



Rejection by Their Own People Is a Fitting End to the Kenyatta Family's Reign of Hubris, Blunder, Plunder, Squander and Abracadabra

By Dauti Kahura



About a month to the August 9, 2022 elections, a Kikuyu elder man was ushered in the offices of Enke Ltd, at the Chancery Building, uptown Nairobi, on Valley Road. Enke Ltd is one of the Kenyatta family's flagship companies.

The man had an appointment with the princely Muhoho Kenyatta, President Uhuru Kenyatta's younger brother, the behind-the-scenes political schemer and smooth operator, who rarely appears in the media and who, has the ear of the family's matriarch, the all-powerful Mama Ngina Kenyatta.

The man had gone to discuss among other things the upcoming elections, with special reference to Mt Kenya region. "Let us be candid with the truth", the man said to Muhoho. "Things have not been okay in the Mt Kenya region...the people of Mt Kenya have been in a very bad mood, in a very long time and all indications show that they will rebel against President Uhuru's backed coalition, come the general election."

The flashy office that the man had been let into, had many television sets mounted on the wall. "How do you intend to overturn this anger against the government and more specifically, against the Kenyatta family? Posed the man, to an intently listening and quiet Muhoho. "Whatever you need to do, you need to do it very fast, because time is of the essence and it is not your side."

A bemused Muhoho possibly couldn't believe what the man was talking about: Is this what you came here for, to tell me inconsequential stories, the aristocratic second-born son of the most powerful political matriarch in Kenya must have wondered to himself. "So-and-so be calm, and take it easy; I'm not sure you understand Mt Kenya politics and therefore know what you're talking about," retorted Muhoho.

"Turn your eyes to the screens," Muhoho ordered the man, "What do you see? All those screens, what do they show? Do you all see all those blue marked regions? Those are our votes. What do you mean the (Mt Kenya) people are not with us? The mounted screens showed large swathes of Mt Kenya would vote blue, Azimio la Umoja coalition's colour. The chairman of Azimio is Muhoho's elder brother, the outgoing President Uhuru.

Azimio's presidential flagbearer is Raila Amolo Odinga, Uhuru's erstwhile, fiercest opposition leader, now turned bosom buddy. In the just ended presidential election, Azimio coalition was whitewashed in the Mt Kenya region. So humiliatingly did it perform in the region, that President Uhuru couldn't even deliver his own Mutomo location, in Kiambu County, to Raila. Martha Karua, Raila's designated running mate, equally couldn't persuade her own former Gichugu constituents, leave alone Kirinyaga County as a whole, to rally behind her boss.

Contrary to what Muhoho's screens were displaying, Mt Kenya voters in the election painted the region so yellow, the colour of the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) and the sponsoring party of the Kenya Kwanza coalition presidential candidate William Ruto, that Azimio losers in the region are still smarting from the defeat. If there is any hue of blue in Mt Kenya region, one must truly look for it, as one would look for a needle in a haystack, to use the hackneyed idiom.

"Those votes you're talking about are on your screens, on the ground it is a different matter, I'm telling you the votes are yellow and you better listen to me," replied Muhoho's guest. "Believe all you want about those virtual votes on the smart screens, the real votes are on the ground and that's where the battle will be won or lost, not on diagrams posted on the screens."

Muhoho must have been flustered by his guest's insistency and matter of fact statements, but he wasn't going to let a great opportunity pass him without dishing to the senior visitor some nuggets of wisdom. "My dear friend, listen, let me educate you a little bit, because I think you don't seem to understand these things. We the Kenyattas tell Kikuyus what to do, they follow our commands. This will not be the first time we'll be doing so. Let that matter rest. We'll talk after August 9."

Many eons ago, the Greeks came up with a word for this kind of attitude and behaviour - Hubris. If you like, simply in English idiomatic language, pride that comes before a fall.

At just around the same time Muhoho was having an animated altercation with his guest, President Uhuru also ushered some Kikuyu elders in one of State House's inner offices. They were part of a large team that had been invited to the pre-independence governor's mansion on the hill.

Before meeting the large team, Uhuru wanted to have a word with the select elders. "I want you guys to declare the 1969 oath invalid, are we together?" Used to having his way and commanding people around, including men, the age of his avuncular uncle, he wanted an instant answer, like instant coffee.

“That would be all so well,” replied the gentlemen, “But that would involve a cultural process, because de-oathing people as you might well be aware is not a simple matter. We’ve to do it at the (Mukurwe wa Nya Gathanga) shrine. Rituals have to be performed, sacrifices have to be offered...is there time to do this?” Instead of listening to the elders and possibly coming up with a solution, he did what he does best under such circumstances – he snapped and stormed out of the office.

To the Kenyattas, it’s either my way, or the highway. The elders felt humiliated by a younger elder, albeit the president, who, to some of the senior elders, could be their last-born brother. The elders had also wanted to tell the president that all was not well on the ground: the water was salty and therefore undrinkable, but as they came to realise, well, too late in the day, it’s very difficult to engage the Kenyattas.

In February 2022, a mzee friend of mine was summoned by the matriarch nonagenarian Mama Ngina, because she wanted to have a word with him. “We had not spoken for such a long time, I wondered what it is that she wanted from me,” said my septuagenarian friend. After the usual prolonged pleasantries and greetings, the matriarch quickly delved into the subject matter at hand. “So-and-so, why have the Kikuyu people turned against us? Us, being the Kenyatta family.

“Mama Ngina couldn’t understand why a people they have lorded over for 50 years could (suddenly) rebel against the family,” the mzee would later confide in me. “To her, some malevolent forces were inciting the Kikuyus – ‘this is unlike them,’ Mama Ngina averred, do you have a clue what’s going on she asked me.”

The Kenyatta family has treated the Kikuyus like their slaves for so long, they assumed they owned them, said mzee. “The Kikuyus have had grievances for a long time, but the Kenyattas must have assumed, like they always do, that this time they were malingering.” I met the mzee a week after the elections; “now that the shit has hit the fan, the Kenyattas are all flabbergasted.”

Many years back, a central Kenya politician, now a former MP once told me, how one time they were drinking in a members’ only club that was also patronised by some of the Kenyatta family members. Inebriated and dropping his guard down, one of the close-knit relative let it be known that the family considered the Kikuyu people as their serfs.

“We didn’t want to believe what we had heard, I mean, some of us had always suspected what the family thought about the rest of us, but to vocalise it to all and sundry, really was a *faux pas*,” said the former MP.

So, it is that President Uhuru took to the Kikuyu vernacular airwaves from the precincts of State House, 72 hours to the election, believing that he would, with his wisdom, sway the Mt Kenya people from voting for Ruto and heed his call at the 12th hour and vote for his frenemy Raila.

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