

The Question of Ethnicity in Uganda's Politics: Exploring the Period 1960s to 1970s and Implications for Ugandan Development

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Abstract

Most of the third world countries yearned and achieved for independence in the period 1960s and Uganda was no exception after having been under the British rule for a long time (of about 60 years). 9th October 1962 is the day to remember for this independence event. Being a new independent state implied that the social, political and economic problems and challenges inherited from the British were numerous and this gave the then Prime Minister Milton Obote 'the formidable and unenviable task of welding the various identities of the country into a modern nation-state.' Indeed, in 1962 Uganda was still a rather fractured and desperate entity, divided by a multitude of ethnic, religious, linguistic, classes and regional cleavages. During the early 1960s there remained a persistent and 'almost unbridgeable gap between the various communities in Uganda.' This is why moreover, in 1957 Sir Andrew Cohen, Governor of Uganda from 1952-57, noted that 'nationalism is still a less powerful force in Uganda than ethnic or tribal loyalties.' In the run up to independence Uganda's politicians failed to form a united nationalist front, and 'managed to arrive at the threshold of independence with very little to show in the way of political struggle.' This contributed to the lack of unity within Uganda's political system, and meant that broadly speaking, political parties were split along ethnic lines. This trend has been ongoing since the independence and post independence era.

Key words: Ethnicity, Politics, Governance, Colonialism, Community

Introduction:

Developing countries have had a bitter experience with identity especially in the area of ethnicity. Uganda has not been an exception and is currently undergoing an intense debate about ethnicity manipulation and its implications for politics and on the other hand national unity. The trigger point for this debate/conflict lies in the history of colonial Uganda in the manner the term 'tribe' was used and deployed by the British colonial administration as a policy for 'divide and rule' in colonizing and administering Uganda.

The 'tribe'¹ was and has always been used as a tool of mapping and controlling the population for exploitation and domination. The manner the 'divide and rule' policy was used was so intense that it was socialized in the consciousness of the Ugandan political elite as well as the 'lay men' who later became the rulers on behalf of colonialists and in the period after that turned the post-colonial states. This is the reason ethnic manipulation has become an important tool of political power and political control as well as political management in contemporary Africa.

Looking at the history of Uganda, In 1959 Sir Frederick Crawford, who was the Governor of Uganda then, came up with an idea of establishing a Constitutional Committee to discuss political representation across Uganda, and what kind of form 1961 elections to the Legislative Council would take. It is reported that the Constitutional Committee also noted in its report that

'Uganda is an artificial unit containing within its borders a very wide range...of different tribes with different languages and customs.'

Furthermore, Jan Jelmert Jorgensen (1981:67) notes that 'the ideology of tribalism was more than a threat to the unity of Uganda.' The priority focus is the divisive nature of ethnicity in Ugandan politics, and this is why it is important to first establish what the term ethnicity specifically refers to in a Ugandan as well as in a broader African context. It is of paramount importance not to confuse ethnicity with the term 'tribe' though these are usually used concurrently which can 'promote a racist conception of African ethnicities as primitive and savage.' Bruce Berman says that 'African ethnicity is a construction of the colonial period through the reactions of pre-colonial societies to the social, economic, cultural and political forces of colonialism and even the times after that.

¹ In this respect, a tribe is used to refer to 'any aggregate of people united by ties of descent from a common ancestor, community of customs and traditions, adherence to the same leaders with the same moral obligations as others'.

The term ethnicity however has no concrete definition.² Nelson Kasfir notes that ‘ethnicity is a fluid, not a fixed, condition of African politics. To operationalize the term, ethnicity is used to describe the different communities of Uganda, mostly separated by region and culture that are defined in almost all forms of literature as separate ethnic entities or groupings.

In 1962, on the verge of independence, there were a number of discrepancies between Uganda’s different ethnic groups, which contributed towards the lack of unification within the country as has had happened in all the other decolonized countries. In Uganda like many countries, there was ‘a long-standing tradition of local nationalism before independence’, which was manifested through the presence of different kingdoms, territories and districts as well as identities like religions and ethnicities. In 1962, Uganda consisted of the kingdoms of Buganda, Ankole, Bunyoro and Toro; the territory of Busoga; and the districts of Acholi, Bugisu, Bukedi, Karamoja, Kigezi, Lango, Madi, Sebei, Teso and West Nile. Loyalty to such local institutions and identities meant that political behaviour was largely based upon ‘linguistic, socio-cultural and economic identities of interests.’ The Independence Constitution³ negotiated in London a few months prior to independence, granted full federal status to Buganda and a semi-federal relationship to the other kingdoms. Such devolution of power undermined the authority of the state, and left Uganda in a ‘quasi-federal milieu.’ The kingdom of Buganda had for a long time generated resentment throughout Uganda, because it had enjoyed a position of unrivalled superiority throughout the colonial period. Many Baganda in fact ‘developed an attitude of complacent arrogance towards the other people of Uganda.’ Almost all other ethnic groups in

² In common use, ‘ethnicity is used as a euphemism for the sensitive term *race*, but with identical meaning: group ancestry and physical characteristics, such as skin color, as in “ethnic Chinese”. In careful use, it refers to any common characteristic or identity, particularly linguistic, national, regional, or religious groups, and can cut across race’

³ It must be noted that ‘the Constitution is the supreme law of Uganda. The present constitution was adopted on 8 October 1995. It is Uganda’s fourth constitution since the country’s independence from Britain in 1962. The first Constitution was adopted in 1962 only to be replaced 4 years later in 1966. The 1966 Constitution, passed in a tense political environment and without debate, was replaced in 1967. The 1995 Constitution established Uganda as a republic with an executive, legislative, and judicial branch. The roles and powers of each of the Government arms are enshrined and spelt out in the Uganda Constitution 1995’.

Uganda were concerned by Bagandan attempts to dominate the post-colonial state, and the ‘suspicion and hostility engendered by this sort of attitude was hardly a sound basis for national unity.’

One should remember that the 1962 Independence Constitution, also in other words called the ‘compromise document’, was intended to deal with the political problems that had beset Uganda during the 1950s. This attempted to appease the separatist tendencies of the kingdoms, particularly Buganda, in an attempt to forge a unified state. As a result of this, to many scholars, the Constitution has been described as ‘a parcel of contradictions’, as it was neither fully federal nor fully unitary. The attempt to forge such a state was a rather formidable task, as ethnic divisions within Uganda were rigid, deep-set, and had been engrained over a long period of time. Ethnicity was a divisive political issue long before Uganda gained independence, particularly the elevated position of Buganda, which came about largely as a result of the preferential treatment shown towards the kingdom by the Protectorate Government.

On the events leading to the 1962:

Emphasizing what has already said, Uganda was a rather disparate entity during the 1950s, and as James Mittelman (1975:302) has aptly noted, Uganda’s history was ‘marked more by internal heterogeneity and conflict than by shared tradition or co-operation.’ Compared to other British colonies in Africa, discontent with the colonial authorities was not channeled into a strong nationalist movement, and ‘neither the leaders nor the sentiments...essential to internal stability’ were present in Uganda. The nationalist cause was rather weak during the 1950s, and there were in fact a number of competing nationalisms in Uganda. Firstly, there was ‘Uganda-wide nationalism’ which aimed to serve the country as a whole. Second, there was ‘Kiganda nationalism’, which aimed to serve the interests of Buganda, and finally ‘anti-Kiganda’ nationalism, which primarily aimed to serve the interests of all other ethnic groups in Uganda. No wonder, it is hardly a surprise that the nationalist cause was fractured. As noted by M.S.M Kiwanuka(1967:22), ‘Kiganda nationalism’ was intrinsic to the success or failure of national unification, as was Buganda’s position of preponderance, which stemmed largely from the overt favoritism shown to the Buganda by the British.

The British policy of divide and rule made them design ways of softening Ugandans among which included treaties with Buganda (1900, 1955), Ankole (1901), Toro (1900) and Bunyoro (1933). The Protectorate government made little investment in the areas outside of Buganda, both economically and politically but as well as socially. The British held the view that ‘tribal governments were the best and the most proper arena for African politics’, and therefore made little effort to provide representative political institutions (in the best interests of the Ugandans). In addition, whilst recognizing some broad ethnic affinities, in the majority of cases the British attempted to segregate Uganda’s different ethnic communities. The Protectorate Government attempted to keep the peace ‘through a policy of separating peoples rather than bringing them together.’ Professor Ali Mazrui (2012:24) stresses the fact that British rule sharpened ethnic loyalties, and that ‘colonial policy made the task of national integration more difficult than it had ever been.’ This viewpoint proves to be particularly pertinent when the role of Buganda is considered, and the preferential treatment it was shown by the Protectorate Government.

Throughout the colonial period, the Protectorate Government bestowed special treatment upon Buganda⁴, and it was ‘through which, and by whose people the British had developed the country.’ Buganda had existed as an independent country for nearly five hundred years before the arrival of the British, and was ‘the largest, but also the wealthiest, the most advanced and most strategically placed of the African tribes in Uganda.’ In 1900 the Uganda Agreement helped to enshrine Buganda’s privileged identity, which was then revised and replaced by the Buganda Agreement of 1955⁵.

⁴ The colonial authority’s preferential treatment of Buganda was largely responsible for regional inequality within Uganda and a major cause of resentment towards Buganda by other ethnic groups. Members of other ethnic units ‘tended to resent Buganda’s special position’, which in time manifested itself in the form of political opposition. However, the appointment of Sir Andrew Cohen as Governor of Uganda in 1952 did bring reform to the policies and attitude of the Protectorate Government, and started the process of rebalancing the uneven distribution of power between Uganda’s different ethnic groups.

⁵ The Agreement ‘satisfied Buganda’s separatist loyalties’, which made the task of national integration decidedly more difficult. In addition, it also enhanced Buganda’s position at independence conferences in 1961, and ‘was a major factor leading to federal status for Buganda.’

During the 1950s, Uganda was transformed ‘by the political and constitutional policies introduced by Sir Andrew Cohen.’ It was Cohen’s arrival as Governor in 1952 that ‘coincided with the development of nationalism and political parties’ in Uganda. Tribal governments were democratized and given local government functions, and the Protectorate began to push for the formation of a unitary state. In 1953, shortly after Cohen’s arrival, it was announced that African representation was to be increased on the Legislative Council, which ‘was intended to provide an institutional means of achieving national unity.’⁶

After the tenure of Sir Andrew Cohen as Governor had ended, in a speech given to a joint meeting of the Royal African Society and Royal Empire Society in February 1957, Cohen detailed how his principle goal had been ‘to help the people and the country to move steadily and in an orderly fashion towards self-government.’ This, Cohen claimed was Britain’s only justification for being in Uganda, and that ultimately a successful transition towards independence was in the hands of Ugandans and the emerging political parties. Before his departure, Cohen ‘served notice that it was incumbent upon Africans to make their own pace’ towards independence, and it was indeed the emerging political parties of the late 1950s that determined this pace.

During the 1950s, as a result of the changing attitude of the Protectorate Government and the growth of political parties, ‘the tempo of political life in Uganda changed.’ One should remember that the calls for independence were certainly a part of political rhetoric, though superseding this were regional concerns and the fear of political domination by the Baganda. Politicians from areas outside of Buganda ‘began to unite and to advocate outright challenge to what was called the Kiganda domination and leadership.’ Understandably, non-Bugandan citizens desired representation, and ‘political co-operation between disparate groups outside Buganda was itself a kind of protest against Buganda’s position of aloofness.’ There was one party that managed to gain electoral success both inside and outside of Buganda, namely the

⁶ However, these reforms were only applied in Buganda, and when direct elections to the Legislative Council were proposed in 1956 they were initially only held in Buganda, which ‘would provide an example to other parts of Uganda’. It seems that despite reform the Baganda were still subject to preferential treatment from the British

Democratic Party. Founded in 1956 as a Catholic party, the Democratic Party (DP) were led from 1958 onwards by Benedicto Kiwanuka, an outspoken critic of the Baganda Government and Lukiiko. Able to appeal to Catholics in Buganda, the DP were ‘also very important outside Buganda’, forming a strong minority in many regions as well gaining electoral victories in West Nile in 1958, and Lango and Acholi in 1959. In addition to the DP, the Uganda People’s Congress (UPC)⁷ quickly became a powerful political force, and offered itself to the Ugandan public as ‘the party of compromise.

Despite the devolution of power throughout Uganda, Obote still ‘saw his role as one of uniting Uganda into a single nation.’ This view was expressed by Obote in London in 1960, where a commitment was made to ‘a free, untied Uganda in which the dignity of every inhabitant was recognized.’ Unlike the Kabaka, Obote had an ‘unalterably strong conviction’ that Uganda should ‘become one nation in which tribal differences would ultimately disappear.’ After independence, it was in fact Obote’s primary concern ‘to weaken the organizational manifestations of ethnicity.’⁸

The reliance upon an ethnic foundation reduced Obote’s freedom of action, and between 1966 and 1971 Obote made a number of attempts to maneuver himself out of this position. He no

⁷ The formation of the UPC began in 1958, when seven unaffiliated members of the Legislative Council came together to form the Uganda People’s Union. In March 1960 the Union joined with the Uganda National Congress, and under the leadership of Milton Obote, the UPC was born. The UPC was formed as a non-Ganda party, and became increasingly hostile towards ‘the feudal tribalism of Buganda.’ In addition, in Buganda Obote was deemed to be an unacceptable leader of the UPC as he was from the Lango District. As noted, the UPC was staunchly anti-Baganda, but there were also ethnic divisions within the ranks of the UPC itself. Bantu and Nilotic blocs within the party competed for power, with the Nilotic group pursuing more radical social policies, with the Bantu taking a more conservative stance. Despite some conflict within the party, the UPC were an integral part of Uganda’s political progression. Both the UPC and the DP were ‘in policy and intention, trans-tribal parties’ and without these two parties it seems doubtful whether Uganda would have gained independence in 1962. In the run-up to independence in 1962 the UPC failed to work successfully with the DP, and despite huge conflict in ideology, the UPC instead formed a coalition with Kabaka Yekka (hereafter KY), a pro-monarchist Bugandan party.

⁸ This conviction proved to be a salient issue for Obote, who continued to stress his desire for unity as the 1960s progressed. On 9th July 1965, on the radio station BBC Home Service, Obote stated that Uganda’s ‘greatest achievement since independence...is national consciousness.’ Furthermore, in response to a question from host Roy Lewis about the importance of tribal affiliation, Obote remarked that ‘tribal consciousness is now quietened down, what is now taking its place is a clear cut national consciousness

longer wanted to be a victim of ‘the ethnic sickness’ that ‘still afflicted the system despite constitutional and organizational changes.’ In September 1967 a new constitution was enacted, which strongly enhanced the power of the central government. The constitution also abolished the kingdoms of Buganda, Ankole, Bunyoro and Toro, turning Uganda into a republic. The disappearance of the kingdoms was ‘an indication that the different regions of Uganda had now achieved equality’, and that the ‘symbols of inequality’ were no more.⁹

Finally, in the same respect, there was reform of the parliamentary voting system which meant that every candidate had to stand for election in three constituencies other than their own, reducing the importance of ethnic and regional identity in electoral campaigns. These policies demonstrate a partial political reversal by Obote, especially when compared to his behaviour in government before 1966. The northern domination of government was somewhat relinquished, and a new ideological approach was adopted. This shift was largely realized in Obote’s ‘Move to the Left’ strategy, which was further enshrined by the Common Man’s Charter¹⁰ in 1969.

The ‘Move to the Left’¹¹ came to be epitomized by the Common Man’s Charter, which was signed into law on 24th October 1969, and envisaged ‘the creation of a new political culture and a new way of life.’ It was ‘an effort to break out of the ethnic dimension’ and also a promise for ‘justice, equality, liberty and welfare for all Ugandans’. It flatly rejected ‘isolationism in regard to one part of Uganda towards another in all sorts of identities of social, economic or political nature.’ In theory the Charter was meant to reduce inequality throughout the country and

⁹ In addition, a programme of nationwide reforms were introduced, that were intended to reduce discrepancies between the different ethnic groups of Uganda.

¹⁰ The Common Man's Charter was a ‘document submitted to the Ugandan People's Congress by Ugandan President Milton Obote, forming a part of the country's so-called "Move to the Left". In it, he asserts several key principles of his vision for Uganda, including a commitment to democracy in the country. It built on agreements from the June 1968 conference, and was signed into law on the 24 October 1969, in an emergency meeting in Kampala. It was subtitled "First Steps for Uganda to Move to the Left", heralding the start of the movement within Uganda’.

¹¹ The Move to the Left was a policy direction undertaken in Uganda, most notably under President Milton Obote in the period 1968–1971. Despite nominally being a move towards socialism, it also had strong nationalist overtones.

generate national loyalty, which caused a considerable stir. The introduction of radical new policies among others the plan to spread wealth more equitably, reform the electoral system, state acquisition of many multinational companies and the eradication of regional mentality created shockwaves throughout Uganda. The proposition of such radical reforms meant that the Charter was received with widespread skepticism, especially as the document itself appears to have been 'riddled with ambiguities and questions that could not easily be addressed easily.

To remember, after Obote had forced the Kabaka to flee Uganda in 1966, Mutesa II later died in exile during 1969 in a state of poverty. The government refused to allow him to be buried in a traditional ceremony in Buganda, which 'further humiliated the Baganda and welded them together in enmity towards Obote.' Such treatment of the Baganda highlights the lack of effort Obote made to integrate an important and populous region within the national framework, and that his public declarations about a new era of politics, free from ethnic division were both erroneous and hypocritical. This argument proves to be particularly pertinent when the ethnic composition of institutions like the army is considered, given that Obote was preaching about the death of ethno-politics whilst also ensuring that recruitment for the army was 'being conducted on an ethnic basis.

The lost counties of Buganda and Bunyoro are another example of ethnic politics. Henry Colvile, the newly appointed British commissioner to Uganda, thought in December 1893 that the best way to carry out his instructions to protect Britain's interests in the Great Lakes region would be to invade and capture the kingdom of Bunyoro. Bunyoro had long been considered a threat to European expansion; it prevented a potential British invasion of the Sudan; it was connected to the slave trade; and, less obviously, to extreme Islam. In addition, it appeared that Buganda, over which Britain had lately established a Protectorate, was once more headed for civil war. Colvile thought that local rivalries in Buganda were to blame. Colvile, who was determined to advance further up the Nile, then made the bold decision to annex southern Bunyoro to Buganda in April 1894. This was done in order to strengthen the British position in Buganda and secure access to Lake Albert.

The transfer of Bunyoro's southern lands strengthened Britain's major affiliation with the Protestant Buganda party, while the Catholic Ganda received the tiny south-western counties of

Buyaga and Bugangaizi. Additionally, the recent expansion of the nearby Catholic saza of Buweekula was approved.

Only one of the counties that the Protestants obtained from Bunyoro, Buruli, was allowed to keep its territorial integrity since the number of counties that each religious group controlled nominally determined the balance of power between Buganda's religious parties. The remaining three counties were merged into the already existing Ssinga, Bulemeezi and Bugerere ganda sazas. What later came to be known as the Lost Counties were initially occupied by Buganda primarily for military purposes.

Local bands of Nyoro warriors were scattered by Ganda chiefs sent to the new regions, and Bunyoro's main army's supply of weapons was cut off. A lot of civilians were slaughtered during the instances of extreme cruelty that took place during the Nyoro population's subjugation, and some locals were also made slaves. Because the Catholics had a disproportionate number of chiefs in relation to their area after recently losing their position of dominance in Buganda, the level of Ganda exploitation and repression appears to have been particularly acute in the western sazas. The exceptional zeal with which the Catholics mined their domain for taxes and labor tribute reflected this. But within a few years, tensions in the new regions began to subside as Nyoro chiefs were eliminated, withdrawn, or capitulated, and the worst human rights violations were curbed as missionaries and colonial administrators instituted some form of control.

In addition to reaffirming Buganda's control over the Lost Counties, the 1900 Uganda Agreement solidified Ganda dominance over the region by granting freehold properties to influential chiefs and the royal family. As estates were selected from the regions with the richest agricultural land and the densest population, about all the Nyoro who lived in the Lost Counties' third of the 16,000 square kilometers of land were taken as mailo freehold land. The Lost Counties' early colonial history is quite scant, but what has been preserved highlights the Nyoro's oppression, destitution, and ill health.

But over time, the growth of mission schools and cash farming led to the emergence of a growing class of ambitious, literate, and relatively well-off Nyoro people. In order to advocate

for the return of the annexed territories, some members of this newly emerging elite founded the Mubende Bunyoro Committee in 1921. They forged strong ties with Bunyoro's royal government and sent numerous petitions to the Ugandan governor and the British Colonial Secretary over the years that followed. In the meantime, the wealthiest Nyoro were able to purchase mailo land from the Ganda, and the most intelligent were able to secure government posts as clerks, teachers and dispensers. It is possible that Ganda strategy moved beyond simple suppression in response to this growing Nyoro self-confidence. A new assimilation approach emerged in the Lost Counties during the latter decades of the colonial era, based on the idea that being Ganda was determined by one's place of birth rather than by one's blood.

During the latter half of the 1960s, a divergence of opinions emerged between Obote and Amin that 'rendered the vital premise of the post-1966 power-system no longer valid.' The conflict that emerged between the civil and military authorities proved once again to be ethnically divisive, something that compromised the process of service delivery by both government sections. Obote gave orders that Sudanese guerrilla activities could not take place on Ugandan soil, and that the national border must be respected. Obote as is seen even in the regime of Amin both resorted to the 'manipulation of ethnic, language and geographical variables to shore up their support in the armed forces', and in an attempt to exert control over the whole country. Obote created a number of armed organizations in an attempt to rival the regular army, namely the Special Force and the General Service Unit (GSU), which was controlled by his cousin Akena Adoko.

The Special Force and the GSU were filled with individuals from Obote's own district of Lango, and were favored in terms of arms, equipment and budgetary allowance, which greatly angered the regular army. Furthermore, the secretive nature of the GSU 'greatly magnified the danger it seemed to represent to the army. As well as the creation of these paramilitary organizations, Obote also ensured that Langi and Acholi officers were given strategically important positions within the army, pinning his hopes of an alliance between the Langi and Acholi, thus 'clearly exploiting the army's ethnic composition.' Obote's behaviour caused an equal reaction from Amin, who mobilized his own ethnic affiliates from West Nile to counter balance the inflated numbers of Langi and Acholi in the army.

After numerous events came about the coup of 1971, with Amin seizing power¹² on the 25th January whilst Obote was attending a Commonwealth Summit Conference in Singapore. The coup took place at the end of a period ‘fraught with tension’, that came about as a result of both Obote and Amin establishing conflicting, ethnically orientated blocks of support within the armed forces. Michael Lofchie (1972:45) argues that the primary reason the coup took place was in fact the formation of class consciousness among the military, and the desire to sustain the position of economic preponderance that the military had recently achieved. Lofchie states that because the army ‘had come to constitute a more and more economically privileged stratum’, Obote was overthrown because the ‘Move to the Left’ threatened the economic prosperity of the armed forces. This however is vehemently disputed by Holger Bernt Hansen, who claims it is ‘meaningless to treat the army as a uniform entity...as it was only a single ethnically-defined group that took power’, and therefore ‘it is difficult to interpret the coup in elite or class terms.

Ethnic manipulation of the military transcended the change of President in 1971, and was realized in a more drastic and brutal fashion under Amin. Ethnicity continued to be a very big issue even in this new regime.¹³ The periods after those regimes have equally carried forward the status quo of capitalizing on ethnicity as a way of ruling the people. This has created divisions, disunity as well as hatred accordingly.

In conclusion, it is abundantly clear that during the time period studied, ethnicity was an incredibly divisive force in Ugandan politics. Although the ethnic conflicts that took place

¹² When the decisive hour came in 1971 Obote was abandoned by his Acholi allies in the army, who were disgruntled about the government response to the murder of Brigadier Pierino Okaya. Obote had dug his political grave ‘by using ethnicity to contain ethnicity.’

¹³ It has been widely noted that ‘Many Langi and Acholi officers were also specifically targeted, creating a ‘holocaust within the armed forces.’ On June 24th 1971 150 officers and men, most of whom were Acholi were killed in ‘a violent tribal clash.’ After Amin’s coup, a significant portion of the Langi and Acholi in the army fled to Tanzania with Obote, where they established training camps and engaged in various cross-border guerrilla attacks. The threat that this produced resulted in a variety of ‘strongly ethnic repercussions inside Uganda’, and the targeting of Langi and Acholi citizens. Langi and Acholi girls were targeted and raped by soldiers, and from the early 1970s onwards ‘periodic terror’ became ‘an aspect of the life of every Langi and every Acholi.’ Ethnicity was evidently still incredibly divisive during the Amin regime, with the ethnic affiliates of Obote from Langi and Acholi being specifically targeted.

between the 1950s and 1970s took a variety of forms, there is a clear continuity of theme. Although the scope of this essay does not extend far beyond the expulsion of Ugandan Asians in 1972, it is clear that the ethnic divisions in Uganda would have continued long after this date. Ethnic divisions do not simply disappear overnight, which would warrant further exploration of ethnic divisions in Uganda after 1972 at a later date. During the time period that has been examined over the course of this work itself, ethnicity manifested itself in overtly negative terms, and was usually a source of contention instead of unification. Both before and after independence friction between different ethnic groups in Uganda was detrimental to the process of national unification, and on a number of occasions ethnic identity became 'a weapon in the political struggle', which was used to mobilize the members of one ethnic group against another.

Multiculturalism or what can otherwise be called pluralism should be a blessing in itself. It has no harm unless people manipulate it or use it as a platform for negativity or any form of bias towards the people and this is why even in very heterogeneous societies characterized by differences in religion, caste, class, tribe or any other form of stratification, relative peace and harmony has been registered in such cases either before, presently or even have hopes of such in the near future. Kibaale District, where there has been conflict between the Bakiga and the Banyoro over land and political positions or even Mbale where the Bagishu and Bagwere have clashed over the no man's land found in Doko serve as a typical example.

Uganda certainly needs to transcend tribal politics for social harmony and integral development. It has been too long in this spiral of ethnic rivalry with our post-colonial history almost being reduced to a history of ethnicity. Instead of capitalizing on our differences to the exclusion of others, we should celebrate our diversity. Government should be a neutral actor in this celebration instead of playing the ethnic card for power gains. Through education and sensitization campaigns, ethnicity should be demystified. We should learn to appreciate each other despite our differences - right from the family and early school levels. Our cultures are rich in social cohesion and conflict resolution mechanisms. Where necessary, we should tap this potential.

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