

Ethnicism, Fragmentation, Patronage and Political Instability in Post-Colonial Uganda, 1962-2022

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Abstract

The East African country, Uganda is recognised as a very strategic country in that subregion. However, its political situation has always been a source of worry. Since its political independence from Britain in 1960, its political atmosphere has been a tumultuous one; from forceful overthrow of sitting governments to life president syndrome, garnished with regular revolts in various parts of the country. This paper has tried to locate the sources of the political instability. It applied the critical method of history, based on inductive and deductive approaches. The paper is organized thematically and chronologically, and presented in the classical narrative style of history. Anchoring the research on Rational Choice theory, the findings located the sources of the crises in the lingering widespread ethnicism coupled with politically motivated fragmentations and patronage being employed the government.

Keywords: Ethnicism, fragmentation, patronage and Political Instability

Introduction

From the political independence of Uganda in 1962 to the present, Uganda's political scenario has been a tumultuous one. Opposition to every government that had existed in Uganda has been marked with violent and rebellious clashes often championed along ethnic and tribal groupings. The situation often led to unstable government and further impoverishment of Uganda. Though for the over sixty years of Uganda's political independence, the military has officially been at the head of government for three out of the eight governments so far, it is not surprising, however, that for a greater part of these sixty years, the military has been the major player in the government of Uganda. The political instability that has bedevilled the country is much accountable for this situation.

Political crises have cost Uganda a great deal in every sphere of life. Demographically, they have consumed irreconcilable figures and as well, displaced millions of people. Economically, they have depleted the nation as well as individuals. Following the crises, kingdoms have disintegrated, families separated, and peace seem to have taken flight. Despite the long duration of the current government in power, political instability continues to rage on in varied forms. It had been hoped that with the long stay of Yoweri Museveni in power, coupled with the rich experience he must have gathered from the various crises, that political instability in the East African nation would, by the present, be a very minor affair. Nevertheless, events have proved this thought wrong, thus, raising in the mind of many, the question of what could be the real source of political instability in Uganda.

This paper strives to contribute in the above quest. Relying much on the critical method of history, employing the inductive and deductive approaches, an attempt is made here to isolate the factors responsible for the political crises in the east African state; having explicitly in mind, an examination of how ethnicism, fragmentation and patronage have manifested themselves as major sources of the subject under investigation. The paper is organized thematically and chronologically.

Conceptual explanations and theoretical framework

Making brief explanations of the key concepts, **ethnicism** is here considered as emphasis upon ethnic identity. It is considered as the classification of people according to common racial, national, religious, tribal, linguistic, or cultural origin or background. On the other hand, **fragmentation**, according to Cambridge Dictionary, is "the action or process of breaking something into small parts or of being broken up in this way." Fragmentation is seen here as including "the multiplication of local government units and traditional institutions by fragmenting pre-existing ones" (Khisra & Rwengabo, 2022). Finally, **political instability** is seen as "a crisis situation within the country that can be caused by a variety of reasons: government incompetence, economic problems, high crime rates, and so on."

It can also be caused by “conflict or, conversely, to become the basis of the conflict itself.” (IGI Global Publishing House).

For a **theoretical framework**, this paper is anchored on **Rational Choice** theory. Rational choice theory believes in individuals calculating the costs and benefits of an action before settling for it (Scott, 2000). This theory recognizes options from which people weigh and choose the best course of action. If one brings ethnicity into the picture of rational choice theory, those involved will be looking at perceived benefits and costs calculations that can propel groups or individuals in pursuit of their own economic or political aspirations (Heath, 1976). Thus, members of an ethnic group rationally consent to belong to a group in anticipation of a certain benefit. Thus, ethnicity can be seen as a choice or strategy which varies depending on the situation. As a result, Posner (2004), argues that ethnic identities are not eroded but retained, supplemented and in some situations activated. Some leaders would rather choose rationally and purposely, the advantages of ethnic mobilisation against other forms of political support. It does appear, too, that ethnic groups are perceived to satisfy an inherent human need to belong to a group and enable group members to maintain and enhance the self-esteem that comes with belonging to the group. Obviously, ethnic conflicts occur when these psychological benefits are threatened by another group or members of the same ethnic group. The political instability in Uganda is better pictured from this framework.

Background to the political crises in Uganda: 1860 - 1960

The political disaffections among Ugandans go back to pre-colonial times. Before the imposition of European rule that brought together the different ethnic nationalities that constitute the present day Uganda, these ethnic nations had not much in common rather they were often at war with one another. The Bunyoro and the Buganda were great rivals, the Toro detested the Buganda and the Bunyoro, the Anchoi were in their own world, and so on. These ethnic groups had no love lost among themselves.

British intervention in the close of the 19th century deepened the animosity among the various groups. It granted special privilege to the Buganda. Between 1894-1896, the British combined with the Bugandan forces and routed the Bunyoro king, chased him from his capital at Mparo. When the Banyoro were eventually defeated, in appreciation of Buganda's collaboration, the British rewarded it with land in Bunyoro. These 'lost counties' remained a contentious political issue until 1964 (Byarugaba, 1998). The “Buganda Agreement” of 1900 between the British and the Buganda chiefs further aggravated the situation. It gave many privileges the Buganda above other ethnic groups during the colonial era. As special allies of the British, they assisted the colonial government in other ethnic areas. In 1953, Kabaka Mutesa II demanded a separate independence for Buganda kingdom. Another accord of 1955, made the Bugandan king a major player in deciding the independence of Uganda and in the general administration of the nation. Everywhere in Uganda except in Buganda, the emergence of the kabaka as a political force provoked immediate hostility. Political parties and local interest groups were riddled with divisions and rivalries, but they shared one concern: they were determined not to be dominated by Buganda. This was already to create a divided front in the fight for independence.

At independence, the British left behind an institutional apparatus that supported ethnic identity and politics of ethnicism. This was carried on by successive governments. Rather than address national identity, they exploited the ethnic tensions left behind by the British. British colonial policies in Uganda would rather be said to be much of divide and rule. By picking out the Buganda at the beginning and making with them agreements that much favoured them to the detriment of other tribes, the British sowed much seeds of discord in Uganda. In order to retain the support of Bugandans, the colonial authority most often ignored the excesses of the Buganda over other ethnic nationalities leading to much disaffection and antagonism that have riddled Ugandan polity since the departure of the colonial authority. To all intent and purposes, the political rivalries, the formation of alliances and betrayal of allies that trailed the group and ethnical quests for hold on central power became a major source of political discontentment and has remained the cause of political instability and military intervention in Uganda.

Uganda is an ethnically diverse country, with over 40 ethnic groups. They are mainly Bantu and live predominantly in the country's southern part. Over 70 per cent of the population are Bantu ethnic groups. Nilotic ethnic groups make up 25 percent of the population, of which the Acholi, Langi and Alur from northern Uganda constitute 15 percent, and Iteso and Karamajong from north eastern Uganda, 10 per cent. (Nyombi & Kaddu, 2015).

Political Instability and military interventions in Uganda

The political rivalries, the formation of alliances and betrayal of allies that trailed the group and tribal quests to hold on central power became a major source of political discontentment. Roman Catholics with some other faith adherents formed the Democratic Party (DP), led by Benedicto Kiwanuka, being not contented with the political domination of the Protestants in Buganda (a domination allegedly enshrined through Lord Lugard's maxim guns). This notwithstanding, the DP still had Bugandan origin. Thus, other ethnic groups feeling threatened by the DP's Buganda origin, formed their own parties. In 1960 a political organizer from Lango, Milton Obote, seized the initiative and formed a new party, the Uganda People's Congress (UPC). The party which was Protestant dominated, was a coalition of all those outside the Roman Catholic-dominated DP who opposed Buganda hegemony. The outcome of the 1961 general elections that gave the DP majority seat in the parliament led to a realignment of the UPC with the Bugandan party, the Kabaka Yekka on Protestant religious grounds. This alliance that won the independence election once more gave the Buganda king, Edward Walugembe Mutesa II, a special, though a ceremonial role of the President of the nation. (Leefers, 2004).

Uganda at independence was, therefore, fragmented along religious and ethnic lines, with Buganda having full federal status while the other kingdoms only had semi-federal status, and the rest of the country including the north, was linked directly to central government, a situation created by colonialism. This political arrangement was a precarious one, and was soon tested with the old question of the 'lost counties' of Bunyoro. The concerns it generated, led Obote, in 1964, holding a referendum in the counties to settle the question. The people were to vote to be part of Bunyoro or Buganda. That almost 80% voted in favour of returning to Bunyoro was not a surprise to many. This bred a serious dispute between Obote and the Kabaka, leading to the end of the fragile alliance between the UPC and the KY. Obote remained Prime Minister because enough DP and KY politicians had defected to his party for him to retain a Parliamentary majority. As would be expected, tensions continued between Obote and the Kabaka and resulted to a Constitutional crisis in 1966. Then, Obote overthrew the Constitution, and stripped the Kabaka of his role as head of state. The Kabaka fought back by appealing to the United Nations to intervene, but then, Obote sent his army led by an officer called Idi Amin, to attack the royal palace. The Kabaka fled, but several of his supporters were massacred. Obote moved on with new constitutional reforms that made himself Life President and abolished the Kingdoms. He also gave the army unlimited powers to detain people without trial. Faced with continuing Bugandan resentment, Obote had to rely more and more on force to stay in power. He became more of a dictator and appointed Idi Amin his Army Commander. He banned the DP and other opposing structures in 1969, using the army to deal brutally with resistances. The unholy alliance with the army made worse the political instability in the country of Uganda. (Lancaster, May 25, 2012).

The era of Idi Amin

Idi Amin having been empowered, he became a major source of worry for Obote who seeing Amin as a threat, ordered his arrest and detention while leaving the country to attend a Commonwealth conference in Singapore in 1971. The plan was leaked to Idi Amin who quickly organized a military coup and on January 25, 1971, unseated Obote's government in his absence, ushering in the first outright military dictatorship in Uganda (Tornberg, (Fall 2012)). The coup and Amin's government were originally welcomed by those in opposition to Obote. However, this changed when Amin himself began to consolidate power. He began to make his own radical policies that seemed much unwelcomed by the people.

Amin suspended the constitution and declared himself President for life. He created the Public Safety Unit and the State Research Bureau which he used to violently suppress all political opposition. Once again, the bad seed of ethnicity sown by the British in Uganda reared its ugly head. One of Amin's first

acts was to separate the military along ethnic lines and have most of those in the Acholi and Lango groups killed because they were perceived as pro-Obote. Records have it that under Amin's rule, "between 100,000 and 500,000 people were killed, including his Chief Justice, Benedicto Kiwanuka, former head of government and leader of the banned DP, and the Anglican Archbishop Janani Luwum." (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

Gradually, the military was greatly purged of other regions, tribes, and faith, leaving it predominantly in the hands of his ethnic kinsmen, the Kakwa, the West Nile region, and the Moslems. Amin recruited his followers from his own tribe, the Kakwas, along with Sudanese and Nubians. By 1977, it is said that these three groups formed 60% of the twenty-two (22) top generals and 75% of the cabinet. Similarly, Muslims formed 80% and 87.5% of these groups even though they were only 5% of the population (Stefan, 2011). This helps explain why Amin survived 8 attempted coups. Mambo, & Schofield (2007) noted that the army grew from 10,000 to 25,000 by 1978, and that Amin's army was largely a mercenary force. Half the soldiers were Sudanese, 26% Congolese, only 24% were Ugandan, mostly Muslim and Kakwa.

It is generally agreed that Amin's government was much more tribal and ethnic centred than any other regime in Uganda. On 4th August, 1972, Amin expelled Ugandan Asians, claiming that God had told him in a dream to expel around 80,000 Asians that held British passports (Nyombi & Kaddu, 2015). Report has it that, "Although Amin proclaimed that the "common man" was the beneficiary of this drastic act-- which proved immensely popular--it was actually the army that emerged with the houses, cars, and businesses of the departing Asian minority" (Library of Congress Country Studies). The rest went to his family and kinsmen.

Despite his brutality in crushing oppositions, there were several mutinies against Amin's government. Hoping to divert attention from his internal troubles and rally Uganda against the foreign adversary, he accused Tanzanian President Nyerere of being at the root of his troubles. and of waging war against Uganda. Thus he invaded Tanzanian territory and formally annexed a section across the Kagera River boundary on November 1, 1978. Nyerere mobilized his army and counterattacked, joined by Ugandan exiles united as the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA). The Ugandan Army retreated steadily, expending much of its energy by looting along the way. Libya's Qadhafi sent 3,000 troops to aid fellow Muslim Amin, but the Libyans soon found themselves on the front line, while behind them Ugandan Army units were using supply trucks to carry their newly plundered wealth in the opposite direction. Tanzania and the UNLA took Kampala in April 1979, and Amin fled by air, first to Libya and later to a seemingly permanent exile at Jiddah, Saudi Arabia (Library of Congress Country Studies).

The Lule & Binaisa duel

Representatives of twenty-two Ugandan civilian and military groups known as came together in a 'Unity Conference' and formed the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF), with Dr. Yusuf Lule, an academic, as the head of its executive committee. He was not seen as a threat to any of the contending factions. Shortly after Amin's departure, Lule and the UNLF established an interim government with him as president, advised by representatives from the Unity Conference called the National Consultative Council (NCC). He was soon perceived as too conservative, too autocratic, and too willing as a Muganda to listen to advice from other Bugandans. After only three months, Lule was forcibly removed from office and exiled. He was replaced by Godfrey Binaisa, a Muganda like Lule, but one who had previously served as a high-ranking member of Obote's UPC (Library of Congress Country Studies). At the December 10, 1980 national election, the DP, claimed victory in 81 of 126 constituencies by its own estimates, pushing Kampala's streets to be filled with DP celebrants. Other ethnic groups, however, were uncomfortable with a central power that has connection with the Buganda. Thus, Paulo Muwanga took control of the Electoral Commission, along with the power to count the ballots, threatening a heavy fine and five years in jail for anyone that would challenge the results. Later, he announced a UPC victory, with seventy-two seats (Library of Congress Country Studies). Once again, ethnic sentiments jeopardised the common trust.

Obote's second regime 1981-85

In February 1981, shortly after the new Obote government began with Paulo Muwanga as vice president and minister of defence. Yoweri Museveni, a former Military Commission member, and his supporters declared themselves the National Resistance Army (NRA). He vowed to overthrow Obote by means of a popular rebellion, starting what became known as 'Ugandan Bush War'. Many other groups also emerged to attempt to sabotage the new regime, but they were eventually crushed. In fighting insurgency, Obote four-year government was more devastating and caused greater loss of life than in the eight years of Amin's rule. Obote's UNLA forcers were said to be primarily made up of Acholi and Langi soldiers, and that they "committed the same sort of acts that were committed against them under the rule of Idi Amin" (World Peace Foundation, August 7, 2015). Despite these activities, Obote's government, unlike Amin's regime, was sensitive to its international image and realized the importance of securing foreign aid for the nation's economic recovery. As if determined to replay the January 1971 events, Obote once again left the capital after giving orders for the arrest of a leading Acholi commander, Brigadier) Basilio Olara Okello, who mobilized troops and entered Kampala on July 27, 1985. Obote fled the country for Zambia. This time, unlike the last, Obote allegedly took much of the national treasury with him (Library of Congress Country Studies).

The Return of military rule: 1985

General Tito Lutwa Okello took over from Obote, and his government lasted from July 1985 to January 1986. His administration's focus was one of self-preservation. In fighting the NRA, rebels, Okello recruited former soldiers of Amin's army. These units fought well, but they were engrossed in looting and did not discriminate between supporters and enemies of the government. The romance with former soldiers of Idi Amin's army turned the sympathy of many against him and in favour of Yoweri Museveni. (Library of Congress Country Studies). Ethnic discontentment was equally added to this. Kakembo, and Ogwang (2012), quoting Mutibwa narrates that, "Gen. Okello swept into power on the crest of a military mutiny as a result of bad blood between Acholi and Langi soldiers." And that "The appointment of Brig. Smith Opon Acak, a Langi, as chief of staff ... did not go well with the Acholi who had expected one of their own, Brig. Olara Okello ... to be appointed." Under such circumstances, Museveni moved against Okello's government and was warmly welcomed by the civilian population in Kampala. Okello and his soldiers fled northward to their ethnic base in Acholi. On January 26, 1986, Yoweri Museveni formally became the president of Uganda.

The Museveni take over: 1986 to present

The new government of Museveni and his National Resistance Army (NRA) were not easily accepted in the north. The presence of the government was soon challenged by rebel groups formed among the former supporters of Obote. The Acholi, in 1986, coalesced into the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA), largely composed of former army soldiers. On another hand, in 1987, there was similarly, another coalition of the Uganda People's Army (UPA) by the Iteso, who were closely allied with the Langi. Their coalition was engendered by a series of misgivings that were giving vents in outrages. The UPDA rebellion made a peace accord in 1988, while UPA rebellion peaked in the late 1980s, before a settlement was also negotiated in 1992. But the situation in Acholiland was compounded after spirit medium Alice Auma declared divinely-inspired leadership of a Holy Spirit Movement to retake the capital and initiate a heaven on earth. Auma's force was defeated near Kampala in August 1987, but its relative success inspired Joseph Kony, also a self-proclaimed spirit medium, a relative of Auma's, to form a new group that became known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The hostilities between the Ugandan military, renamed the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) following the promulgation of the new 1995 Uganda constitution, and the insurgent LRA began in 1987. It is one of Africa's longest-running military conflicts. In September 2006 a ceasefire was declared after peace talks. The LRA is accused of widespread human rights violations including mutilation, torture, rape, the abduction of civilians, the use of child soldiers and a number of massacres. Operating in a vast swathe of northern Uganda, southern Sudan and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the LRA has, at various times, caused the displacement of the majority of civilians in its areas of operations with the support of militias allied with the Sudanese government in its own civil war. The conflict has equally some ethnic colouration (Library of Congress Country Studies).

Museveni initially promised to organize a democracy in four years, he extended it to nine years within which he established grassroot political structures. In 1989, the Uganda Constitutional Commission was formed to draft a new constitution. A popularly elected Constituent Assembly debated the Commission's constitutional outline from 1994-1995. On September 22, 1995, the Constituent Assembly adopted a new constitution, which included strong restrictions on political party activity. Democratic presidential elections were held in 1996. The main candidates were Museveni, Dr. Paul Kwanga Ssemogerere, and Mohammed Mayanja Kibirige. A no-party election, the candidates were to base their platforms on personal merit. Museveni won with 75.5% of the popular vote (Leefers, Spring 2004).

Museveni's government, despite having held Uganda for a long time under a relative peace and some economic progress which came from encouraging exportation of her agricultural produce to neighbouring countries, has received a lot of criticisms for alleged infractions not much different from those of his predecessors. Nyombi & Kaddu (2015), observed that:

... in recent years, perceptions and sentiments of ethnic marginalisation and exclusions have surfaced in Uganda. Today, "there is a widespread perception that he [President Yoweri Museveni] has favoured his own ethnic group when it comes to government positions (such as ministerial posts and presidential advisors) and all attendant benefits." Furthermore, most senior positions of the security organs are held by officers from western Uganda (President Museveni's native land).

Nyombi & Kaddu (2015), chronicled some of the senior figures in the security organ under Museveni's government to include Brig. Muhoozi Kainerugaba (the commander of Special Forces); Maj. Gen. David Muhoozi (Commander of the Land Forces); Brig. Leopold Kyanda (Chief of Staff of the Land Forces); Maj Gen. Samuel Turyagyenda (Commander of the Air Defence Division), General Edward Kalekezi Kayihura (Inspector General of Police) and Mr. Johnson Byabasajja (Commissioner General of Uganda Prisons) and many more senior officers in the UPDF (Uganda People's Defense Force), Uganda Police Force and the Prison's Service.

Museveni is currently serving out his sixth term as Ugandan president, and it will end in 2026. He has held power for thirty-seven years. He sees the presidency as a life-long mission. He believes in using tough measures to hold the country from chaos. He has continued to stay in power because the opposition is divided. It lacks a coherent political strategy despite the many anti-government protests against high food prices, corruption and social inequality witnessed (Schmidt, 2012). To hold on to power, Museveni has employed a seeming tactic of divide-and-rule. He excels in fragmentation and patronage. Obviously, through fragmentation, he intends to weaken subnational concentrations of power, resources, and legitimacy wielded by otherwise coalesced, potentially strong, subnational authority structures and sociopolitical groups. Through fragmentation, cracks are created in "pre-existing intra-regional unity, generates new conflicts, and reopens old wounds, leading to violent encounters at the sub-national level, between regional sub-groups, and with the central state" (Khisia & Rwengabo, 2022). This strategy has evidently deepened ethnic sentiments in the nation by extending rivalries to smaller units, and creating a 'stranger relationship' among brothers. The result of this is the much uprisings of smaller units against their long time leaders and kinsmen.

Khisia & Rwengabo (2022), in order to drive home the magnitude of such strategy under Museveni, chronicled the balkanization of regions and districts. According to them:

After Museveni came to power in January 1986, six new districts were created within six years, increasing the number from thirty-three to thirty-nine by 1991 and to forty-five in 1997. In 2007, the number increased again to 80, then to 115 in 2016, 128 in 2018, and 135 in 2020. Kingdoms and other precolonial traditional authority structures, which had been abolished in 1967, were restored starting in 1993. New ones were created by fragmenting the old and/or forging them where they had never previously existed. This dual

process of fragmentation eroded the power and resource base of subnational units. The hitherto powerful districts of Bushenyi, Mbale, Luwero, Gulu, Arua, and Soroti were ghostified. Buganda was fragmented to create the chiefdoms of Bunyala, Kooki, and Buruuli. These structures internally compete with the Mengo-based Kabakaship.

It is necessary to underscore the political calculations inspiring the creation of new kingdoms and districts. One cannot ignore how these considerations have affected relations, especially in intra-society and state-society levels. These go round to usher in waves of low-scale violence. Some critics remark that such machinations led to the November 2016 deadly attack on the Rwenzururu kingdom palace in the town of Kasese (Khisia & Rwengabo, 2022). One will decipher that the attack was a ploy to destabilise the aggregating political force of that region. Such scenario has been replicated in many other parts of Uganda.

Besides fragmentations and the deepening of ethnic divisions which are geared towards undermining the strength and unity of the opposition, Museveni and his cohorts delight in violent and brutal suppression of opposition personalities. This strategy has been very recognizable since his hold on the reins of power in Uganda. Nevertheless, the crushing of opposition in recent years has attracted world wide condemnation. Most notable in such scheme of oppression is the rough handling in many occasions, and several arrest and detention of the young presidential candidate of the opposition party, the National Unity Party (NUP), Robert Kyagulanyi, best known by his stage name 'Bobi Wine'. Having attracted widespread support from the Ugandan citizenry, even across ethnic lines, Bobi Wine drew the ire of the Ugandan *Colosus and Iron man*, Museveni. Several times, Bobi Wine's travel plans have been abruptly and violently truncated by Ugandan security agents; his campaign rallies had equally been violently interrupted and dismissed, several of his supporters arrested and even many killed (Khisia & Rwengabo, 2022).

The International Crisis group, Program Director for Africa, Murithi Mutiga reporting on recent events in Ugandan political scenes, stated that;

The bloodiest episode came in the third week of November, when protests erupted in many parts of the capital Kampala following one of Wine's arrests. Police responded with lethal force. At least 54 were killed in a 48-hour period, mostly by police bullets. Officials also barred many election observers from taking part, denied some foreign media outlets accreditation and shuttered the internet on the eve of the election (19 January, 2021).

The Human Right Watch (2022) affirmed this view on the brutal suppression of opposition to his government. It reported that, "In the leadup to Uganda's January 2021 elections, security forces beat and arrested scores of opposition supporters and journalists, killed dozens, and disrupted opposition rallies. Presidential candidates, Patrick Amuriat, of the Forum for Democratic Change and Robert Kyagulanyi of the National Unity Platform were among those arrested." Also in the Human Right Watch (2023), similar harassments, arrests, detentions, and killings of opposition leaders and critics were equally reported. Violence, intimidation and repression are undeniable signatures of the Museveni government in Uganda.

Evaluation

Like in many other places in Africa, colonization of Uganda destroyed the socio-cultural and political fabrics of the peoples of Uganda, and in its place, forcefully bundled multiple ethnic nations together. Instead of creating room for a harmonious co-existence among them, British colonization sowed seeds of hatred and division with their divide and rule policies which they ended up handing over to Ugandans at independence. This has continued to hunt Uganda to this day. Evidently, Ugandan political scenario since independence has been marked by instability. Much of this instability stemmed from ethnic and tribal interests and disaffections that were breed under the colonial regime in Uganda. Unmindful and

intolerant behaviour and exclusion have been a source of tension and instability between ethnic groups and the state of Uganda. Nyombi & Kaddu (2015), buttressed this point with some examples, including:

... the issue of Buganda that created tension between the Baganda ethnic group and the state, and the conflict between the Bakiga and Banyoro in Kibaale brought inter-ethnic tensions. The constitutional process that led Uganda to independence was marred by unequal demands by the colonial government on ethnic constituencies.

Along the line, corruption coupled with ethnicity to cause revolts against the governments of the day. Even such corruption took its root from the colonial era that created so many different privileged classes whom colonial authorities patronized above their kinsmen, and in return, they became tools to exploit and enslave their people. The patronage extended by the British to the Bugandans to the detriment of other ethnic nationalities cannot be overemphasized in this regard. Such discontentment has in various instances giving way to military intervention in Ugandan politics. This orientation has also generated greed and corruption in the military ranks, as well as the ambition to confiscate power.

The long reign of Museveni was an opportunity to tow a more accommodating terrain but his activities turned that possibility into an illusion. Not only that Museveni became ethnically culpable, his dogged drive to fragment the regions and districts has further increased ethnic dispositions and nepotism. One cannot but agree with Khisa & Rwengabo (2022), that;

Spatially concentrated and historically marginalized minority ethnic groups may hope to benefit from decentralized governance, such as Uganda's devolution, which theoretically allows the design and implementation of policies and programs that are germane to their conditions and needs. Yet ethnic-based decentralization "provides no permanent resolution of ethnic conflict" but rather serves to satisfy one group or generation of leaders, while evoking further ethnic and sub-ethnic demands and appeals to grievances that a given generation of leaders may have previously ignored.

Conclusion

Kigongo (1995), rightly pointed out that negative ethnicity has impacted on every facet of nation building in Uganda, and remains an impediment to national integration and development. It is clear from this study, that unmindful and intolerant behaviour and exclusion have been a source of tension and instability between ethnic groups and the state of Uganda. It remains a fact that besides deep seated corruption in the Ugandan polity, the major source of political instability in the country remains ethnicism, fragmentation and political patronage. Unfortunately, this equally plays out in a lot of countries in Africa. Analysts were right in remarking that ethnic variations have been at the centre of national politics from colonial times to our times (Berman, 1998). Until Africans and Uganda in particular, reject the ethnic based rational choice theory in governance, accept and embrace in goodwill, the positives of ethnic diversity, and each group sees others as equal partners and stakeholders in the gains of the nation, peace may continue to elude them.

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