



MAJOR GENERAL FRED RWIGYEMA. A TASTE OF THE PROMISED LAND'S OPERATIONAL AND LEADERSHIP CURSE

Ouma, D.

MAJOR GENERAL FRED RWIGYEMA. A TASTE OF THE PROMISED LAND'S OPERATIONAL AND LEADERSHIP CURSE

Ouma, D.

School of Business and Economics, Kaimosi Friends University College, P.O Box 385 Kaimosi, Kenya

Accepted: January 12, 2022

ABSTRACT

The Rwanda conflict and eventual genocide of 1994, a generation ago, brought the leadership in military units that could be extended to management. Akin to the biblical homecoming, it brings leadership lessons that prevail in military and management science during turbulent times. The Rwanda exodus and state of affairs was premised on circumstances and opportunities that arose in Rwanda-Ugandan resource support. In the biblical times, Moses led the Israelites to Canaan. During the holocaust, Ben-Gurion led the Israelites back to Israel. In Eastern Africa, this is the case of Major General Rwigyema through the Rwandan patriotic front. The case of the major general Rwigyema sheds light upon the intersection of politics of exile, operations and management science during tough time's. For most successful business, operations and politics, military strategy has offered strategy and complementary support. More times, the strategies borrowed from military formations have produced leaders that the corporate world would envy. The case of Major General Rwigyema and the Rwandan liberation is a case to apply to management science. The current study critically analysed leadership and operational skills of Major General Rwigyema and his role in commanding the exiled Rwandese back home. The study drew parallel between the challenges faced by Rwandese in Rwanda and Uganda through the 60s to 80s to apply leadership and command strength of a leader that could be applied in business to overcome challenges and economic issues.

Keyword: Operational Leadership

CITATION: Ouma, D. (2022). Major General Fred Rwigyema. A taste of the promised land's operational and leadership curse. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 9 (1), 340 – 345.

INTRODUCTION

The tragic conflict in Rwanda in 1994 attracted the attention of the world (Reed, 1996). Though the world treated this as a nation dealing with its own affairs, it brought to light the leadership equivalent of Moses during the biblical exodus. According to the book of exodus in the bible, the Israelites ended up in Egypt due to famine. The Rwandese sojourn could be attributed to colonization, wrongly implemented succession plans and bad leadership (Kimonyo, 2015). Historically, Rwandese mobility like that of traditional and ethnic African communities rested on famines, acute land shortages and political strives. Rwandese predicaments was fuelled and maximized during the Belgian rule against Rwandese, Twa (0.5%), Hutu (87%) and Tutsi (12.5%) population.

Significantly, Prunner (1995) traces the Rwandese refugee during the Belgians departure. This was particularly after King Kigeri V was deposed and an influx of asylum seekers (mostly Tutsi) crossed to Uganda, Tanzania and Congo. The situation worsened during Kayibanda's leadership. Through this tribal composition and political up heals, leadership was focused on material resources and tribal alienation majorly affecting the two major tribal groups Hutu and Tutsi.

Exiled, most Rwandese tried to integrate themselves into host countries lives. Significant success recorded in Uganda and Congo where cultural resemblance favored Rwandese (Rusesabagina & Zoeller, 2007). With time, politics of the host societies sidelining the Rwandese. In Uganda, politics started defining Ugandan and outsiders. This segregation, relegated Rwandese to business, menial jobs and limited rights to land ownership (Lemarchand, 2002). Educated unemployed Rwandese youth found military service the option during the Obote II time. Tull, and Simons (2017), argue that the failed blending theory, UPC instituted evictions and the Byarimana declaration that there was no space for Tutsis in Rwanda worsened the situation.

The transformational leadership of Major General Rwigyema sprouted when Uganda advanced the struggle theory of Yoweri Museveni's politics of change, fairness and stability (Betts & Jones, 2016). Although the exiled Rwandese leadership had not solidified, the urge to go home had already been game planned by the Rwanda Youth Movement through 1960, 1962 and 1964. This game plan created the need of leaders such as Major General Rwigyema (Otunnu 1999: Mushemaza, 2007).

Born Emmanuel Gisa, Major General Rwigyema was born in Gitarama, south Rwanda. He was a key figure in the national resistance army of Museveni. Other key Rwandese commanders were Paul Kagame, Col. Patrick Karegeya, General Salim Saleh Akandwanaho, General Elly Tumwine, General David Tinnyefuza, Gen Jack Nziza and Col Tom Byabagamba among others. After the Hutu revolution of 1959, Rwigyema's family later fled to Uganda in 1960 and settled in a refugee camps of Nsungwezi, Ankole and later Kahungye in Toro where he started his school (Reed, 1996 & Prunier, 2010). After finishing high school with the assistance of Salim Saleh he joined the Front for National Salvation (FRONASA) in Tanzania led by Museveni. Major Gen Fred Rwigyema later joined FRELIMO in Mozambique. In 1979 he returned back to join the national liberation army (UNLA) and using the National Resistance Army (NRA) as a vehicle they drove off Idd Amin.

In 1986, with the current president of Uganda Yoweri Kaguta Museveni seizing power, Rwigyema was appointed deputy minister of defense. He immediately embarked on a leadership effort and a game plan to lead his people back to Canaan. The initial strategic plan was preceded by the drafting of an eight-point plan, new operational guides and personal code of conduct. The documents were drafted based on Rwanda refugees' interviews of in Central and Eastern Africa. This gave birth to the RPF (Jewel, 2014).

Using Museveni goodwill, material support, weaponry, ammunition, logistical and strategy leadership, RPF military wing, started building an army inside the host army. This strategy involved creating leadership with structures not likely to shake the main army but backed with vital military, political organization as well as individual outcomes. To transform leadership and followers NRA inspired, build trust, encouraged and trained and developed different military and political leadership. During the night of 30th September 1990 Rwigyema lead the army back home. He moved the army a day before the Ugandan Independence Day and at night strategically to avoid suspicion. Upon reaching the border town of kagitumba he bound the army through an oath that “upon setting foot on the Promised Land they never would leave their motherland”. On the 2nd of September, Major General Rwigyema was shot and later died upon setting foot on Canaan amid many shooting theories. His case corroborating the biblical Moses’ case of:

“yet thou shall see the land before thee

: but thou shall not go thither unto

the land which I give the children of Israel”

(Deutenomy 32:52)

Today, Rwanda is one of the best performing countries in Africa (Rwigyema, 2020). It is an example of success in post-conflict reconstruction (Rwigyema, 2021). Following the ethnic effects of the genocide in 1994, Rwanda embarked on a reconstruction program defined by sound economic policies, peace, nationhood and stability. Fred Rwigyema envisioned exactly that. His management and leadership has roots in the book of *exodus* during Israelites sojourn in Egypt: perspective, time and personalities not rival. However, Rwigyema could have wished to reach Kigali which was not the case. Unlike Moses, Maj General Rwigyema set foot on Canaan’s outskirts.

Paul Kagame (Joshua) would later get the Rwandese to the Promised Land (Rwigyema, 2021).

DISCUSSION

Leadership in management science was an unpredictable concept until about 30 years ago (Bligh, Kohles & Pillai, 2011). The concept of visionary leadership emerges as a result of need. As a result of the changing needs, leadership emerge in response to needs. It creates a chance for communities and businesses to succeed from unpleasant situations (Wong,Bliese, & McGurk,2003). During such times, contemporary leadership theories separates leaders from non-leaders. According to Rune (2021) strategic leaders are expected to possess self-critique, delegate of maximum authority based on policy and recommendations, conscientious, disciplined, fulfilling promise, open to change, innovative, flexible and with the ability to deal with uncertainties. In military and organizational efficiency this is obtained from team work (Gjelten, 2016).

In the light of new leadership theories, the developing intellectual and behavioral leadership encourages leaders to seek operations and training in the technical self-improvement and administrative aspects of duties. Subordinates have to be informed. Training and lack of education among soldiers’ leads to strategic failure with orders being carried out without ethos, tact and professionalism (Lee et al 2010). Military and corporate leaders, should seek well-rounded military/ business education through attendance of service schools, independent reading and research. According Atkinson and Mackenzie (2015) the need to ensure that tasks are understood while teams are training and in the field are vital. During operations, corporates and military formations despise competitors. Tactically, seriousness should be paramount to avoid head-on collision. In the market or the field, the leader could dominate the enemy, while preserving himself to emerge the strategic leader. Mao Tse-tung advises that “when the enemy

advances, we retreat; when he retreats, we attack” On the leadership front/market, leaders start by attacking competitor targets which are weak. In revolutionary leadership, the first phase is political/market agitation defined clandestine operations. This starts with market mapping and training). Targeting market and intelligence/strategic staff of the competitor could provide forums for customers to shake up the general market equilibrium of business and military logistics or attack fields. Guerrilla warfare follow if marketing/ political lobbying is not successful. In guerrilla warfare and operational activities, the units could form groups likely to attack soft targets/markets. While doing this, discipline is vital to prevent formations from attacking noncombatants. This is also true when retreating. Military operations curved out of such ethics easily earns formations international and local population support. Well executed, strategic intent in business should target non-viable markets or mistreat customers during market exit.

Well used, guerrilla warfare could force competitors to negotiate and give room for political settlement. For corporates, it could force competitors into alliances and markets sharing. Using this approach, visionary leader while lobbying politically could give subordinates, teams’ resources and information to execute operations. Execution plans should never be on paper, or anywhere. For both business and military operations strategic plans should not be leaked and unit intelligence officers could be kept kilometres away to relay information to operational points.

Sound and timely decisions are needed leadership as an activity influences others guiding them towards similar goal and strategy timely (Wong, Bliese & McGurk,2003). While withdrawing, the leader should inform, provide and share with his men reasons for withdrawal. Attained, this helps to keep fear under control and map new battle grounds (new markets for business). At all times the leader should never let

a unit /section think it has been abandoned or vital commanders or managers feeling used and dumped.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Leadership power equips one with the ability to influence, change values, beliefs, behavior and attitude of others towards intended goals (Leonard et al. 2006). The visionary leadership of Major General Rwigyema is an example of good leadership in the corporate, military and political life. Although his leadership resonates with the visionary leadership of the biblical Moses and Ben Gurrion, Rwigyema and Moses’ mirage of the Promised Land are fatal. However, their cases are vital to characterize the best leaders.

APPLICATION

While preparing to take his people to Rwanda, Rwigyema involves all Rwandese in the army irrespective of their warring tribal routes back home. This is the case of Moses taking other tribes from Egypt when heading to Canaan (Exodus). As a good leader, he encourages team spirit and relies on the 8-point game plan. The major starts, grows and builds an army within an army (the power of units excelling within established corporates). While leaving to Rwanda, he does not shake the structures of UPF (power of corporates not shaking the host), leads, transforms and inspires people to achieve unexpected results (Malloch & Melnyk, 2013). To motivate the army, he offers hope, training through liberations songs and oaths. He clearly portrays clear visions of strategy and establishes lobbying arms (operational and political wings). Through RPF He reaches out for friendly support in terms of strategy, operations, logistics and withdrawal routes from president Museveni.

Using RPF case, Military and corporate leadership is a goal that give reason or purpose for the existence and successful attainment of the unit/organization mission. The military/corporate leader must accomplish and purpose for which various unit/

organizations exist. The goal or objective must be pursued with minimum expenditure, persons and time. The mission and command clarity of group or unit specify responsibilities based on needs (Binaisa,2011). The individual need or group attitude of corporate/ military service needs consideration as it ensures that there is order and operation obedience. Defined by managerial rank and assignment, it accords responsibility, helps in planning, organizing, process mapping and helps in sourcing men, money, material, time and facilities (Weustman & Casey, 2015).

Applied in the managerial instances, the military profession has no monopoly on leadership qualities. Leaders could be found in virtually all operational areas though defined by situation, education, personalities, team members, working relation,

desired goal and morale (Maxwell, 2009). In management science, the environment, missions, leader, resources and the spirit that it is doable must be provided. The team must be motivated and in situations where special problems arise seconds in command must assume command immediately since the development of leadership in subordinates must be of the highest quality for succession planning.

For Major General Rwigyema

"A true leader is still a leader even when he takes up servants' duty, provided he maintains a human face and added integrity to his self-retained qualities.

" He inspires people to do what is expected of them to do. Ceases to be a leader when he maintains ego instead of being guided by convince and inspiration."

(Israelmore Ayivor)

REFERENCES

- Abou-Moghli, A. (2015). The role of organizational support in improving employees' performance. *International Business Research*, 8(2), 198-203.
- Atkinson, P., & Mackenzie, R. (2015). Without leadership there is no change. *Management Services*, 59(2), 42-47. 3.
- Azzam, A. M. (2014) Motivation to learn: A Conversation with Daniel Pink. *Motivation Matters*, 72(1), 12-17.
- Betts, A & Jones, W (2016) *Mobilizing The Diaspora*, Cambridge university press.
- Binaisa, N. (2011) African Migrants Negotiate 'Home' and 'Belonging' Re-framing Transnationalism through a Diasporic Landscape. Working Papers, Paper 41, May. International Migration Institute (IMI), Oxford Department of International Development (QEH), University of Oxford.
- Bligh, M. C., Kohles, J. C., & Pillai, R. (2011). Romancing leadership: Past, present, and future. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(6), 1058–1077
- Gjeltén, T (2016) Presidential Leadership: Uniting Behind Exceptionalism. *World Affairs*, 179, (1) 15-21
- Grint, K. (2007). *What is Leadership? From Hydra to Hybrid*. Working paper, Said Business School and Templeton College, Oxford University.
- Jewel, M (2014) ' cohesion through socialization: liberation tradition and modernity in the forging Rwanda Defense Force(RDF)' *Journal Of Eastern African Studies* 8(2)278-293.
- Kimonyo J (2015) A strong Man Building Strong Institution In A Weak Society? *New times*

- Lee, P., Gillespie, N., Mann, L., & Wearing, A. (2010) Leadership and Trust: Their Effect on Knowledge Sharing and Team Performance. *Management learning*, 41(4), p 473-49.
- Lemarchand, R (2002), A History of Genocide in Rwanda. *The Journal of African History*, 43, (2) 307-311.
- Leonard H. A.et al. (2006) Something old, something new: Army Leader Development in a Dynamic Environment, RAND Report MG-281.
- Malloch, K., & Melnyk, B. M. (2013). Developing high-level change and innovation agents: competencies and challenges for executive leadership. *Nursing administration quarterly*, 37(1), 60-66.
- Maxwell, J. C. (2009). *Teamwork 101: What every leader needs to know*. Thomas Nelson Inc
- Mushemaza E, D (2007) The politics and empowerment of Banyarwanda refugees in uganda,1959-2001, kampala fountains .103
- Otunnu, O. (1999). "Rwandese Refugees and Immigrants in Uganda." In Adelman, Howard, and Astri Suhrke, eds. *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Prunier, G (1995) *The Rwanda Crisis 1959-1994: History of a Genocide*, C Hurst, London.
- Prunier, G, (2010), *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*, London
- Reed, C (1996). Exile, Reform, and the Rise of the Rwandan Patriotic Front Author(s): Wm. Cyrus Reed Source: *The Journal of Modern African Studies* , 34(3)479-501
- Rune, T (2021) Leadership: In Pursuit of Purpose, *Journal of Change Management*, 21:1, 30-44
- Rusesabagina, P, & Zoellner, T (2007), *An Ordinary Man: An Autobiography*, New York, NY.
- Rwigema, P, C. (2021). Potrait of developing economy: Rwanda perspective. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 8 (3), 637 – 680.
- Rwigema, P. C. (2020). Impact of education on economic growth. The case of Rwanda. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 7(2), 490 – 512.
- The Bible, New King James Version, 2020, *Deut 32:52*.
- Tull, D & Simons, C (2017), The Institutionalisation of Power Revisited:Presidential Term Limits in Africa, in: *Africa Spectrum*, 52, 2, 79–102.
- Wong, L; Bliese, P & McGurk, D, (2003)"Military Leadership: A Context Specific Review"). US Army Research.
- Wuestman, D., & Casey, J. (2015). Lean leadership: Sustaining long-term process change. *Strategic Finance*, 96 (8), 15-16, 61.