

## POLITICS

# Beyond party colours: Where Jubilee meets Chinese party

BY PROF MACHARIA MUNENE

Two countries that appear to have fluctuating relationship are Kenya in the African continent and the Peoples Republic of China. They are both, in the 21st Century, on the geopolitical upswing and assert their global presence forcefully.

Currently led by sons of "revolutionaries", they have grown to respect each other, extend hands of understanding, and reject insulting instructions from imperial/colonial that pretend to be the custodians of world interests. Both were victims of Euro aggression with Britain in the lead, particularly in the 19th Century, that led to a "Century of Humiliation" for China and to colonialism in Kenya.

Both, inspired by dreams of strong leaders and parties, successfully fought their way out of the Euro-imposed condition. China was the first to fight its way out of its "Century of Humiliation" when in October 1949 Mao Zedong proclaimed the New Era at Tiananmen Square in Beijing and started building a New China. Among those top "revolutionaries" with Mao was Xi Zhongxun, the father of current President Xi Jinping. Similarly, Kenya fought its way out of British colonialism in the Mau Mau War of the 1950s and one of those accused of masterminding it was a "revolutionary" named Jomo Kenyatta.

An anti-colonial intellectual giant of the 1930s, a defender of Ethiopian independence against Benito Mussolini's invasion,

and a promoter of Pan-Africanism before and after World War II, Kenyatta emerged from the Mau Mau War to lead Kenya into its Republican status in 1964. His son, Uhuru Kenyatta, is now president of Kenya.

Relations between the two sides were not always rosy as each sought to chart its own revolutionary path. In the 1960s, for instance, their respective youth used weapons of window destruction at each other's embassies in Nairobi and Beijing as Kenya rejected Mao's idea of exporting leaping revolutions.

Instead Kenya adopted an ideological novelty called Sessional Paper Number 10: African Socialism and Its Application to Planning in Kenya whose essence was to claim that capitalism, with a Kenyan twist, was socialism. China would later, under Deng Xiaoping, follow the example and claim that capitalism was socialism with Chinese characteristics. Officially, therefore, both countries are socialistic and insist on being independent in the international arena.

In that independence insistence, China is more successful than Kenya or any other African country, and so those countries would like to know how China does it. In China, the preferred political economy was an ideological mongrel of capitalistic economy juxtaposed on communistic politics. China generously offered training to ruling parties in such places as Ethiopia and South Africa. Kenyan started gravitating to China's political system in the 1980s when the Euros put pressure on President Daniel arap Moi's governance style.



The Chinese, very respectful and receptive, built Kasarani Sports Complex for Moi to be used in the 1988 All Africa Games. It was at the Chinese built Kasarani that the Jubilee coalition merged, with Kiraitu Murungi leading in the ditching of his mbas and other small parties, in order to create the new Jubilee Party.

Present and given prominent recognition was a representative of the Communist Party of China, CPC, who brought a message of goodwill from Beijing. Deputy President William Ruto requested the Chinese delegate to speak on behalf of all foreign political parties, just before he called on President Kenyatta to address new party faithful.

The symbolism of the prominent CPC presence is in the Jubilee Party dream. For Kenya and the new Jubilee Party, there are

three unavoidable attractions to China. First, China has become the world economic engine.

It is gradually directing world thinking towards Beijing with its elaborate One Road, One Belt and new Silk Road infrastructural master plan. It has been, particularly to African countries, generous in helping to open up untapped wealth. Kenya would like to continue partaking of this generosity. Second, the CPC is attractive to the new Jubilee Party, JP, because of its longevity. From its founding on July 1, 1921 in Shanghai, it went through such hardships as the 1927 long march, fighting the Japanese in World War II, and the civil war that ended in 1949. It was caught in the hostility of the Cold War, rivalry with the Soviet Union for ideological dominance, and even survived the Soviet system and is still very vibrant 95 years later. Third, Jubilee would be interested in knowing how the CPC, with 70 to 80 million members all over China runs and transforms a country of over 1.3 billion people into the global power that it is.

In that context, therefore, it is not a surprise that the CPC had such a prominent role in the creation of the Jubilee Party. Like the CPC, JP would like longevity, avoid hardships and internationally orchestrated challenges, assert independence in global dealings, and turn Kenya into the centre of regional if not global gravity. The seeming common perception of interests and the good body chemistry between Xi and Uhuru, sons of "revolutionaries", does not hurt.