and he makes decisions as he pleases.

The presenter revealed that colonialism gave way to a wave of military coups and that the States that came in were controlled by the military. In Uganda's case, these were the Amin State, the UNLA State and the Museveni State. He said that the Likes of Bunyenzezi and Kagame of Rwanda, Makenga of DRC, the Lule forces and the Abarusura of Bunyoro formed the Museveni State. To him, the Kabamba attackers were young and heirs. Mr. Kagame later became head of administration and finance in Uganda's intelligence, which was headed by Mugisha Muntu. He said that their alliance captured the Uganda State, made alliance with Habyarimana, which they later broke down and removed him from power and went ahead to make a coup in DRC, then participated in war in South Sudan, and are now forming the East African federation.

### **The Character of the NRA State**

When the NRA came to power, Mr. Tanny Roland became the overall in-charge / owner of Coffee. He later metamorphosed into Toyota Company. He implored participants to interrogate who he was and whose interests he was representing.

Mr. Rwomushana reminded Pan Africanists that the decision to introduce Decentralization policy by-passed the Constitutional process and again he interested members to find out why? He added that the same applied to the re-introduction of Cultural Institutions, which were defined only by what they shall not do, something he appealed to Pan Africanists to interrogate as well.

He also said that under the NRA State; the Constituent Assembly (CA) in which he was a member did not have the power. Thus, when it made a Constitution stating that power belongs to the people, it was deception because the CA itself did not have the power to give yet all logic requires that you only give what you have. Its due power was in the fact elsewhere!

### **PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS**

**Nandala Gidudu** said that transition and opposition are necessary because there is too much greed in government, which needs to be checked.

**Julius Mutabazi** declared that he is for multiparty politics as long as it is done democratically and transparently. He reasoned that the role of opposition is to surmount all the odds because the State in Africa will always be fused with the ruling party. He said that if monarchies were perfect, there would be no need for democracy.

Instead, monarchies created a situation of being ruled by one frail imperfect person in perpetuity called a king.

**Ivan Muhozi** asked; what is wrong with an MP earning a lot of money and in turn serve his people?

**Nabasa Muhandiiki** stated that the background of most of our State managers is very problematic and this has an effect on their service delivery.

**Matsiko Magundu** reasoned that in reality power belongs to the minority throughout the world and not the majority. He explained that always a few people influence the majorities. He added that power belongs to only those who understand and it is them who think for the rest.

**Stephen Tashobya** asked for the definition of a Ugandan.

**Oyaka Makmot** mentioned that the likes of Ankore and Buganda were nations but with the advent of colonialism and the desire to destroy Black civilization, these were terminated. Then we got nations which resulted from migrations and threats which are still existing to date, he argued that these nations need to be strengthened adding that in them, there is power of spirituality which strengthens us as opposed to puppet masters serving in the so called modern nations. He argued that neo-colonial states are not nations but are impositions to take power away from us and they disenfranchise us.

**Mushusha Richard** said that since most opposition movements are not succeeding to take power; they should work together with the ruling party to ensure harmony.

**Mwido Mohammed** remarked that opposition parties are being confronted by the State. He added that in our case, a person occupying the State will always win elections because they are fused with the State unlike in countries like the USA where a ruling party is distinct from the State. He said that in our case we do not have elections because for example, Besigye is not contesting with the ruling party but with the State, which now is harassing him.

**Kazebere Smurts** asked to know whether the social structures stated by Rwomushana that are leading to political power are evolving predictably.

**Rutaro Andrew** urged political parties in Africa to fight up to the end. He said unlike in USA where there is neither permanent ruling party nor opposition party between the Republicans and the Democrats, in Uganda, it is the reverse and one must sacrifice to change this. He said that the NRM is to some extent implementing opposition manifestos.

**Issiko Ramadhan** quoted Museveni saying that no one can teach him democracy, he wondered whether Uganda's democracy is unique to the rest of the world!

**Mwine Afrod** said that there is no exemplary democracy in the world. He wondered why in the USA it is always the Republican and Democratic parties in power.

**Semweba Patrick** said that today's African states are called modern states, which means that before these, there were others; he sought to know whether those which were there before were better.

**Turamye Silver** prayed that let there be internal democracy based on God. That it is God who gives.

**Bwanakunu Peter Pius** said that political parties have lost meaning, people vote for parties instead of voting for the merit of a person. He said that being an MP today is an economic business and this is why those who lost were crying.

**Amon Kitooke** asked whether by suppressing our dynasties we are losing or gaining something.

**Rogers Kasaija Araali** asked that since political parties are no longer taking those clear ideologies like say capitalism, democrats yet schools still have them on the education system; is it relevant anymore to teach them?

#### **COMMENTS BY MR. KASACCA HENRY, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF DIALOGUE AND DEMOCRACY TRAINING CENTRE**

**Mr. Kasacca Henry** said that we have a middle class in Uganda, which got there without working for it and that some of them do not know what it takes to save money but there they are! He reasoned that if some of these get into politics and become MPs, they will be easily compromised by whoever wants to pass certain legislation in their favour.

He further said that the rationale of the defiance campaign is that reforms cannot be negotiated. This thought is premised on the previous attempts aimed at getting reforms, which did not yield much.

Mr. Kasacca revealed that religion and ethnicity have been a factor in our politics. However, religion has now been demobilized in politics but ethnicity has been activated. He mentioned that there is pretence about ethnicity yet when people get into parliament for example; they form tribal associations such as the Buganda, Busoga caucus and then interface with Museveni the State as such. He said that ethnicity is a reality and that it is wrong to assume that we can unite people by suppressing it. He said that some people can only trust distribution of resources with their tribe mates.

Mr. Kasacca stated that the idea was to modernize the traditional African government but it was said to be backward where it were families shaping our political situation.

Regarding the view raised by a participant that leadership comes from God, Mr. Kasacca said that this line has been taken before but it has not solved our political problem. We have had local names attributed to God which suggest that God is the giver of everything, is all powerful and the like; this line of view has been conventionally used but outside our specific realities thus we should begin building our own nucleus.

### **COMMENTS BY HON DAVID PULKOL, FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL OF EXTERNAL SECURITY ORGANIZATION**

**Hon David Pulkol** commented that what Mr. Charles Rwomushana has said is the reality of the current State in Uganda. He added that our leaders are bosses and not servants of the people and that they have been chest changing peoples' interests and running a predatory system. He said that a corrupt State in Uganda has ensured that it spreads co-opts everybody into corruption including women, youths and the like across the country thus giving corruption a bright future in Uganda.

He said that the people in power in Uganda deceived Habyarimana and Mobutu, former presidents of Rwanda and DRC respectively and that what we see now is that those who were military officers in the NRA in Uganda, one of them Gen James Kabarerebe became CDF in DRC and now minister of defence in Rwanda. Mr. Makengo who was in Luwero bush war with Museveni is now a citizen of the DRC! To him, those in power are using that advantage to dominate others. He concluded that we need mutual respect and mutual support instead of a few people seeking to impose themselves on others.

### **COMMENTS BY PROF EDWARD KAKONGE, FORMER MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**Prof Edward Kakonge** asked that who are we? He castigated what he called manipulations that you cannot raise your grievances and that when you try, you are locked up yet we are all defined as human beings by how we relate with others.

He suggested that tribes should be used constructively as building blocks to participate in building our country. All people be the Langi, Baganda, Banyankore and etc are who they are and they want to contribute to Uganda. Prof Kakonge argued that as citizens, our contribution to Uganda is obligatory and no one should deny us that contribution. He noted that there are some efforts to distort Uganda's history and attempts to make a Uganda where many Ugandans have not contributed, this he said is wrong and must stop. He wondered that if your contribution is denied, then why do you exist?

## RESPONSES BY HON CHARLES RWOMUSHANA

**Mr. Rwomushana** asked that if you are disenfranchised, do you go and dine with those who have done so! He gave a distinction between operating instinctively and consciously. He said that the missionaries walked here because they were conscious but those who preach Jesus today ask for "something" and to him this is because they are not conscious. He added that those who were conscious walked in the jungles of Luwero and formed the NRM government but because today we have an unconscious generation, we cannot do the same. He called upon participants to be patriotic and explained that their other interests like those at family level, individual and tribe interests should be subordinate to the national interests. He vowed that for some people to want to use their family relations to dominate others, for him he would rather go in the grave, otherwise he will not tolerate that dominance which is based on marriage relations. He cautioned the youths against losing interest in Uganda.

**Mr Rwomushana** predicted that more dictators in Africa and their families might be heading to danger. He gave examples of Saddam Hussein whose children; Uday and Qusay were killed including grandchildren before the death of Saddam himself. That even in Libya, Gaddafi's children were targeted and killed and that even in Egypt, the protesters went for Mubarak's children. He said that the behaviour of the USA is that it attacks children of first families.

He also said that Jesus' doctrine on distribution of wealth was love and compassion while for Karlmax; it was use of force. He reasoned that the modern states are under Marxism. Then for capitalists, it is by use of money and that for military regimes, they attack for resources. He suggested that as the oppressed, you must be conscious about these behaviours or you will get destroyed. He revealed that even Mobutu's children of former Zaire were killed and thus to him, all exploiters behave the same way.

Mr. Rwomushana reasoned that there is a problem with the current generation in Uganda. He gave example that of the people who built Uganda House, the highest qualified was a teacher; he wondered whether we have the same skills today.

He said that before the outgoing generation, people were truthful, honest and had compassion but in today's generation, we are deceitful, we steal, we are dishonest and when doing all these, we think we are bright! He emphasized that the older State related with the older generation, there was order not because of a strong police but because people had good morals. He reasoned that the behaviour of the modern State now reflects the behaviour of a collapsed generation we are living in.

He said that even our leaders make lies and overtime begin believing in their own lies! He gave reference to Col Kiza Besigye whom he said is deceiving people that "*Kigwa Leero*" meaning the liberation mission will be fulfilled to day yet as an army veteran, he knows better he has no means to ensure that this happens. He said that therefore, it is

this serious that we deceive our neighbours and deceive ourselves and believe in what we have deceived ourselves!.

## **RESPONSES BY DR. SALLIE K. SIMBA**

Dr Sallie Simba said that it is difficult to question what Hon Charles Rwomushana and Hon David Pulkol say because they have been inside government.

He stated that while still studying in Makerere University, his classmate Gen James Kabarebe said that Habyarimana must go and tasked Dr. Simba to ensure that Mobutu also goes. After intensive weekly discussions, James Kabarebe and colleagues went to Rwanda and removed Habyarimana from power. Later, they went to DRC and removed Mobutu as well. He said though he did not participate in these revolutions because he chose a different career, he thinks it was justified to depose Mobutu because he was ideologically bankrupt. He disclosed that there was a steadfast officer who should have been president after Mobutu but he was killed during the struggle by retrogressive forces. Then, Laurent Kabila who was ideologically bankrupt became president, thus the problems of the DRC continued.

Dr. Simba remarked that liberations in Uganda and Rwanda informed the one of DRC. In the former, it took five years in each of the two countries while in DRC, liberation struggle took only seven months because it caught everyone by surprise due to the leadership question.

On the question of ideology, Dr. Simba said that formerly, the State was playing a positive role in the peoples' lives but today, the State restricted itself to creating an enabling environment and then it is individuals to take care of their welfare.

Regarding morals, Dr. Simba concurred with the earlier speakers that there is a big problem today. He revealed that about three years ago, a study was made and the findings were that the said fathers of 30% of the people in Kampala are not the true fathers!

**Dr. Simba** said that inherently, people in Africa have close working relationships. He gave examples that in Bunyoro there is no coronation, which takes place without representation from Lango and Acholi because of the traditional connections. That even people like the Bagwere, Balamogi, Bakenye, Banyala and Baruli consider each other different but when they speak, you discover that they are the same.

He advised that tribes should not be building blocks for our economy and politics and that we should not have an arrangement that manipulates our tribal identities. He added that tribal manipulations work for those in power but do not help the country to move forward. He said that as long as the people are divided, they will be manipulated.

**Compiled by:**  
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