



# **The Intrigues of African Politics A Case Study of Uganda.**

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## **Author's Background**

Stephen Larzen Juma is a Kenya. He holds a Bachelor of Education Arts degree in English Language and Literature Education 2nd class honors upper division from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology 2013. Juma is an alumnus of the prestigious Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants FLTA program of the USA State Department of Education and Culture. Mr. Juma was a Fulbright scholar at the University of Pittsburgh in the 2015-2016 academic year where he taught Swahili and Kenyan culture to American Students while pursuing language, literature, and gender studies. Mr. Juma graduated with a Master of Public and International Affairs with a major in International Political Economy, and certificates in Global Studies, African Studies, and Leadership in Public and International Affairs from the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and

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## **Abstract**

In their diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds, People in the African continent had their way of life that they were accustomed to. There might have been family and ethnic issues but there existed order and harmony. Even without visible boundaries and superior weapons to guard different territories, there were systems and social institutions through which issues were addressed. The relationship between rulers and their subjects was cordial. social responsibility and mutual respect were the fabric that held many communities together. However, between the 1870s and 1960s, Africa was subjected to European imperialism, aggression, military oppression and cultural disruptions. When the European finally left, great damage had been done that the African countries have struggled to restore. A half a century later, the African continent has not achieved economic and political emancipation. The social relation has been ruined by ethnic animosity, leader's deception, and economic exploitation. Among the 47 least developed countries in the world, 33 of them are from sub-Sahara Africa. Africa's cumulative progress when compared to human development attained in developing regions of the world is discouraging.

. This research paper follows the over one and half a century of the East Africa region's social, economic and political development with a focus on Uganda. It traces the history of British colonialism in the region and the consequences of their rule as reflected in the present situation of Ugandan Politics. The research adopts the content analysis of written sources and descriptive approach of Uganda, before, during and after colonialism. The research aims to answer the question, what are the factors that influence politics in Uganda? The research utilizes literary and historical texts, articles, journals, critical essays, books/book chapters, and newspaper reports to support the hypothesis that the current political instability, social disorder and economic crisis in Uganda stems from ethnicity, religion, political parties, and the colonial legacy.

**Keywords:** Politics.

## **What are the Factors influencing politics in Uganda?**

The African continent was invaded by the European powers in the late 1890s. The European established protectorates and settlement schemes and controlled the regional economies and territorial boundaries until the 1960s. According to Maxon, (1994) the increasing external contact and influences from Arabs, Asians, and Europeans through commercial activities in the coastal region of East Africa paved the way to interior parts of East African countries. The Europeans had various reasons and motives for their journey ranging from simple exploration to scientific discovery. The geographical features especially the configuration of East Africa led to search adventures such as the source of river Nile. Some explorers like David Livingstone were driven by service through Christianity. The industrial revolution in Europe which demanded raw material and physical labor from Africa culminated into the Scramble for Africa which had been preceded by humanitarian missions and trade relations. Because of this relation, the doors were open for Britain and Germany to take over East Africa and eventual colonization. The colonial interlude left a tremendous legacy. "Patterns of political authoritarianism and economic dependency were set and have since not been decisively altered by the East African state's achievement of independence." (Maxon 1994, 124). The African inhabitants tried to resist European invasion but were eventually subdued. Under colonial rule, they were subjected to so much European imperialism, aggression, military oppression, and cultural disruptions that when the Europeans finally left, great damage had been done and the African countries are still struggling to restore their lost glory. Over half a century later, the African continent has not achieved economic and political emancipation.

According to Kaiser and Okumu (2004), during the pre-colonial period in East Africa rulers wielded legitimate authority on behalf of their ethnic groups. This was based on the principle of mutual understanding that members of the community shared the same interests, religious beliefs and codes of conduct due to kinship relations. Personal relationships and the principle of reciprocity were more important than the protection of pluralism or the abstract notion of democracy. Local leaders wielded their authority with the same kind of social responsibility they exercised over their family and political legitimacy was defined according to age, gender and

wealth. Sometimes power was invested in individuals distinguished according to birth or reputed rituals. (Kaiser &Okumu, 2004).

In the selection of village elders, knowledge of customs, discretion, and substance coupled with wealth was the basic criterion. Ordinary people were obliged to respect authority. Elders represented the will of the ancestors and were entrusted to carry out the will of the community. Power was decentralized, where most of the societies conducted their affairs without chiefs. The elders could participate on the council at the village level. Formal political institutions were maintained with minimum complexity and hierarchy. Junior males waited until they graduated into power, while women seeking to exercise power through informal means. (Kaiser &Okumu, 2004). Pre-colonial systems of the local rule were as effective in maintaining public order and cohesion as any other system. Kingdoms differed from chiefdoms in the sense that while kings exercised authority over multiple clans and depended upon loyal sub-chiefs or administrators to enforce their orders, chiefs were elected by councils of elders and they exercised a ritual role in the society.

Uganda is one of the East African countries that were under British colonialism. The country is a democratic state and presidential republic where the President is both head of State and head of government business. There is often a thin line separating the three arms of government. To reduce sectarian violence, political parties were restricted in their activities from 1986 by president Museveni. This ban was lifted in July 2005 through a constitutional referendum. General elections are held every five years and president Museveni has been elected in the last five elections amidst claims of voter fraud and protests from the opposition. There are many factors that affect both economic and democratic development in the continent of Africa in general, but Uganda's Politics, in particular, is influenced by such factors as ethnicity, religion, political parties, and colonial experiences as discussed herein.

Ethnicity is a major factor influencing Ugandan politics. Uganda has 56 ethnic groups. Baganda which is on the north side of Lake Victoria is the largest ethnic group while the smallest groups are found in the northeastern region of the country. According to the final results from the fifth post-independence National

Population and Housing Census released in 2018, by August 2014, the total population was 35 million

people. 5.56 million of them were the Baganda, 3.2 million of Baganda lived in rural areas of Central Uganda and an additional 2.2 million people lived in urban areas. The Banyankole people, one of the indigenous groups in western Uganda, were 3.2 million in number, and more than 2.5 million of them lived in rural areas and only 652,710 in urban areas. The table below shows the percentage distribution of population per ethnic group for 13 ethnic groups in Uganda (Mugerwa, 2016)

### Population distribution per ethnic group

GROUP	%	GROUP	%
Baganda	16.2	Bagisu	5.1
Iteso	8.1	Acholi	4.4
Basoga	7.7	Lugbara	3.6
Banyankore	8.0	Banyoro	2.9
Banyaruanda	5.8	Batoro	3.2
Bakiga	7.1	Karamojong	2.0
Lango	5.6	Others (est.)	20.3

Source: Kurian (1992) at 2009-2010.

To win the Ugandan election, the presidential candidate needs to gather 50% +1 of the total counted votes. President Museveni's ethnic group of the Banyankole is majorly found in the western region, where Museveni is popular, showing that voters have a strong preference for their ethnic candidate. However, the Banyankole constitutes only 8% percent. So how then does Museveni obtain 50% +1 winning the vote? Voters of certain ethnic groups may show preference to a candidate from another ethnic group if they receive a share of victory of the chosen candidate. Therefore candidates may target voters with benefits of public resources for electoral gain. Those who feel marginalized vote the opposition in protest. The Ankole and the Acholi vote against Museveni because they feel marginalized.

Ethnicity undermines the legitimacy of elected officials. President Yoweri Museveni, in 2011 won the presidential elections with a convincing 68% of the vote, according to the country's electoral commission. The closest contender Kizza Besigye, his former personal doctor, managed to get only 26%. (Rice, 2011). Ethnicity as a social identity marker plays an important role in electoral politics. In environments where voters lack access

to information about competing candidates or parties, ethnic and other social identity labels provide voters with a cheap and relatively accessible source of information about either candidate quality -whether they can be trusted, are competent, and will work hard -or about the extent to which a candidate will pursue a policy or redistributive agenda that is likely to benefit specific individuals. It's also evident that groups of voters are likely to vote for a candidate they can benefit from because of their policies or efforts to distribute patronage. Voters expect co-ethnic candidates to favor them when delivering goods and services and when deciding which legislative goals to pursue. Political ethnic favoritism is rampant when it comes to constituency service and the delivery of local public goods.

Though the result revealed that there was a strong rebound for Museveni compared to the decline in the previous election, there were concerns of voter fraud. Museveni had spent a lot of taxpayers' money on his campaign bribing voters, candidates, and electoral officials. Besigye did not recognize this victory and called for protests by his supporters. It was reported that the number of resources deployed by the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) and the overwhelming advantage of incumbency, beat the logic of the notion of a level fair and free elections. In 2016, Museveni aged 71 years old won a fifth term as president, by 60.75 % extending his 30 years in office while Kizza Besigye had 35%. The elections were declared a sham and Mr. Besigye was put under house arrest while international observers blamed the governing National Resistance Movement's domination of the political landscape for disregarding the fairness of the election. (BBC News, 2016)

Ethnicity affects the development and distribution of resources leading to conflicts. Museveni's support is concentrated in the western part of the country, with a firm majority in the Central Region and pockets of support elsewhere in the country. Museveni's primary challenger of the past two decades has been Dr. Besigye, of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). While it's possible for candidates to dependent on ethnic voting, it's not always that the voters benefit from their victory. To some extent, the members from the ruling ethnic group are likely to be found in large numbers in public and government positions due to a spoils system that rewards friends and families of a political winner as appreciation. The notion that those who support winning

candidates will be rewarded also influence voting patterns. Ethnic minority voters living among the ethnic majority may also be influenced to vote as a bloc due to the effort by the majority to mobilize votes for their candidate. President Museveni has been able to dominate Ugandan politics because he has the manpower and resources to influence voters outside his ethnic group.

While previous rulers Milton Obote from the Lango ethnic group and Idi Amin from the Kakwa ethnic group encouraged attacks on tribes believed to favor other leaders, Amin massacred two northern tribes that had supported Obote. Museveni is tolerant of ethnicity save for the tension between the Ankole and Acholi in the north. This has given Museveni an upper hand among other ethnic groups. Dr. Besigye who is from the Ankole ethnic group while campaigning said the Banyankole are responsible for removing Museveni from power or they will be blamed by Ugandans for benefiting from the incentives of having their person as head of state. In truth, most Banyankole in rural areas still live in poverty. This shows that Museveni with the assurance of Banyankole votes has concentrated on offering perks to other ethnic groups to influence their vote while friends and relatives reap the benefits of election victory. Ethnicity has been instrumentalized to offer the necessary justifications and to rationalize privileged positions in Uganda.

The second factor influencing politics in Uganda is religion. Religious groups align with different political views and individuals. The struggle for religious numbers which has a direct bearing on elected representatives has been apart of the Ugandan political sphere for decades. In Kampala Uganda, a group of Muslims disfigured a Pentecostal preacher's face with acid during the Christmas Eve of 2012. The preacher, Mr. Mulinde had been converting thousands of Muslims to Christianity. Mr. Mulinde was a Muslim converted to Christianity and became a vocal critic of Islam. He was also involved in opposing the establishment of Islamic civil courts in Uganda where Muslims make up 12 percent of the total population of 41 million.

The present religious tensions allude to the central Buganda Kingdom's bloody religious conflict of the 1880s. In 1877, The British Anglican missionaries arrived in the Buganda Kingdom. Later, came the French Catholic missionaries followed by the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) which was chartered to



negotiate trade agreements in the region from 1888. In 1886, there were a series of religious wars in the Kingdom of Buganda. First, it was between Muslims and Christians. In 1890, the war was between Protestants and Catholics. In May and June 1886 a large massacre of Christians, both Catholic, and Protestant, took place. Many were executed at Namugongo, the traditional execution site also used for the Muslim martyrs of 1876. The immediate cause for the killings was the Kabaka's anger at the disobedience of his Christian pages, in particular, their refusal to indulge in homosexual practices. These religious and kingdom divisions would later re-emerge shortly before and continued after independence. Idi Amini, who converted to Islam after independence, persecuted Christians. and the Muslims suffered revenge after Idi Amini was overthrown in 1979. (Ward, 2011)

Religion is closely related to ethnicity because religious groups also form voting blocs. Ethnic and religious rivalries have played an important part in shaping Ugandan politics. Through the mid-twentieth century, the British focused on developing the economy of southern Uganda, while incorporating the northern ethnic groups, including the Acholi, into their military forces. Under Idi Amin, a northern Kakwa, the Acholi suffered discrimination due to their support of Obote. When Obote reclaimed power following the Tanzanian invasion that brought down Amin, various ethnic groups throughout the country formed armed movements in order to protect their interests and bring their own people to power. Thus, the Acholi people feared revenge and retribution after current President Museveni and his National Resistance Army overthrew the Acholi General Tito Okello's administration in 1986.

When Museveni rose to power, many Acholi found spiritual and social help in a woman named Alice Auma, who had converted to Catholicism from the Anglican Church in her youth. She was reportedly taken over by a male, Christian "holy spirit" on May 25, 1985, and took to calling herself Lakwena, or messenger of the spirit. Out of her claim of spiritual possession emerged the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) that fought against the government and was defeated in August 1987 by the national army. Joseph Kony quickly took over and established the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). He also claimed to be possessed by spirits, legitimizing his claims by alleging himself to be a relative of Auma and labeled the three divisions of his army Father, Son, and

Holy Ghost. Kony has often claimed that “the LRA fights for Ten Commandments and for Uganda to be a free state governed by the Ten Commandments, a democratic state, and a state with a freely elected president.”

Religion creates a public culture that influences elections. There was a significant change in the relationship between religion and politics since Museveni came to power. Although Museveni separated religion from power, religion has continued to have an impact on Ugandan public culture and politics in different ways. Religious leaders play a vital role in influencing the masses and shaping public opinion of voters during parliamentary and presidential elections. In a country where there is limited freedom of expression and assembly, religious leaders affect change in a restrained political environment. Religion provides public space for debate during the election period.

The distribution of religion in Uganda according to the 2014 census indicated that Catholics constituted 39.3 %, Protestants (Church of Uganda) 32.0 %, Muslims 13.7%, and Pentecostals 11.1% of the Ugandan population. Only 1% were declared non-religious (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2016). 85% of Christians claimed to attend church service at least once a week. (Pew Research Centre, 2010). When combined, the church congregation far outnumbered the crowds attracted by pre-election political rallies. The religious influence in politics in Uganda is seen in all forms through prayers, public education, summons, letters from pastors and the sessions that involve anointing and proclaiming blessings to political leaders. These religious leaders go to great lengths to influence Ugandan elections. In the presidential elections held on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016, this effort was noted in the way most of the religious leaders crusaded for a peaceful, free and fair election. Other religious leaders used the pulpit, television, and radio to show their support for certain parties and politicians. According to the Secretary-General of the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) “No political rally will ever gather the crowds you see gathered in Ugandan churches every Sunday morning.”. Ugandan elections also reflect the highly religious character of public culture in Uganda. From the 2002 and 2015 Censuses, the percentage of the people who are not religious in Uganda is less than 1%. This makes Uganda one of the most religious countries in the world. Therefore religious leaders are more likely to have great influences than politicians and what they say goes a long way in producing ripple effects among the

followers whose votes are influenced by their religious leaders. (Alava & Ssentongo, 2016). Personal beliefs and group ideologies determine a political figure's support.

Religion may create divisions or unity in politics based on beliefs and ideologies. Although theoretically, politics and religion are separate institutions, practically, they play complementary roles. In the late 19th century in Uganda, religious wars caused suffering during the struggle for political control. The victorious Protestant Church worked closely with the colonial administration to govern the country. This continued after independence causing religion to get be part of politics and consequently dividing up the country along with religious factions. When NRM took power in 1986, President Museveni practically separated religion from politics because of the divisions it had created. Museveni embarked on an economic model designed to increase economic growth and equitable distribution of resources to all Ugandans through trickle-down economics. Due to corruption, this model only benefited the rich while the poor continued to suffer. As a result, Ugandan clerics who had kept their distance from politics came forward to condemn the government for failing to protect its citizens.

According to the Uganda national household survey (UNHS) 2016/17 report, the number of poor people increased from 6.6 million in 2012/13 to 10 million in 2016/17. (Oketch, 2017). Although Museveni will not tolerate religion in politics, this is a challenge that he has learned to appreciate and in his speech during the "Born-Again All-Night New Year's Prayer" two months before the 2016 general elections, he declared that he intended to increase state funding to religious groups, "because they have helped the state to police the minds of its people instead of just depending on policing of the body." (Kasozi, 2016). It's believed that Museveni's warming towards religious groups through extending incentives to them had a hand in his 2016 re-election. However, after 30 years of President Museveni's rule, many Ugandans feel they have no choice but to join their religious leaders in prayer for Museveni's replacement.

Thirdly, Political parties have been responsible for divisions and conflicts in Ugandan politics. These political parties have a strong connection with religion and ethnicity. The main conflict in Ugandan politics

was caused by the British use of agents from the Buganda kingdom which had been exposed considerably to Christianity (Pulford, 1999). The British tried to replicate the Buganda political system that was in other parts of the protectorate with agents from the Buganda kingdom being used by the British to supervise Ugandans from other kingdoms. This bred hostility against the Buganda kingdom which continued to be empowered by the British both economically and politically. The emergence of the Legislative Council (Legco) as a representative national assembly in the 1950s was considered by the Buganda elite as a breach of contract made at the onset of colonial rule that warranted autonomy to the Buganda kingdom. Buganda withdrew its representative from the Legco in 1958 and absconded elections crippling the effort to form national political parties. Another election was held in 1961 with Buganda still absconding, The Uganda People's Congress (UPC) led by Milton Obote claimed victory. The Buganda kingdom allied with UPP and formed the government after the 1962 election. Milton Obote became the first president of Uganda. With the tentative arrangements, the alienation of the Democratic Party (DP) and temporary compromises made by both the Obote and Buganda kingdom formed the basis for Uganda's political crisis (Kaiser and Okumu, 2014).

Uganda became independent in 1962 but internal conflicts developed quickly afterward. By 1964, Obote had forged an alliance with Amin and expanded the size and power of the Ugandan Army. In February 1966, Obote suspended the constitution and proclaimed himself the executive president. He removed the positions of president, vice president and changed the constitution to abolish traditional kingdoms. Things reached a crescendo in 1966 when President Milton Obote had the Kabaka, the traditional king of Buganda (a subnational ethnic kingdom within Uganda), overthrown by then-General Idi Amin, thus removing a challenge to his power. The conflict between Obote and Amin led to Obote himself being overthrown by Amin five years later. Gen. Amin outlawed all political parties transforming Uganda into a dictatorial state. Idi Amin reigned between 1971-1979. On 25<sup>th</sup> January 1971, Gen. Amin banned all political parties transforming Uganda into a total dictatorship. His rule gained notoriety for brutality and oppressiveness. Amin retaliated against the attempted invasion by Ugandan exiles in 1972, by eradication of the army of Obote supporters from the Acholi and Lango

ethnic groups. His government arbitrarily arrested and massacred some 5,000 Acholi and Lango soldiers, and at least twice a number of civilians and government officials.

Political parties also contributed to the development of democracy. The regime type changed from dictatorial to democratic after Amin's exit. Four political parties took part in the parliamentary elections held in December 1980 where Museveni lost the election with The UPC led by Obote winning 74 seats in the National Assembly; the DP, 51; the Uganda Patriotic Movement, 1; and the Conservative Party, 0. All the parties were represented in the cabinet appointed in 1986 followed by outlawing of operations by all parties (Mugabe, 2016). Yoweri Museveni led the National Resistance Movement (NRM) to take over the presidency after failed peace talks. He promised an inclusive and non-discriminatory government calling an end to the loss of human lives through war. However, on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1986, Museveni ordered all political parties to suspend meetings and rallies (Otunnu, 2015). Before the referendum in July 2005 allowing the multiparty system, there was only one political organization, the National Resistance Movement headed by President Museveni. Museveni had initially said that it wasn't a political party but "a mass organization that claimed the loyalty of all Ugandans." The 1995 constitution had outlawed political parties while the Movement organization was in power. Although other political parties could exist, they were prohibited from backing candidates and holding meetings. President Museveni declared that parties were not allowed to participate in either the presidential election or the Parliamentary elections held in May and June of 1996, respectively. Nonetheless, 156 of the 276 members of the Parliament elected in 1996 were considered to be supporters of General Museveni. The UPC, DP, and CP remained the opposition parties (Ross, 2011). Today there are 29 registered political parties that are permitted to participate in elections. In June 2000, the no-party system was subjected to a national referendum. Despite accusations of vote-rigging and manipulation, Ugandans approved it. Museveni was re-elected to a second five-year term in March 2001. In the 303-member National Assembly, 214 seats were directly elected by popular vote, and 81 were nominated by legally established special interest groups including women (56), army (10), disabled (5), youth (5), labor (5), and ex officio members (8). (Fisher, 2001)

Constitutional amendments marked the beginning of the fall back to tyranny. There were widespread protests led by opposition parties and a return to arbitrary arrests of opposition leaders and their supporters. Freedom of press, speech, association, and assembly have been limited. President Yoweri Museveni and the ruling National Resistance Movement have been in power for more than 30 years, with a 2005 constitutional amendment lifting presidential term limits and permitting him to run and win in 2006, 2011 and 2016 presidential election. Museveni's government has routinely blocked demonstrations in the last few years with an excuse that demonstrators threaten public safety. Museveni's extended rule elicits criticism from the general public and the international community. The civil society has joined opposition parties to advocate for freedom but a provision in Uganda's law limits their activities (Burnett, 2015). Efforts to protect the ruling party and the president from criticism have become more important than citizens' right to information. Fundamental democratic rights have been limited.

Political parties have created an atmosphere of insecurity and instability. Police brutality usually increases during the campaign for presidential elections and after elections following disputed results. The police obstruct some candidates' from accessing the media and public assembly. When the former Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi left the ruling party to vie for president in 2016, he was arrested, detained, and his campaign was blocked. The government also passed a new bill in 2016 which seeks to limit the activities of non-governmental organizations. The repressive requirements prohibit the NGOs from engaging in any act which is prejudicial to the interests of Uganda or the dignity of the people of Uganda or engaging in activities which the government has not authorized by issuing a permit (World Report 2016). The 2013 Public Order Management Act grants police wide discretionary powers over the content and management of public meetings. The law has been used largely to obstruct civic meetings and opposition rallies and as a basis to arrest opposition members and their supporters. Police prevent opposition gatherings while protecting activities deemed partial to the incumbent President Museveni. Limited freedom of political parties in Ugandan politics has attracted international concern. The United States was particularly concerned about the lack of political space and freedom of speech. In short, there was heated competition for power among different groups made up

of a political and ethnic rival. After Amin was ousted, competitive politics was allowed during Obote's second period, but the oppression of political parties was still visible. Under Museveni political parties were still permitted to exist but were not allowed to be active and political candidates had to contest as independent candidates despite belonging to a registered political party. Museveni's argument was that "Uganda needed stability and peace, which could only be achieved through making the NRM part of a grassroots democracy through local resistance councils that were set up throughout the country." Initially, this was welcomed and there was political stability in the absence of active political parties that became more active in the 1990s. Political parties in Uganda are weak because they lacked a conducive environment to fully develop.

The last factor influencing politics in Uganda is colonialism. To get a better picture of the colonial experience of Uganda, it's important to observe the broader image of colonialism in Africa and how Uganda's experience compares to other colonial states. The last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed radical changes in sub-Saharan Africa as European powers scrambled for a share of African countries. The British while attempting to exploit Uganda for their gains, destabilized the kingdom's internal cohesion and stability. "After destroying the religious and social structure of Uganda. They left Islam and Christianity fighting for the resource spoils." (Uzoigwe, 1974) While the British cannot be blamed for political woes in Uganda, they are partially responsible for the political divisions and marginalization perpetuated by Ugandan leaders since independence. According to Mutibwa (1992), since independence in Uganda, there is a direct link between the murderous regimes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote to the British rule because "the system which had been created by the colonial power and then inherited at independence, to be perfected by Obote... and matured under Amin's dictatorship... was still there." The legacy of brutality carried out by the Buganda agents used by the British on other kingdoms is evident today in Uganda. Communal tensions over control of natural resources and land, religious conflicts, and police violence continue in disguise of preserving public order while in reality defending the ruling party from opposition competition are all attributed to the colonial legacy. Uganda, unlike Kenya and Tanzania, was neither invaded by the British or had an influx of settlers or great disruption of social

order by the British who first arrived as explorers looking for the source of river Nile. Yet, the effect has lived half a century later after they left.

The British arrival was preceded by traditional religious conflicts with a long history of struggle and a treat from Egypt who was trying to expand their territory of the Sudanese empire (Shillington, 2005). When Protestant Missionaries from England, and later Catholic Missionaries from France came into Uganda, there were four distinctive religious groups with different interests within the Kabaka kingdom. The British helped the Kabaka to maintain its dominant power. “Britain, built up the Ugandan Protectorate around and above Buganda, making it a heart that could never, without fatal result, be torn from the larger body politic and economic” (Mutibwa, 1992). Development was therefore concentrated in Buganda and the Bantu kingdoms. This inequality is still in play today in Ugandan politics. The division created by the British between the South and the North defines the governors and the governed population in Uganda. The Baganda who were the majority of the population became the largest, best-educated and wealthiest ethnic group compared to other kingdoms. These religious and kingdom divisions continued to influence Ugandan politics during and after independence. The British used the divide and rule approach with the help of the Buganda kingdom thus, the Buganda political system was replicated in other parts of the protectorate with agents from the Buganda kingdom being used by the British to supervise Ugandans from other kingdoms. Resistance was put up by the Bunyoro, Ankole and Lango kingdoms. Religious divisions played a big role in fueling conflicts as Buganda kingdom was considerably exposed to Christianity from the British missionaries (Pulford, 1999)

The emergence of the legislative council (Legco) as a representative national assembly in the 1950s was considered by the Buganda elite as a breach of contract made at the onset of colonial rule that warded autonomy to the Buganda kingdom. Buganda withdrew its representative from the Legco in 1958 and absconded elections crippling the effort to form national political parties. Another election was held in 1961 with Buganda still absconding. The Uganda Peoples Party (UPG) led by Milton Obote claimed victory. The Buganda kingdom allied with UPG and formed the government after the 1962 election. Milton Obote became the first president of Uganda. With the tentative arrangements and compromises made by the Buganda kingdom and UPG party



formed the government. The alienation of the Democratic Party (DP) and temporary cooperation made by both Obote and Buganda kingdom formed the basis for Uganda's political crisis for the future (Kaiser & Okumu, 2004)

The British support to Buganda kingdom in conquering the rival kingdoms and rewarding Buganda with additional territories, rights and status bred animosity in Uganda as a whole. For this reason, when the British were planning to grant Ugandan independence, there was no dominant political party or group. Even the elite Baganda were not politically united. The Uganda National Congress (UNC), was the first political party formed in 1952. The party was composed of only protestants and Baganda. Later, the Democratic Party (DP) was formed this time composed of the Catholics. The Uganda People's Union was the first non-Baganda political party that was weak. The Anti-Buganda wing of the UNC formed the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) and decreased the influence of the original political party. The kingdom founded its own political movement, called Kabaka Yekka (KY) "the King alone, to fight the DP. These parties formed the basis of narrow politics in Uganda influenced by religion and ethnicity that have plagued Uganda since independence (Engholm, 1962)

Independence in other countries in Africa was fought for, but in Uganda independence was negotiated. Shortly after the British granted Uganda self-rule, internal conflict developed quickly. By 1964, Obote had forged an alliance with Idi Amin. In February 1966, Obote suspended the constitution and proclaimed himself the executive president. He removed the positions of president, vice president and changed the constitution to abolish traditional kingdoms. This transformed Uganda into a dictatorial state. Things reached a crescendo in 1966 when President Milton Obote had the Kabaka, the traditional king of Buganda (a subnational ethnic kingdom within Uganda), overthrown by then-General Idi Amin, thus removing a challenge to his power. These allies soon quarreled, however, and Obote himself was overthrown by Amin five years later. Idi Amin reigned between 1971-1979 after overthrowing Milton Obote's government. In his ruthless regime, about 300,000 people are believed to have been murdered. In 1972 Idi Amin sent Asians away from Uganda (The New African, 2018). When Idi Amin overthrew Obote, things changed from bad to worse lasting for eight years. His

reign was characterized by human rights abuses, political repression, sectarian violence, and ethnic persecution of the Acholi people and Lango ethnic groups. Both the Obote and Amin regimes became infamous for their dictatorial style and horrific human rights violations. Ethnicity and religious innuendos continued to play a big role. Obote was a Christian and Amin a Muslim—the government of Uganda formally respected religious diversity until Museveni separated religion from politics.

In 1986 Museveni, led the NRC to take over the presidency from Lutwa Okello after failed peace talks. He promised an inclusive and non-discriminatory government calling an end to the loss of human lives through war. However, on March 11, 1986, Museveni ordered all political parties to suspend meetings and rallies (Otunnu, 2015). Continued suppression of the Acholi people bred the Lord's resistant army (LRA). The Acholi people claimed being oppressed and alienated by the Museveni government. According to the U.N report, LRA has committed acts that violate international human rights law involving sexual violence, targeting of civilians, ethnic- or religious-based attacks, attacks on schools and hospitals, and abduction and forced displacement of persons. Over 20,000 children, most under the age of 13, have been captured by the LRA soldiers. The rebel group has caused over 1.6 million people of Uganda's population in the North to desert their homes for protected refugee camps (Raffaele, 2005). President Museveni believes in the local council system as the foundation of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM). However, the government has not held village or parish council elections since 2002. It is reported that the cost of carrying out elections is too high, but the general assumption is that the ruling party fears to lose the elections to the opposition parties. As a result, the local administration has weakened (International Crisis Group, 2017).

## **Conclusion**

Uganda is rated among the top countries perceived as very corrupt by Transparency International which placed it at 29 on a scale of (perceived as most corrupt) to 100 (perceived as clean). The Lord's resistant army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony, a Christian prophet has been terrorizing Ugandans for about three decades now. LRA has

committed acts that violate international human rights law involving sexual violence, targeting of civilians, ethnic- or religious-based attacks and attacks on public amenities.

President Museveni came to power and promised an inclusive government calling an end to the loss of human lives through ethnic clashes. However, on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1986, he ordered all political parties to suspend meetings and rallies. Museveni who was deemed as the savior of Uganda after years of turmoil under Obote and Amin had steered the country from autocracy to democracy. However, long after independence, Uganda has not outgrown the legacy of colonialism left in the country by the British. Political divisions and animosity are the residual of 50 years post-independence Uganda. While the 1990s transformed many African states into multi-party-political systems, Museveni's belief in political indivisibility has crippled the effort by opposition political parties to develop. Lack of freedom of speech, association, and assembly has been the recipe for the deteriorating political system in Uganda. The Judiciary and legislature have limited space to play their oversight role of checks and balances. As a result, there has been a decline in governance with negative effects on the political system.

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