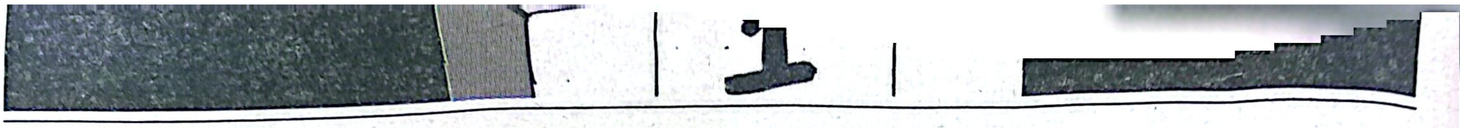

Only a developmental State can be productive and strong

Matsiko Kahunga Development

Time and space could only allow me to watch the first two presentations during Acode's 62nd State of the Nation Dialogue which was part of the Tarehe Sita celebrations 2016. My commentary, therefore, draws from the paper by Prof Palamagamba Kabudi of The University of Dar es Salaam, and the paper by Dr Arthur Bainomugisha, the Executive Director at Acode.

Though the wording of the theme focused on elections, both presenters looked at the State and its role in ensuring peace and security in a larger context. And it is here that Dr Bainomugisha rightly argued that for a State to ensure peace and security, it must be a strong State. Strong to the level of invincibility that will discourage would be adventurous rentables to rubble-rouse in anticipation of being bribed. This bribing is usually couched in soft diplomatic language as 'peace talks', 'peace agreement', et al.

Yet, as one analyst remarked during the peak of the first Burundi fratricide conflict, one rebel outfit causing havoc was said to have requested for $3,000 for each of the 200 or so of its 'forces' in the course of the negotiations. It has since changed name, and its leadership is now in parliament, in 'opposition' to the current Nkurunziza rule. Uganda has had a similar experience in varying degrees, with 'rebels' integrated into the system.

What then constitutes a strong State, one whose response to a 'rebel' outfit will be "...we will find you there and leave you there...", as was once stated by Obote in reaction to Museveni's warning of going to the bush in 1980. Part of what constitutes a strong State was given by Prof Kabudi and the other part by President Museveni during the climax of the Tarehe Sita celebrations at Kololo.

The first key ingredient of a strong State is resolute leadership. This is what enabled Mwalimu Nyerere to dissolve the mutinying army shortly after independence in Tanzania, seeking Nigerian military support for two years (this latter part I learnt for the first from Prof Kabudi's presentation). The second component that lays strong pillars and anchors for the State is what President Museveni mentioned during his speech: a productive economy where he cited the 3Cs and 3Ts of Uganda's pre-independence economy. Coffee, Cotton, and Copper; Tobacco, Tourism and Tea.

And contrary to the dominant economics school, these sectors still hold the key to Uganda's transformation. All we need is to look at them through new lenses: as backbones of Resource-Based Industrialisation, not merely raw materials for export. Speciality coffee and tea selling at $ 42 a kilo rivals a barrel of oil; meeting only 30 per cent of our textile needs locally creates millions of jobs; as will local production of copper

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cables and pipes; tobacco is an untapped resource for organic pesticides that will dwarf cigarettes earnings; while tourism is there for takes on a silver platter: simply allocate $ 25 of the per capita tourist CAA fees into marketing.

The ingredients for a productive, developmental, strong State were all there during Tarehe Sita celebrations. National Enterprise Corporation (NEC) was there at the climax. So were the youth. Ugandans of the Mawazo Generation at Makerere University have fond memories of quality NEC Foam mattresses. And that was only a portion. Prof Kabudi mentioned Tanzania's compulsory National Youth Service, branded *Jeshi la Kujenga Taifa* (JKT). Want a strong State? Revisit NEC of the early 1990s; pay a visit to JKT ...and Uganda will soon have a manpower demand beyond the millions unemployed today.

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