

OUR HISTORY

Fearing that Yoweri Museveni's ties with Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi would threaten Kenya's stability, president Daniel arap Moi worked behind the scenes to block the NRA leader from capturing power in Uganda.

At the time Idi Amin was the president of Uganda, Kenya's president Jomo Kenyatta died on August 22, 1978. His vice-president, Daniel arap Moi, was immediately sworn in as the new president of Kenya.

A few months after the aforesaid incidents, Amin's army invaded northern Tanzania. The enraged Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere ordered his military to dislodge them. The Tanzanian army fought alongside the Front for National Salvation of Yoweri Museveni and Kikosi Maalum commanded by Col Tito Lutwa. They, therefore, overthrew Amin's regime on April 11, 1979.

In the new government headed by Prof. Yusuf Lule, Museveni served as minister for defence. Lule's successor, Godfrey Binaisa, maintained Museveni as minister of defence before moving him to ministry of regional co-operation, where he (Museveni) focused on tasks meant to revive the East African Community.

Meanwhile, Binaisa became afraid that Museveni, Paulo Muwangwa and Brig. David Oyite Ojok were plotting to remove him from power. For that reason, he rushed to Kenya and beseeched president Moi for support. Before anything to write about came from Moi, Binaisa was overthrown on May 12, 1980. In the new establishment (Military Commission), Museveni was its vice-chairman, until Dr Milton Obote was inaugurated as president on December 15, 1980 following the controversial general election of December 10.

THE GADAFI FACTOR

Museveni, who participated as a candidate in the 1980 general election, did not recognise Obote's government. He, therefore, launched an armed struggle, starting February 6, 1981. His fighting group was named National Resistance Army (NRA). It received some logistical support from Libyan leader, Col Muammar Gaddafi. Prior



WHY KENYA'S MOI OPPOSED MUSEVENI AS PRESIDENT

to receiving Libyan help, Museveni had a meeting with Gaddafi in Libya on June 21, 1981. At the time of their meeting, Moi was the chairman of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which has since been renamed African Union.

Later in August 1982, Gaddafi perceived Moi and Obote as his enemies. In the case of Obote, he loathed Gaddafi for bankrolling the NRA and Uganda Freedom Movement rebels of Dr Andrew Kayiira. In the case of Moi, his enmity with Gaddafi was over the refusal by Moi to surrender the chairmanship of O.A.U to Gaddafi.

Libya under Gaddafi was meant to host the OAU summit in August 1982, where Moi was anticipated to hand over the chairmanship to Gaddafi. But a few weeks to the summit, the US administration of president Ronald Reagan lobbied friendly African presidents to boycott the summit in Libya. Indeed, the summit didn't take place due to lack of two-thirds quorum.

ZERO QUORUM

Due to lack of quorum, Moi, who was in Libya, told Gaddafi that he was unable to surrender the chairmanship to him, but Gaddafi insisted on Moi handing over to him. Amidst tensions, Libyan youth attempted to attack Moi at the urging of Gaddafi's security personnel. As the hostile youth made the move as Moi strolled out of the building, a charged bodyguard of Moi, Leonard Yator, came close to shooting them



using two pistols. A perplexed Gaddafi prevailed over his youth before Moi's bodyguard fired. A defiant Moi, therefore, retained the chairmanship of OAU for a successive term of one year.

Against that background, Moi was always worried that once the NRA captured power and Gaddafi's ally, Museveni, became the president; they would destabilise Kenya. This informed Moi's determination to block Museveni from becoming president, especially after Gen. Tito Lutwa replaced Obote in July 1985. That's why Moi offered to chair the peace talks between Lutwa and Museveni. The talks commenced on August 26, 1985, ending with the signing of a peace agreement on December 17. To Moi's delight, Article 3 of the agreement barred Museveni from becoming the president of Uganda. The article reaffirmed Lutwa as the head of state by stipulating: "The head of state at the date of signing of this agreement shall continue to be the head of state and chairman of the Militia

But Moi's happiness was short-lived because the NRA resumed fighting on grounds that Lutwa's government forces had dishonoured the terms of the agreement by violating the human rights of Ugandans. The renewed fighting resulted in NRA capturing power on January 26, 1986 and Museveni was sworn in as president on January 29.

FURTHER TENSIONS

On becoming president, Museveni monitored the fleeing soldiers of Lutwa over concerns that they intended to re-group in Kenya to launch a comeback. In one of the security briefs Col Serwanga Lwanga presented to Museveni, he indicated that some of Lutwa's fleeing soldiers camped at Mumias in Kakamega, Kenya.

Such security briefs informed the three-day Busia border fight between NRA and Kenyan forces in 1987. Moi accused Uganda of being a transit point for anti-Moi youth taken to Libya to receive military training with the intention of coming back to fight his government. He also accused Uganda of supporting his opponents uniting under Mwakenya Movement.

The tensions escalated to the extent that Moi expelled Uganda's High Commissioner to Nairobi, Charles Katungi, and his deputy, Samson Bigombe, on December 18. He also closed the Libyan embassy in Nairobi.

Houdek, had on July 16, 1986, communicated to US secretary of defence, and secretary of state, warning that Museveni's friendship with Libya's Gaddafi posed a great danger to American regional allies like Moi. Houdek wrote: "By hosting an expanding radical Arab presence, Museveni is inviting problems with a host of countries who have been victims of Libyan supported subversion and terrorism, notably Egypt, Zaire and the Western nations." He added: "While Museveni said he has told the Libyans he would not countenance extra-legal actions on Ugandan territory, the Libyans inevitably will cheat and create problems for Museveni and Mobutu (president of Zaire) and Moi."

MORE TENSIONS

On December 28, 1987, Museveni and Moi met at Malaba border and pledged to settle their disagreements. However, the tensions escalated in February 1990 when Museveni was visiting Zimbabwe, at the invitation of president Robert Mugabe. At that particular time, Museveni was the chairman of OAU, having replaced Hosni Mubarak of Egypt on July 3, 1990.

Before Museveni returned from Zimbabwe, Moi addressed a gathering at Kericho in Kenya on February 8. He told them how Uganda under Museveni was extending military training to Kenyan youth with the aim of overthrowing his government.

He wondered: "At no time has Kenya tried to interfere with the internal affairs of its neighbours. I wonder why Uganda involves itself in acts aimed at destabilising Kenya." He vowed: "Kenya will not tolerate politics of expansionism by any neighbouring country aimed at destabilising it."

Soon after returning from Zimbabwe, Museveni addressed a press conference at Entebbe and dismissed Moi's claims. He furiously said: "The allegations are foolish."

Museveni instead accused Moi's Kenya of giving safe haven to anti-Uganda rebels. He said: "What the Kenyans are doing now will not help them in any way. We even know where the anti-Uganda rebel camps are based in Kenya."

The writer's book, *President Idi Amin: A Narrative of his Rule (1971-1979)*, is on sale at sh100,000 at Uganda Bookshop.

HAVE YOUR SAY