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Religion, Politics and Governance in Uganda

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Foreword

This monograph is a compendium of selected Public Lectures that were presented under the auspices of the Religion, Rights and Peace Fellowship (RRPF) of the Human Rights and Peace Center (HURIPEC), School of Law Makerere University. The RRPF, was created to make the following key contributions to the debate on human rights and good governance in Uganda, *viz*:

- (i) Establish an intellectual space and promote pedagogic opportunities for diverse perspectives on the centrality of religion and faith in promoting Human Rights, peace, social justice, equity and transparency in governance in Uganda;
- (ii) Ensure that various perspectives and approaches to the issues of Religion, Rights and Peace can be shared, advanced and popularized throughout society with special attention paid to the youth, both those inside and outside of universities and other tertiary institutions;
- (iii) Create linkages between Academia, Religious leaders, State officials, policy makers and students for the promotion of a constructive dialogue and discourse aimed at appreciating the critical role of Religion and Faith in strengthening Democratic Governance and in the achievement of progressive constitutionalism; and,
- (iv) Stimulate a fresh culture of critical engagement and discussion by academics and religious leaders and actors.

The **overall purpose** of the Fellowship was to contribute to reviving and restoring the historical place of Universities as centers for generating new knowledge and social change, focusing in particular on the religious dimensions, human rights and peace, and the interplay between religion and politics in governance. Among the activities of the **Fellowship** were **Public Lectures**, which were held at various universities across Uganda.

The Fellowship was under the overall oversight of the Director HURIPEC. Bishop Dr D Zac Niringiye was appointed by the University as a Visiting Fellow, to develop and implement the activities of the Fellowship. The Fellowship Steering Committee (FSC) constituted of heads of HURIPEC (Chair), Religion and Peace Studies, Political Science, and Women and Gender Studies departments; extending the activities of the Fellowship beyond HURIPEC. The involvement and participation of academics from other universities made it possible to hold public lectures in Kyambogo University (KU), Makerere University Business School (MUBS), Uganda Christian University (UCU), Gulu University (GU) and Uganda Martyrs University (UMU).

I thank my predecessor Director of HURIPEC, Professor Joe Oloka Onyango, who with Bishop Dr D Niringiye initiated the ideal of this Fellowship, and made it a reality. Thanks are also due to Bishop Dr D Zac Niringiye, the Visiting Fellow for leading the work of the Fellowship, in particular the Seminars and Public Lectures; Andrew Karamagi, the Fellowship's Research Assistant and the administrative support staff at HURIPEC. My colleagues, heads of the participating Departments at Makerere added much value to the Fellowship. I am also grateful to colleagues from KU, MUBS, UCU, GU and UMU for partnering with us in the public lectures programme. Our gratitude to the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) for providing financial support towards the Fellowship. DGF has funded the publication of this monograph.

There are five lectures put together in this monograph: the first four, by Dr Niringiye, focus on the overall theme of Religion, Politics and Governance in Uganda; the fifth, by Dr Maximiano Ngabirano of UMU, discusses the place of Universities as agents of social change. I commend these lecture notes to students and practitioners of Religion, Politics and Governance, to the wider Uganda body-politic.

Dr Rose Nakayi
Director

Acknowledgements

The idea of the Religion, Rights and Peace Fellowship (RRPF) at the Human Rights and Peace Center (HURIPEC), was born out of a discussion in 2011 with Professor Joe Oloka-Onyango then Director of the Center. Although we come from different professional backgrounds, we shared the conviction that given how pervasive religion is in Ugandan society, it was important to create space for discourse on how religion could be a positive force in Uganda's quest for social justice and good governance. I am grateful to Joe for our partnership in translating that discussion into a project under HURIPEC; and to Dr Rose Nakayi, who succeeded Prof Oloka-Onyango as head at the end of the 1st year of the Fellowship. I am grateful to Joe and Rose for their leadership and encouragement.

The members of the Fellowship Steering Committee (FSC) provided me with practical and moral support. I am indebted to the staff teams at HURIPEC and PILAC, in particular Dr Rose Nakayi, Associate Professor Chris Mbaziira for their collaboration and cooperation and creating time and space in HURIPEC and PILAC for these public lectures. Dr Mesharch Katusimeh at Uganda Christian University, Prof Maximiano Ngabirano at Uganda Martyrs University and Dr Daniel Komakech at Gulu University together with the administration in these Universities, made it possible to hold public lectures there and also identified discussants.

Lectures proceeded with a presenter followed by discussants drawn from academia, religious and political leadership. I am grateful to all who participated in the public lectures as discussants. The audiences included students, academic staff and interested human rights, religious and political actors beyond the university. This monograph is a compendium of selected presentations. The first four I delivered at various campuses, including Makerere. The historical material in the lectures draws a lot from my doctorate (unpublished) research work 'The Church in the World: A Historical-Ecclesiological Study of the Church of Uganda with Particular Reference to Post-Independence Uganda, 1962-1992'. Special thanks to Associate Professor Maximiano Ngabirano of Uganda Martyr's University for the lecture on the "University as a ground for academic and intellectual exchange as well as an agent of social change".

The contribution by Andrew Karamagi, the Research Assistant, to the whole work of the Fellowship and in particular putting this monograph together is invaluable. The support staff, in the department of HURIPEC, was tireless in providing administrative support; Dr Rose Nakayi, Ms Maxine Twijukye, Francis Birikadde and Ms Aryantungyisa Oti provided editorial help. I am grateful to you all. The Staff of Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) were very supportive in the project design, implementation and reporting. Martha Gutierrez, the Country Director of GIZ, was the first to assure me of her commitment to ensure that the project got off ground; Bolji Aina of GIZ, Lars P Christensen and Nicholas De Torrente both of DGF were supportive all the way.

These notes are an offer and invitation to continuing conversation on religion, politics and governance in Uganda and the role of universities not only as grounds of intellectual discourse but as agents of social change.

Bishop Dr D Zac Niringiye
Visiting Fellow, HURIPEC
August 2014

Chapter 1

RELIGION, POLITICS AND TURBULENCE: FACING THE CHALLENGES OF PEACE BUILDING IN UGANDA

Dr D Zac Niringiye

Introduction

It is a historic fact that the story of Uganda from its beginnings is one chequered with social-political upheavals often of a violent kind.¹ Ugandan societies, like other African societies; are, in the words of Professor John S.Mbiti, “notoriously religious. Religion permeates into all departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible to isolate it”.² This begs the question as to whether there is a correlation between religiosity and social-political turbulence. The corollary is as relevant: Can religion be an agent of reconciliation and peace building?

In this lecture, I reflect on the role of religion in abating or escalating or resolving social-political turbulence in Uganda. My attention is focussed on two epochs in Uganda’s turbulent history: the genesis of Uganda (1875 to 1900) and during the Idi Amin regime (1971-1979), to ground our discussion of current and future challenges. Firstly, I make an attempt to define religion and politics. Then, secondly, I show how in the earliest period, in the emerging Uganda and the introduction of foreign religions, political motives are part and parcel of the motivation of the believers – transmitters as well as the receptors of religion in all its forms. Political motives are shaped by religious concerns. Thirdly, I explore the role of religion in structuring or re-structuring of political power. The basic thesis here is that the motives of structuring and re-structuring of political power are the root causes of turbulence in Uganda. To the extent therefore that religion shapes hopes and aspirations of a people, religious identity is part and parcel of the story of turbulence. We acknowledge from the outset that our perspective, though broadly engaging with the place of religion in its diversity in Uganda, is from the stand point of our knowledge and experience of one form of religion—Protestant Christianity.

As already asserted, one of the common denominators of the story of Uganda is turbulence. It is therefore not possible to deal with the entire story. We have decided to consider two critical periods of turbulence that help illustrate the interplay between religion and politics, and how that interplay bred turbulence: first, the during the budding of Uganda, therefore setting foundations for religious-based cleavages; and, the second, during the Idi Amin era. I conclude with exploring implications for today’s Uganda.

¹ Sources on the socio-political turbulence of this period include:

Akena-Adoko, *From Obote to Obote*, Kampala: Vikas Publishing House, 1983.

Kabaka of Buganda, *The Desecration of My Kingdom*, London: Constable, 1967.

Samwiri Karugire, *Roots of Instability*, Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1988.

Phares Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1992.

² John S Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers (1969), p. 1.

Defining Religion

Although the meaning of the term 'religion' may seem obvious, there is no generally agreed definition and it is used in widely differing senses depending on the perspective or subject matter under discussion. Meanings assigned to the term 'religion' also differ depending on the field under discussion or consideration or the approach being taken. It is much easier to discuss particular religions rather than attempting a generic definition.

Typically, one way to arrive at a definition of 'religion' would be etymological. However, as Bishop Richard Holloway observed, "Religion is a mysterious word, whose origins are obscure."³ In its original Latin usage, *Religio*, according to Cicero is defined as, "giving of proper honour, respect, and reverence to the divine, by which he meant the gods".⁴ But this definition is not inclusive of a number of religions that do not have a concept of 'the divine' such as Buddhism.

An attempt to define 'religion' by trying to find an equivalent to this word in any of the indigenous African languages is also problematic. Intriguingly, there is no word-equivalent to the Latin-English word. In all the Bantu languages of Uganda, the often used term '*eddini*' was derived from Arabic and was certainly introduced in the early 1840s with the advent of Arab traders in Buganda.

AK Rule in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* notes for example that British philosopher, FH Bradley, defined religion as: "A fixed feeling of fear, resignation, admiration, or approval, no matter what may be the object, provided only that this feeling reaches certain strength, and is qualified by a certain degree of reflection."⁵ EG Parrinder in his review of Edward Taylor's work around the motif of 'animism' has suggested that, "belief in supernatural beings' or souls was the root of all religious faith. Animism could be taken as 'the minimum definition of religion.'⁶

Rather than defining 'religion' etymologically or ontologically, I have opted to define it by description. My argument is that religion is recognisable. What we need to describe is the phenomenon of religion, by identifying what is commonly characterised as 'religiosity' in nature in various societies.

My definition of Religion is that it is "**a recognisable entity of beliefs and practices, relating to a higher entity or notion**". It is important to note the three elements in this definition:

- a) An acknowledgement of higher entity or entities, notion or notions and ideas, (the notion of transcendence) and how these unseen entities relate to the here and now, in time and space. It is the idea that the transcendence participates and is present in the imminent, whether by choice or not. This is what is characterised as **beliefs**.
- b) A recognisable group of people who define their collective identity or whose collective identity may be defined in terms of certain beliefs and practices. We characterise this as the factor of **belonging**;

³ Richard Holloway, *Crossfire: Faith and Doubt in the Age of Certainty*, London: Collins (1988), p. 17.

⁴ K. G Hawkins, "Religion", in Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (eds.), *New Dictionary of Theology*, Downers Grove IL.: InterVarsity Press (1988), p. 575

⁵ A. K Rule, "Religion, Religious", in Walter A. Elwel (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Grand Rapids MI.: Baker Book House (1985), p. 930.

⁶ E. G Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, London: Sheldon Press (1962), p. 20.

- c) Special actions—dos—that may be undertaken by (though not limited to) special persons, occasions and institutions e.g., rites, prayers, acts of mercy; practices that connect the transcendence to immanence; as well as ‘don’ts’—actions that deviate from the prescribed or normative, which brings discord, dissonance or displeasure, often inviting judgement. This is the factor of **behaviour**.

These three features: beliefs, belonging and behaviour characterise religion.

A distinction may be made between ‘Religion’ and ‘Faith’. I understand faith to be “a description of a person’s or community’s relationship of the transcendence – beyond time and space, in the ‘spatial-temporal’ – the here and now, in a particular historical moment. Faith is about believing. Every act of religious faith shows two aspects: a cognitive and a volitional. It is at once an affirmation of ‘truth’ and a surrender to the truth affirmed. ‘Truth’, is here to be understood as a particular understanding of reality; a particular perspective on the world that one inhabits; a particular account of the meaning of the universe. So we speak of a religious faith. We may speak of Bahai Faith, Hindu Faith, Islamic Faith, Christian Faith, etc.

It is possible to be religious without having a religious faith. It is possible to belong and behave as ‘others’ without believing. But it is not possible to have a faith without being religious; to believe and behave in a particular way is informed by the collective narrative a particular community.

Defining Politics

We consider politics to be about the stewardship of public resources and the authority to exploit and distribute them. The common use of the term ‘politics’ often refers to the arena of contest for space and power to govern; the etymological definition, deriving from the root Greek word of ‘politics’, ‘*polis*’ – which means life in the city; and the technical definition as distribution of scarce resources. We take all three meanings of ‘politics’ together. Real politics has to do with the material life of a people in community—‘life in the city’, which entails shared space and access to common resources. Contest for political power is about earning the right and authority to be in charge of the creation and mobilisation of public resources and instituting policies, systems and processes that ought to deliver access for all, through public services. This is the contest for state power and often the more common use of the term political, in the sense of ‘pertaining to the state’⁷. The legitimacy of those who wield state power derives not simply in occupying the positions of state authority but rather in ensuring that all the communities and members of that society have equitable access to public resources. Politics is about the stewardship of state public resources and the management of the public square.

Governing and government is about the leaders, policies, systems and processes (legal and institutional) that ought to deliver access for all the citizens to public resources. Political leadership is therefore essentially about the stewardship of public resources and the management of the public sphere. The goal of authentic politicking must therefore be a justice and equitable society, as well as advocating and putting in place policies and mechanisms for the common good of the citizenry. Political power is ‘allocative power’. The question therefore is how Uganda’s political development has worked to ensure

⁷ Holger B. Hansen and Michael Twaddle (eds.), *Religion & Politics in East Africa*, London: James Currey (1995), p. 14.

equal access by all ‘nationalities’ and other diversities, to public resources—forming that sense of ‘belonging together’.

The Interplay between Religion and Politics

From the above discussion, clearly religion and politics intersect. There are at least two points of intersection: ideology and collective identity.

Religious ideology is grounded in beliefs. Political ideology is grounded in notions of power and power relations.

Religion is a character of group identity—the notion of belonging; politics is about collective access to public resources and space and the structuring of power and power relations for the management of scarce public resources. Religious identity then becomes a factor in political bargaining and contest.

We can therefore speak about the religion of politics, in other words, those ideals and beliefs that shape political praxis; we may also speak of the politics of religion—the way in which religion is a factor in structuring political power. We shall explore this in the case of Uganda.

Sowing the Seeds of Turbulence: The politics of religion in ‘budding Uganda’

What we characterise as ‘budding Uganda’ is located in the ancient kingdoms of Buganda and Bunyoro, beginning with the famed visit of Brian Morton Stanley, the British explorer-journalist and his interaction with Kabaka Mutesa, and the now legendary letter in the *Daily Telegraph*, in 1875, appealing for missionaries. Although Stanley was neither the first foreigner nor the first white man in the Kabaka's court as many Arabs and other Europeans had preceded him,⁸ three factors however made him unique. Firstly, he stayed longer than any previous white visitors did. Secondly, he aided the Kabaka in the battle at Buvuma Islands in Lake Victoria, using his firearms. This display of firepower deeply impressed Mutesa who, at the time, also had fears of an invasion by Egyptian and Sudanese forces in the north of his kingdom. Thirdly, Stanley proposed that Mutesa should invite Christian missionaries who would teach him and the peoples of his kingdom about the new faith.

It is noteworthy that after the declaration of Buganda as a British Protectorate in 1894, a projected supported actively by the Protestant missionaries, the extension of the Protectorate borders was simultaneous with the spread of Christianity beyond Buganda. Thus, although the coming of Islam had created an atmosphere of openness, showing to both Mutesa and his chiefs that it was possible to add to the traditional cult of the *Balubaale*, it was Christianity that shaped the colonisation agenda. It is noteworthy that even as early as then, Stanley, though not a missionary in teaching the Kabaka some rudiments of Christianity in the same vein discredited Islam.

⁸ Buganda had strong trading links with the East African Coast. Swahili and Arab traders reached Buganda before Mutesa became Kabaka. They came in search of ivory and slaves in exchange for firearms and cotton-cloth. Three white men had preceded Stanley: John Hannington Speke and Captain Grant, who were on an exploration mission of the source of the River Nile, in 1862; and Colonel Chaille Long, an American, who visited the Kabaka as an envoy of Colonel Gordon, the Governor of the Equatorial Province of the Egyptian Empire.

Islam, which was brought by Arab traders from the East African coast in the 1840s,⁹ preceded Christianity and was the first foreign religion in the court of the Kabaka. Although Kabaka Sunna received instruction in Islam, he never embraced it. His successor, Mukabya Mutesa 1, embraced both the Arabs' merchandise and religion, and 'established' Islam. Mosques were built all over the kingdom and the Islamic calendar adopted.¹⁰ (the highlighted appears on page 9 below, word for word) However, Islam did not root itself in the life of the people. One of the reasons for this was the cultural distaste for circumcision. It was unthinkable that the Kabaka should be mutilated. Thus, despite his zeal, he was never fully converted to Islam. In addition to the issue of circumcision, the Egyptian Muslim traders who visited Buganda in 1876 led to greater discontent with Islam because they criticised the Qibla of the court mosque and questioned the validity of an uncircumcised Kabaka leading Friday prayers.

The Kabaka (king of Buganda) was at the centre and indeed the most powerful person, and "the symbol of social, political, economic and, to some extent, religious power" of the Kingdom of Buganda.¹¹ Wilson Mutebi has expressed well what the Kabaka was to Buganda at the time:

The whole land of Buganda belonged to him and all its inhabitants. He was called *Namunswa* (the queen ant) to indicate his importance. He was referred to as *Ssabalongo*. This is the title of a man who has had twins more than once, and it is the greatest title any man can get in Buganda. It was given to the Kabaka to indicate that no person could be greater than him.

He was called *Mukama* (Lord), *Ssabasajja* (greatest of all men), *Mpologoma* (Lion), *Ssegwanga* (Cock), *Magulunyondo* (metal legged). He was also called *Ssabataka* which means the head of all clans in Buganda.

The political system enabled him to maintain a position of power and authority. Below him were three main types of important officers. There were the *Abami Abamasaza* (the County Chiefs) some of whom were hereditary and others appointed by the Kabaka. As he appointed these officers he could sack them if and when he wanted. Even in case of the hereditary office he could sack one and appoint another, so long as he chose the replacement in the same clan.¹²

The Kabaka exercised totalitarian, though not always total control over his subjects. Although he was supreme as the *Ssabasajja* and *Sabataka*, the chiefs and the clan heads wielded some power. The most important chiefs were the *Katikkiro*, equivalent to the modern day Prime Minister, and the *Kimbugwe*, the guardian of the reigning monarch's umbilical cord. In the royal palace and capital, the Kabaka surrounded himself with several wives, chiefs, slaves, executioners and priests. Pages, another important element of life in the court of the Kabaka, were selected youths, given to the service of the Kabaka with the prospect that, if any proved themselves, they could become chiefs. These pages, however, could as easily become targets of the fury of the Kabaka in the event of any displeasure with them.

⁹ Abdu B K Kasozi, *The Spread of Islam in Uganda*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press (1986), pp. 18-33.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 20-39; and Michael Wright, *Buganda in the Heroic Age*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press (1971), pp. 6-9, on the impact of Islam during Mutesa's reign.

¹¹ Kasozi, *ibid*, p. 17.

¹² Wilson Mutebi, "Towards an Indigenous Understanding and Practice of Baptism Amongst the Baganda, Uganda" (unpublished Master of Arts thesis, Makerere University, Kampala, 1982), pp. 38-9. The three were *Bakungu* (chiefs), *Bataka* (clan heads), and the pages in the court.

The reasons for Mutesa's enthusiasm to receive European missionaries have been widely discussed by both political and mission historians. Some have argued that Mutesa's motivation was not primarily religious but political. This assessment is based on an understanding of religion and politics as two separate realms, a conceptual world-view that was alien to Buganda culture. It should be recognised that in inviting the missionaries to his kingdom, Mutesa did so in the terms in which he understood 'religion'. For Mutesa, 'religion' was primarily political in value. This was the case in primal¹³ religious practice and his experience of Islam. The national divinities in traditional Kiganda culture-religion were controlled by the Kabaka, and were responsible for protecting the Kabaka and the kingdom. The Kabaka exercised his authority in both the visible and non-visible realms and was perceived to be in control of both.

Arabs were the first external or foreign 'invaders' of his kingdom. They sought the conversion of the Kabaka who also wanted their goods and merchandise, not least their military hardware to subdue his vast Kingdom and quell any rebellion. The Arabs brought Islam and participated in helping him fight a number of battles, notably against their notorious rival neighbour, the King of Bunyoro. In further confirmation of this utilitarian-political view of religion, Stanley had, in addition to teaching him about his faith, helped him in another of his battles. He aided the Kabaka in the battle at Buvuma Islands in Lake Victoria, using his firearms. This gesture impressed Mutesa who, at the time, also had fears of an invasion by Egyptian and Sudanese forces in the north of his kingdom.¹⁴ So far his experience of other religions did not contradict this utilitarian-political perception.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Mutesa's enthusiasm for the Europeans arose from his hope that their coming would serve his immediate need for military defence and protection—political motives. He needed allies who would supply him with arms and ammunition against Egyptians. The coming of the Europeans would hopefully open new relationships that could strengthen his military defence capacity, which he so urgently needed at the time against a looming invasion from the north. Stanley's involvement in the war in Buvuma Islands and his display of superior firepower had impressed the Kabaka. With such a prospect, Mutesa conversed with Stanley about the Christian faith and permitted missionaries to come to his kingdom. The 'conversion' of the Kabaka opened the gates to the Kingdom, beginning in the Kings court.

The arrival of Father Laudel and Brother Amans, both of whom were French Roman Catholic missionaries of the order of the White Fathers, in February 1879 radically changed and charged the politico-religious climate in the Court. Firstly, their arrival increased the number of Europeans in Buganda. This increased European traffic sent negative signals to Mutesa and made him more apprehensive and suspicious of European intentions. Secondly, the White Fathers claimed that their version of Christianity was more authentic and true than that of the CMS missionaries who had preceded them. The intense wrangling, rivalry and mistrust of the two groups was evident to the Kabaka, as each group tried to discredit the other before him, in a bid to win his favour. Mutesa used this to his benefit by playing one group against the other, showing commitment to neither.

¹³ 'Primal religion' is used interchangeably with 'traditional religion' to keep, as Andrew F. Walls has argued, "the two important facts about them [traditional religions]: the historical priority of these worldviews to all the great religions, and in all parts of the world, and their basic elemental nature." AF Walls, "Africa and Christian Identity", in WR Shenk (ed.), *Mission Focus: Current Issues*, Ontario: Herald Press (1980), p. 213.

¹⁴ John V. Taylor, *The Growth of the Church in Buganda*, London: SCM Press (1958), p. 36.

Religious rivalry was not new, but this time it took on overtly political dimensions. While in the late 1870s and early 1880s it was the missionaries and Arabs whose bickering and rivalry was overt, it was not long before their converts, the Baganda, emulated this conflict. All the religious groups had concluded that their survival depended on the acquisition of military and political power. It was the desire to control the centre, including the Kabaka, which continually bred suspicion among the leaders of the different religions and therefore heightened their conflicts. Religious affiliation became the basis of group identity and therefore the new way of ascending the ladder of political power.¹⁵

Political partisanship developed along religious lines. By the beginning of the 1880s, Buganda had been divided into two parties—the ‘Bakatoliki’ and the ‘Bapolostante’, otherwise called ‘Bafalansa’ and ‘Bangeleza’ respectively, both referring to the Christian traditions and countries of origin of the two missions.¹⁶ Religious divisions became the most important mechanism for allocating resources within the political system and therefore membership of a religious group served as the obvious means of securing one’s share.¹⁷ For example, the distribution of chieftainships, among Christians and Muslims after their joint victory against Mwanga in September 1888, was made on the basis of a rough equality between their forces. The same thing happened between Roman Catholics and Protestants after defeating the Muslims in February 1890 and after the defeat of the Catholics by the Protestants in 1892.¹⁸

The events of this period had far reaching implications in shaping the interplay between politics and religion in Uganda. The balance of power was tilting in favour of the young Protestant church, and entrenched it, as Louise Pirouet has pointed out, as the “established church”.¹⁹ This is comparable to the ‘established’ position of traditional religion prior to the advent of Christianity, with the difference that while the traditional religionists had a recognisable power base, they did not control the political power structures. This time religion controlled the centre. Furthermore, these religious feuds instilled in their converts intense mistrust and animosity toward each other, thus setting the stage for continuous rivalry. The rivalries between the Protestant and Roman Catholic missions in Buganda were perpetuated throughout the process of the spreading of Christianity in Uganda.

The martyrdom in the Mwanga era was also essentially about politics. The teaching of the Europeans seemed to be the cause of increasing insolence and insubordination among the pages who had become Christians, as manifested by their apparent allegiance to their missionary teachers and their refusal to acquiesce to Mwanga’s homosexual desires. Those in the capital who opposed the ascendant influence of Christianity, notably Muslims and Mwanga’s Katikiro, Mukasa, took advantage of the Kabaka’s fury with the missionaries and pages to agitate for decisive action against them.²⁰ On Mwanga’s orders, several

¹⁵ Holger B. Hansen, *Mission, Church and State in a Colonial Setting: Uganda 1890-1925*, London: Heinemann (1984), pp. 12-20. Holger discusses the restructuring of power in Uganda.

¹⁶ FB Welbourn, *Religion and Politics in Uganda 1952-62*, Nairobi: East African Publishing House (1965), p. 6; and Anthony D. Low, *Religion and Society in Buganda 1875-1900*, Kampala: East African Institute of Social Research (1957), pp. 5-9.

¹⁷ Hansen, *op cit*, p. 18.

¹⁸ Semakula Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda*, London: Longman, 1971, p. 254. The Protestants were allocated the major chieftainships, the Roman Catholics were to be in charge of Buddu and the Muslims were sandwiched between them in Gomba, Busunju and Butambala. See Kiwanuka, *Ibid*, pp. 108-130 and Anthony D. Low, *Religion and Society in Buganda 1875-1900*, Kampala: East African Institute of Social Research (1957), p. 9.

¹⁹ Louise M. Pirouet, *Black Evangelists*, London: Rex Collings (1978), p. 67.

²⁰ Many commentators and scholars have highlighted the role of Moslems and chiefs in fueling Mwanga’s animosity against the Christians, notably J F Faupel, *African Holocaust: the Story of the Uganda Martyrs*, Africa: St. Paul

pages were executed. In the first two years of his rule, over fifty Christian pages and minor chiefs were brutally killed. Some were maimed, others cut to pieces, and others were burned, both Catholics and Protestants.²¹ The CMS missionary, Bishop Hannington, was also killed during that period, in Busoga in October 1885. Hannington had ill advisedly used the Eastern route to Buganda, a route that was considered a back door and therefore dangerous for the security of Buganda. Besides, Mwanga had learnt that Hannington was to be the leader of the Protestants,²² a fact that increased his suspicion. Mwanga therefore ordered his killing.

The period immediately after the martyrdom of 1886 was turbulent.²³ Tension between Mwanga and the Muslims, traditional religionists, and Christian chiefs increased. In a bid to strengthen his standing, Mwanga developed a strong army, subdivided into regiments, led by chiefs.²⁴ By this time the religious allegiance of these chiefs was divided along the different religious factions and therefore the regiments were built along the same lines. The leaders of the three religious groups (Muslims, Protestants, and Catholics) began to bring in large quantities of arms. This increased Mwanga's suspicion that they were becoming too powerful but his attempt to get rid of them sparked off a series of battles.

A rebellion led by an alliance of the regiments of Christians and Muslims routed him out of the palace in September 1888. Mwanga fled, but the Muslim-Christian alliance did not last. One month later, the Muslims with the assistance of Arabs fought and defeated the Christians and installed their own Kabaka, a Muslim. The Christians fled westwards, and while in exile they marshalled their forces. Two years later they fought and defeated the Muslims. Mazrui has rightly observed that in the entire pre-independence period, this was the "time of maximum amity between the Protestants and the Catholics in Uganda".²⁵ The Christians restored Mwanga to the throne. But the Roman Catholic and Protestant alliance did not last either. In 1892 they fought each other for the control of both the capital and the provinces. The Protestants, with the help of Captain Lugard of the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC),²⁶ defeated the Roman Catholics.

The rapid spread of the protestant Church in Buganda and to the rest of Uganda was propelled by a conducive socio-political climate in Buganda, the pioneer recipient of the missionaries. The climate was advantageous at two levels: firstly, at the level of the kingdom government of Buganda, and by extension local administrations in the other kingdoms and districts; and secondly, at the colonial government level. Once the Protestants controlled the centre, all the important chieftainships in Buganda were allotted to leading Protestants as chiefs. Most of the chiefs combined the roles of church leadership and

Publications, 1984 and Wright *Buganda in the Heroic Age*.

²¹ Lists in Faupel, *op cit*, pp. 207-222 and Samwiri Karugire, "Arrival of European Missionaries", in Tuma and Mutibwa (eds.), *op cit*, pp. 13-15. It should be noted that these were not the first religious martyrs of the period. During Mutesa's reign, about seventy young converts to Islam were burned at Namugongo for refusing to participate in prayers conducted by him. See David Kavulu, *The Uganda Martyrs*, Kampala: Longman (1969), p. 12. (I have not seen the details of Tuma and Mutibwa before. Therefore you need to write out the full details before starting to use *op cit*)

²² James Hannington was consecrated in London in 1884 to become the first Bishop of the diocese of Eastern Equatorial Africa.

²³ For a full account of this period, see Wright, *Buganda in the Heroic Age*, and Kiwanuka, *op cit*, pp. 192-270.

²⁴ Wright, *op cit*, pp. 24-28. Michael Wright discusses the rise of a standing army during this period and its command, and details the wars that followed. In fact Wright's book is essentially about this period in Buganda's history.

²⁵ Ali Mazrui, "Religious Strangers in Uganda: From Emin Pasha to Amin Dada", *African Affairs*, 76, (302) January 1977, p. 25.

²⁶ The IBEAC had arrived in Buganda only in 1890 mandated to secure British interests in the region following the signing of a treaty, in Europe, between Britain and Germany that placed Buganda under the British sphere of influence.

chieftainship. Some were members of the Mengo Church Council, and others were even among the first to be ordained.²⁷ These men actively supported evangelisation and Christian teaching. In fact, the missionaries worked at first entirely through these chiefs, regarding them as the natural leaders of the church, as indeed they were. These chiefs provided housing and feeding for the missionaries. They mobilised material and financial support for the catechists and teachers in their areas, and very often, it was at the initiative of these chiefs that teachers were commissioned to serve in their areas of influence. The missionaries were so pleased with the way these chiefs contributed to the growth of the Church in Buganda that it became for them the *modus operandi* in the rest of Uganda with some success. This was the process of the ‘establishment’ protestant Christianity in Uganda. Protestant Christianity became the power-religion of Uganda.

Space does not permit to discuss how development of social services in the emerging Uganda, in particular education and healthcare, was along religious lines (Catholic-Protestant-Islamic divide). Expanding education and healthcare services became the primary way of increasing the numbers of adherents of the competing religions, thus entrenching religious identity as the critical pillar of social-political organisation.

The Second Republic: The ‘Overthrow’ of the Protestant Church and the ‘establishment’ of Islam

When Idi Amin captured State power in Uganda in 1972, the Church of Uganda had hitherto enjoyed the benefits of being the quasi-established ‘religion’ of Uganda, since its victory over the Roman Catholics in 1892. On the religious landscape of Uganda, the only significant ‘other’ was the Roman Catholic Church. Although Islam preceded Christianity in Uganda and was instrumental in forming an open environment for the acceptance of Christianity, it really never became a significant social-political force for the Church to reckon with. In this context, not only was Islam a minority faith, it was marginal in the structuring of social-political space. Thus, when Idi Amin, a professed Muslim, captured state power, the Muslim community celebrated in hope that Islam was once again to enjoy the benefits of established religion, as it had prior to the coming of Christian missionaries towards the end of the 19th century. Amin exploited this sentiment, and began to project a pro-Islamic posture. The new regime not only deposed the Church of Uganda from its ‘quasi-established’ position that the Mission-Colonial government alliance had accorded to it, but also groomed Islam to take over.²⁸ For the first time since the religious wars of the late 1880s, the Church of Uganda awoke to the reality of Islam as a significant part of its ‘world’—not a ‘world’ to evangelise, but rather a socio-political force to contend with.

²⁷ Nikodemu Sebwato and Zakariya Kizito were chiefs and also ordained in the Church.

²⁸ Idi Amin’s project to ‘Islamize’ Uganda has attracted a lot of discussion. Among those who have discussed the issue are:

M. Hamidullah, “Islam in Uganda and its contribution to National Development”, in AH Abidi Syed, *The Role of Religious Organisations in Development of Uganda*, Kampala: Foundation for African Development (1991), pp. 83-85;

A B K Kasozi, “Christian-Muslim Inputs into Public Policy Formulation in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda”, in Hansen and Twaddle, *op cit*, pp. 223-246;

Kasozi, *The Spread of Islam in Uganda*, *op cit*, pp. 116-120;

Omari H. Kokole, “Idi Amin, ‘The Nubi’ & Islam in Ugandan Politics 1971-1979”, in Hansen and Twaddle, *op cit*, pp. 44-55;

Islam itself had once enjoyed the benefits of being the established religion in pre-colonial Buganda, in the 1870s during “her golden era”,²⁹ but lost it when the Islamic ‘party’ was vanquished by a combined force of the Protestants and Roman Catholics in 1890.³⁰ And since then, further attempts were made for Islam to regain that position, with no success.³¹ Although the Islamic community was a significant player in the political manoeuvres since the 1950s, it never succeeded in regaining control of the centre. During the late 1950s, their significance was recognised for their vote in a political race that was essentially contested between the Roman Catholic Democratic Party (DP), and the predominantly Protestant Uganda People’s Congress (UPC). The importance that Obote, the first post-independence Prime Minister, a communicant in the Anglican Church, attached to the Islamic vote motivated him to facilitate the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Muslims (NAAM) in the 1960s to strengthen UPC’s political standing.³² However, as a Ugandan Islamic scholar Hamidullah observed, “even after achieving the political support Obote needed from Muslims, there were neither reciprocal benefits nor any attempts to redress the unjust treatment suffered throughout the colonial and post-independence periods.”³³ Therefore Amin needed to re-draw the religious map of Uganda, for the sake of Islam and also to create a constituency that would provide a political support base at home and abroad.

With the expulsion of the Asian business community in 1972, Amin had wealth which he would use to hold together the pro-Amin Islamic alliance. So a large percentage of the properties were allocated to Muslims, and the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC), a national organisation of all Muslims in Uganda, became one of the largest collective landlords in the economic history of independent Uganda.

The creation of an Islamic constituency at home enabled Amin to reconfigure Uganda’s image abroad, with a view to obtaining new foreign benefactors. Amin shifted towards a pro-Islamic posture to attract Arab financial support. He was given the cold shoulder when he visited Israel and Britain in July 1971 to buy arms and other military hardware which made him realise that they would not be reliable any longer in supporting him and his regime as they had done in overthrowing Obote. The decisive moment was the meeting in Germany in February 1972 with some Libyan officials. Colonel Gaddafi extended an invitation to Amin to visit Tripoli on his return journey from Germany. He must have given the impression to Gaddafi and the Libyan leaders that Uganda was predominantly Islamic. In a communiqué signed after the meeting, Amin and Gaddafi agreed that “religion and nationalism create history and motivate the march of nations and peoples towards progress and revolution. Islam provides a good example”.

Two months later, Amin expelled all the Israelis in the country accusing them of ‘milking’ the economy, and declared solidarity with the Arab and Palestinian cause against Israel and their ‘Zionist

²⁹ Kasozi, *The Spread of Islam in Uganda, op cit*, p. 20. This is how Kasozi characterises the period 1862-1875 when Islam reached its highest peak in the country. John Rowe, in his essay ‘Islam under Amin: A case study of *deja vu?*’, in Hansen and Twaddle, *op cit*, has drawn parallels between this period and the period under Idi Amin and examined the continuity and similarities in both.

³⁰ For a detailed history of Islam, see Kasozi, *The Spread of Islam in Uganda, op cit*. Hamidullah’s essay, “Islam in Uganda and its Contribution to National Development” is a short but succinct review of the story of Islam in Uganda.

³¹ The Muslims sought to regain their control of Buganda in 1895 through another battle, but were summarily defeated, and effectively condemned to becoming a marginalised community in the socio-political development of Uganda.

³² NAAM was created as a rival to the Uganda Muslim Community (UMC), that was Buganda-based and therefore more inclined to supporting Kabaka Yekka.

³³ Hamidullah, *op cit*, p. 78.

expansionism'. He then declared Uganda an Islamic state, and invited King Faisal and Gaddafi to visit in 1972 and 1974 respectively. Their visit strengthened further the Islamic cause at home. According to Hamidullah, "these two were the first missionaries for Islam in Uganda".³⁴ But it also bolstered Uganda's image as an Islamic state. Subsequently Uganda was admitted to full membership to the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) at the Lahore Pakistan Conference of 1974, thus identifying Uganda, with a Muslim population of less than 10%, with a political as well as cultural network of states with predominantly Muslim populations.

The argument has been put forward that Idi Amin's project to 'establish' Islam was inspired primarily by political rather than religious ambitions.³⁵ This conjecture builds on the artificial dichotomy between religion and politics. In the history of Uganda, religion had a political dimension, and politics had a religious one. The two were intertwined, a fact that Amin must have been aware of. It is my contention that Amin's Islamization project had both religious and political motives. The two served one another, as they did in the Christian missionary era. Uganda became an Islamic state on the same principle: "the religion of the ruler is the official religion of the state."³⁶

The murder of Archbishop Janani Luwum in 1977 was, in some way, the embodiment the confrontation of two religious establishments. Janani Luwum, then Bishop of Northern Uganda, was elected in May 1974 to replace Archbishop Erica Sabiti who was retiring that year, at a time when Idi Amin had entrenched his position as President of Uganda and was on course to 'establish' Islam. Luwum accession to the Protestant Arch-Episcopal was bound to lead to confrontation with the Idi Amin regime.

Firstly, Janani Luwum hailed from Acholi in Northern Uganda, the home region to deposed President, Obote, and the heartland of the military support to his regime. Secondly, he was to preside over a religious institution, the Protestant Church, whose 'established position' was Amin's envy. We have already indicated how from the time of the violent overthrow of the Republican government, his project was to 'establish' Islam. It did not help that one of the first major national projects for Janani Luwum to spearhead its preparations was the celebration of the Centennial for the Church of Uganda, slated for 1977. Moreover the project was gaining a lot of support—financial, material and spiritual, from both within and outside the country. This was happening at the time Amin's pet-project, the construction of the National Mosque at Old Kampala, the symbol of Uganda as an Islamic country, was floundering. Again, this must not have gone down well with Amin.

Thirdly, he was a Mulokole, courageous and bold. As Kevin Ward observed in his work, "The Church Amidst Conflict", Luwum was a deeply spiritual man and "intellectually the most competent person," godly, fearless and with a pastoral heart.³⁷ As Bishop of Northern Uganda, one of the heartlands of the opposition to the Idi Amin regime, he had intervened on several occasions on behalf of many who

³⁴ Hamidullah *op cit*, p. 83.

Edward B. Muhima, 'The Fellowship of Suffering': A Theological Interpretation of Christian Suffering Under Idi Amin (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, North Western University, 1981, chapter III entitled "Amin's 'Moslemization' plan);

John A. Rowe, 'Islam under Idi Amin: A case of déjà vu?', in Hansen and Twaddle, *op cit*, pp. 267-279.

³⁵ Most Islamic sources argue from this perspective. In fact some have suggested that the progress of Islam slowed down during the Amin era due to excessive interference from the regime. Kasozi, *The Spread of Islam in Uganda*, *op cit*, pp. 109,123. In my view, the situation was more complex. Other factors show that Islam became stronger during the regime.

³⁶ This is Ali A. Mazrui's argument in "Religious Strangers in Uganda: From Emin Pasha to Amin Dada", in *African Affairs*, (302), 1977, pp. 21-38.

³⁷ Margaret Ford, *Janani: The making of a martyr*, London: Marshal, Morgan & Scott (1978), p.38.

‘disappeared’ at the hands of the its military machine. At one of the House of Bishops in early 1972, Luwum appealed to his brother Bishops to protest to the regime for the senseless murders that were a common occurrence in his diocese, but “after some hesitation they sought audience with the President.”³⁸ The regime must have kept a close eye on him due to his association with the Acholi and UPC,³⁹ the archenemies of the regime. Now as Archbishop, Luwum continued to exercise his pastoral duty at national level, advocating for those who dared not face the regime’s reckless machine. On several occasions, he confronted Amin protesting his regime’s brutality, and demanding that the government live up to its mandate to protect the lives and property of the citizenry, rather than unleashing its military machine on a defenceless population. This could not and did not go down well with Amin who was committed to eliminating any form of real, imagined or potential challenge to his regime. He was bound to face Idi Amin’s terror apparatus, since he was now considered to be an enemy and a political saboteur.

It is difficult to ascertain the extent of Luwum’s support and involvement in efforts to remove Amin from power. At the time, there were several efforts to get rid of the regime by military means, of which Luwum was certainly aware. The story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Hitler’s Germany in the 1930s and 1940s⁴⁰ may shade some light on Luwum’s role in the struggles to remove Amin from power. Although the historical contexts of both men are very different, there are cords of similarity in their pilgrimage in mission and the repressive regimes in which they exercised that mission. The carnage and injustice against the Jewish people inspired Bonhoeffer’s mission of mobilising the Confessing Church as a resistance movement against the German State. He believed that there is a point where a church needs to consider the option of resistance, in a situation where the state had lost its legitimacy. As early as April 1933, after it became clear to him that Hitler was developing a programme to oppress the Jews, he expressed this conviction on “the Church and the Jewish Question”:

The state, which endangers the Christian proclamation, negates itself. That opens up three possibilities for action by the church against the state: first...asking the state whether its actions are legitimate... Secondly, helping the victims of state action... The third possibility is not to tie the victim to the wheel but actually to destroy the spokes of the wheel. Such a course would involve the church in direct political action.⁴¹

He was convinced that it was the responsibility of the church to act in defence of the defenceless, failure of which demanded repentance. When in 1938 it was evident to him that the regime was not relenting in its brutality and its project to exterminate the Jewish population, Bonhoeffer decided to work under cover to overthrow the regime. For him, to do anything less would have been tantamount to conniving with evil. When plans were advanced to overthrow the government in 1940, Bonhoeffer wrote:

The church confesses that she has witnessed the lawless application of brutal force, the physical and spiritual suffering of countless innocent people, oppression, hatred and murder, and that she has not raised

³⁸ Ibid, p. 50.

³⁹ Kevin Ward has made the point that “in political terms Luwum was inevitably seen as ‘UPC’ because of the way the UPC government in 1969 got involved in his enthronement as a bishop of Northern Uganda diocese.

⁴⁰ When Amin broke off diplomatic relations with Israel and embarked on a diplomatic crusade among African nations to isolate Israel, he likened his mission that he considered as heroic to Hitler’s crusade to exterminate the Jews. Reference to this is made in the portion of the “Telegram from Idi Amin Dada to Dr Kurt Waldheim, Secretary General of the United Nations”, 11 September 1972, in W Kato, *Escape from Kampala*, p. 87.

⁴¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, quoted in Eberhard Bethge et al (eds), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer- A Life in Pictures*, London: SCM Press (1986), p. 106.

her voice on behalf of the victims and has not found ways to hasten to their aid. She is guilty of the deaths of the weakest and most defenceless brothers of Jesus Christ.⁴²

His involvement in clandestine activity to assassinate Hitler and overthrow the regime was his way of raising his ‘voice on behalf of the victims’. It is noteworthy that this was the same Bonhoeffer who in 1936 had, after much agonising, come to the conclusion that “Christian pacifism dawned on me as being a matter of course, though shortly beforehand I had passionately fought against it”.⁴³ Luwum, I argue, like Bonhoeffer, had come to the conclusion that Amin’s regime had forfeited any moral legitimacy and therefore had to be removed. No wonder he was closely associated with some of those found by Amin’s sophisticated intelligence network to have been planning to remove him from power. It was only logical that he should be accused to be a collaborator with ‘enemy forces’. Hence, in Idi Amin’s eyes, Luwum was guilty as a political criminal, and therefore condemned to a criminal’s death ‘Amin-style’.

Luwum should be remembered, not just among the Church martyrs but also among the hundreds of thousands of political martyrs who perished, having been judged by Amin and his terror apparatus as criminals. Although Luwum himself was not a politician by vocation, nor did he consider himself one, his words and actions had serious political implications. Professor Mahmood Mamdani, a recognised international academic and a social political analyst of Uganda’s political history, reflecting on Luwum’s death, asserted that Luwum was murdered “not because he was a devout Christian, but because he was an ardent nationalist.”⁴⁴ It is my contention that it was precisely because Janani Luwum was a devout Christian that he was an ardent nationalist.

Religion and Politics in Museveni’s Regime

President Museveni, in his book *Sowing the Mustard Seed*, a chronicle of the bush struggle to capture state power, argued that among the primary causes of Uganda’s political crisis in the 1960s were sectarianism and socio-economic underdevelopment. His point was that societies like Uganda still at the pre-industrial stage “tend to have vertical polarisations based mainly on tribe and ethnicity” and that “even when polarisation in underdeveloped societies is horizontal, they are sectarian by religion, as has been the case in Uganda.”⁴⁵ Based on this analysis, two of the top five priorities that underpinned Museveni’s political programme and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) and its military wing the National Resistance Army (NRA), were “Restoration of security of person and property” and the “Consolidation of national unity and elimination of all forms of sectarianism.”⁴⁶

However, given that the Museveni/NRM/NRA struggle was executed utilising military means, based in one region of the country—the Luwero Triangle, the only way to pacify the rest of the country was the continued use of violent means, particularly against the routed armies of the Okello and Obote regimes who retreated to the north and eastern parts of the country from where they waged war against the regime. It also evoked an immediate sectarian response. For example, the Catholic Church “hailed the successful revolution of the NRM, which they described as a ‘most welcome breath of fresh air for us in Uganda and

⁴² Ibid, p. 184.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 84.

⁴⁴ M. Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda*, Nairobi: Heinemann (1983), p. 56.

⁴⁵ Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed*, London: MacMillan Publishers Ltd. (1997), p. 187.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 217.

an example to the rest of the world.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the NRM/A accused the incumbent Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, Yona Okoth, of being a member of a clandestine organisation, Force Obote Back (FOBA). He was accused of attending several FOBA meetings in Tororo in the early 1986⁴⁸ that were purportedly planning the overthrow the government by force of arms. He was later named a defence witness in a treason trial of four FOBA operatives.⁴⁹ In Okoth's view, these accusations against him were motivated by partisan and religious malice. In his address to the House of Bishops at their meeting in May 1986, he reported that he had brought these issues to the attention of the President, ministers and people in Tororo over specific individuals and by name. He had pointed out:

[The] specific individuals, and by name, all being members of the Roman Catholic Church in the areas and DP members who had been engaged in these sinister activities of spreading rumours about prominent Protestant and UPC supporters and sympathisers. These rumourmongers wanted the Protestant leaders, including myself to be eliminated by all possible pretences, hence the present tense situation in the area. The goal as they envisaged it was to come to power through [the] bloodshed of innocent people, mainly the Protestants.⁵⁰

It was even more bizarre with the emergence of the Holy Spirit Movement and its military wing—the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces, led by one Alice Auma⁵¹ and later the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), under the leadership of Joseph Kony, grounded in a quasi-religious dogma.

In the later period of the Museveni/NRM/NRA regime, as inter-religious conflict and turbulence has waned, there has been a rise in intra-religious conflicts. Episcopal succession wrangles have been on the increase in the Church of Uganda, some turning violent. The internal conflicts in Islam have also been on the rise.

Conclusion

It is true that Uganda is constituted of many nationalities (ethnic groups), many of whom were independent kingdom-nations. Prior to the advent of the British missionaries and colonists, there were inter-tribal and inter-kingdom wars. Colonial leadership, rather than enshrining and enforcing a just social order, entrenched social-political power along religious-ethnic lines—as a way of subduing and subjugating Uganda and her people. Post-independence leadership deepened this cleavage. Religious leadership—missionary and indigenous, particularly the Protestant Mission and Church, were the beneficiaries of the way political power was structured. Once the colonial and post-independence governments provided an enabling environment for missionary church enterprise, it seemed not to matter too much to the mission and church leaders how just and equitable the socio-economic and political

⁴⁷ John Mary Waliggo, "The Catholic Church & the Root-Cause of Political Instability in Uganda", in Hansen and Twaddle, *op cit*, p. 116.

⁴⁸ Letter from Archbishop Yona Okoth to His Excellency the President, dated 30 December 1986, Archbishop's Papers, COU Archives.

⁴⁹ *The New Vision*, 7, 19 July 1989.

⁵⁰ Archbishop Yona Okoth, "The present situation after the NRA took over the government on January 25, 1986", p. 4, Archbishop's papers, COU Archives.

⁵¹ Heike Berhend, "The Holy Spirit Movement and the Forces of Nature in the North of Uganda 1985-1987", in Hansen and Twaddle *op cit* pp. 59-71.

structures that were developed were. This marginalised other religious communities, particularly the Muslims.

Conflicts, turbulence and wars resulted. It should be stated that the turbulence has an ethnic and religious hue because of the structuring of power, and therefore injustice was along religious, regional and ethnic lines, resulting in violent conflicts. These have escalated to engulfing the entire country. Uganda's story is not unique. As Ghanaian Economics Professor, George B.N. Ayittey once remarked,

Year after year since 1985, one African country after another has imploded with monotonous regularity: Ethiopia (1985), Angola (1986), Mozambique (1987), Sudan (1991), Liberia (1992), Somalia (1993), Rwanda (1994), Sierra Leone (1995), Zaire (1996), Burundi (1997), Congo (1998), Ethiopia/Eritrea (1999). ... currently, civil wars rage in at least 14 African countries. All states have collapsed and infrastructure has crumbled. More distressing, several other African countries are standing in line, ready to blow up: Cameroon, Kenya, Togo, and Zimbabwe.⁵²

The answer to the conflict and turbulence is to address the root causes: injustice along ethno-religious lines. Failure to address this will certainly plunge Uganda into violent conflicts, and could even lead to complete state collapse, as has happened with some of the states mentioned above.

⁵² Statement by Professor George B.N. Ayittey, speaking at a Brown-bag Lunch Seminar at the World Bank, Africa Technical Division, Washington, D.C., April 26, 2000

Chapter 2

UGANDA @50: RELIGION, POLITICS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Dr. D Zac Niringiye

Introduction

There are at least three things that make this topic relevant in today's Uganda. Firstly, the country is marking 50 years since it attained independence from the British colonialists– a significant milestone. Secondly, the debate is continuing on separation of Religion and Politics, a debate that has been heightened by President Museveni's continued castigation of religious leaders who are critical of his regime and its excesses. Thirdly, there continue to be tensions and conflicts in various regions of Uganda as well as various communities.

I start with a prayer by His Excellency Y.K Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, on the eve of the National Day of the celebration of Uganda's independence Jubilee:

Father God in heaven,

Today we stand here as Ugandans, to thank you for Uganda. We are proud that we are Ugandans and Africans. We thank you for all your goodness to us.

I stand here today to close the evil spiritual past and especially in the last 50 years of our national leadership history and at the threshold of a new dispensation in the life of this nation.

I stand here on my own behalf and on behalf of our past leaders to repent.

We ask for your forgiveness for our own sins, and those of our past leaders;

We confess these sins which have greatly hampered our national cohesion and delayed our political, social and economic transformation;

Sins of idolatry and witchcraft, so rampant in our land;

Sins of shedding innocent blood;

Sins of political hypocrisy, dishonesty, intrigue and betrayal;

Sins of pride, tribalism and sectarianism;

Sins of laziness, indifference and irresponsibility;

Sins of corruption and bribery that have eroded our national resources;

Sins of sexual immorality, drunkenness & debauchery;

Sins of un-forgiveness, bitterness, hatred and revenge;

Sins of injustice, oppression and exploitation;

Sins of rebellion, insubordination, strife and conflict.

These and many others have characterised our past leadership, especially the last 50 years of our history. Lord forgive us, and give us a new beginning. Give us a heart to love you, to fear you and to seek you. Remove far from us all the above sins.

We pray for **National unity**. Unite us as Ugandans and eliminate all forms of conflict, sectarianism and tribalism. Help us to see that we are all your children. Children of the same Father. Help us to love and respect one another and to appreciate unity in diversity.

We pray for **prosperity and transformation**. Deliver us from ignorance, poverty and disease. As leaders, give us wisdom to help lead our people into political, social and economic transformation.

We want to **dedicate** this nation to you so that you will be our **God and guide**. We want Uganda to be known as a Nation that fears God. A nation, whose foundations are firmly rooted in righteousness and justice. *Blessed is the nation, whose God is the Lord. A people you have chosen as your own* (Psalms 33:12).

I renounce all the evil Foundations and Covenants that were laid in Idolatry & Witchcraft. I renounce all the satanic influence on this nation.

And, hereby **Covenant** Uganda to you, to walk in your ways and experience all your blessing forever.

In the Name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

This prayer was made at an overnight prayer meeting at the Nelson Mandela National Stadium, organized by the Covenant Nations Church, whose pastor is a daughter to President Museveni, and Uganda Jubilee Network, a loose coalition of Christian leaders, pastors and organisations, on 8 October, 2012.

On face value, one would welcome this as a significant symbolic act by our President and there are many who have responded this way, notably pastors and other Christian leaders across the country. This act therefore confirms the significance of the theme of this paper: Religion, Politics and National identity. All the three elements are present in the act as well as the content of the prayer.

Firstly, the celebration of independence is a political event; it is about self-rule and the sovereignty of the State. Secondly, the prayer was at a religious event: the meeting was organised by Christian leaders—Evangelical and Pentecostal Church leaders, among them the President’s daughter in her capacity as pastor of Covenant Nations Church, where her mother, who is also the First Lady, Janet Museveni, is an active member. Thirdly, the content of the prayer acknowledges a turbulent history, a plea and cry for national cohesion and a peaceful future. There is a tacit assumption that prayer (a religious activity) has a role to play in bringing hope and a future.

But the prayer itself seems to raise more questions, than it gives answers: Why the President? Why General Yoweri Museveni who has publicly disclaimed affiliation to Christianity and indeed any of the contemporary religions?¹ Who is the ‘we’ in the prayer? The latter is a significant question about national identity and national cohesion. The question is about belonging. While we all belong to various social entities, we have multiple identities. There is a belonging that is *a priori*, the primary category that

¹ See, Y.K. Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed*, London: Macmillan Publishers (1997), p. 15. President Museveni admits to have decided on a non-denominational path, believing that “God is not a Muslim, a Protestant, a Catholic or a Jew”.

defines belonging and participation in wider society. So the question is not whether we have multiple identities, but rather that identity that defines our participation in the wider body-politic.

The event was not inclusive in its design and roll out. It was led by a section of the Christian community in Uganda; and the absence of Muslims raised concerns of whether this prayer portrayed a national character. How are they to own a prayer of national repentance when they are excluded on the platform? Why did the President not make the prayer at the designated event for National Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer at the breakfast earlier in the day, or at the National Celebrations, on the D-day itself?

We can also interrogate the act and its content from the angle of Christian teaching and practice, by asking what it means “to close the evil spiritual past and especially in the last 50 years of our national leadership history and at the threshold of a new dispensation in the life of this nation”; to repent “on my own behalf and on behalf of our past leaders”; and to “covenant Uganda” to God? We then ask whether this is part of the job description of the President of Uganda.

Clearly the theme of this lecture is not only relevant but it strikes at some of the contradictions in Uganda’s evolution as a nation-state and its search for national identity and cohesion. There is no doubt that the interplay between politics and religion impinge on the question of tolerance, peaceful co-existence and national identity. The matter of national identity is about finding a common identity within the diversity of Uganda.

My dual thesis, in this lecture, is that by their nature it is impossible to separate religion and politics; and in Uganda, religion in general and Christianity in particular, and politics, have had a symbiotic relationship entrenching the politics of exclusion. Consequently, the interplay between the two has been a negative force against national cohesion and nation identity. The exception in the latter proves the rule.

The question we shall seek to address at the end is how the interplay of religion and politics may serve the common good and enhance the project of national cohesion and identity.

Uganda @50 and the Question of National identity

In interrogating the question of national identity, we ask whether we a nation. In other words, do those who live in the geo-political entity called Uganda define themselves first and foremost as Ugandans? This is the huge question of citizenship and nationhood. It is not helped by the fact that at 50 years since Uganda attained independence, the country by 2012 did not have a national identification mechanism.

The question is about belonging. While we all belong to various social entities, such as tribes and religions, which have multiple and intersecting identities, there is a belonging that is *a priori*, the primary category that defines our identity and participation in wider society. So the question is not whether we have multiple identities, but rather that identity that defines our participation in the wider body-politic. People take part in society through markets, services and spaces. The critical question is that of inclusion or exclusion. The World Bank study titled *Inclusion Matters: The Foundation for Shared Prosperity*, observed that “there are group identities resulting in exclusion”, such as “gender, race, caste, ethnicity, religion and disability status.”²

² World Bank, *Inclusion Matters: The Foundation for Shared Prosperity*, World Bank: Washington (2013), p. 9.

I will first admit that this is a personal question as well: I am a Ugandan citizen; a Mufumbira by ‘tribe’; Mugiri by clan, Christian, Anglican and Protestant by faith and religious tradition; hailing from Western Uganda; a theologian, academic, Religious leader and social-political activist by vocation. Which of these identities is definitive of my belonging to the country, Uganda?

The management of competing identities is the subject of politics. Political power is ‘allocative power’—the management and distribution of scarce resources. Political power is authority to structure and re-structure access to markets, services and spaces. The question therefore is how Uganda’s political development, in both the colonial and post independence eras, has worked to ensure equal access by all ‘nationalities’ and other diversities, to public goods and services.

Nations and Nation-State

The idea of a nation-state and indeed the notion of nationalism as principals of organising societies is a modern construct. The fact is that nationalism was not important for the political administration of the West in the first 1,500 years of the Christian era. *The World Guide 2003/2004*, in the article “Nation-States: State vs peoples”, rightly points out,

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the ideal government was the universal, earthly state, based on the Christian republic or community. Before the era of Nationalism, political loyalties were determined by organizational approaches such as city-states, vassal and lord, the dynasty, religious groups and sects.³

The article traces the origins of the idea of the modern nation-state to 18th century nationalist revolutions in Europe and North America. The article points out that:

Nation-states are a legal conformation derived from nationalism, an ideology that took shape in the 18th century in the West. At the end of that century, civilization came to be seen as being determined by nationality and therefore based on this principle each individual should be educated in his or her native language and not in those of other civilizations or eras (such as Greek or Latin).⁴

The key motif in the emergence of the idea of the nation-state is the ideology of nationalism: “the identification of the state and the nation with the people (or at least the desire to determine the size of the state according to ethnographic principles).”⁵ In other words, the structuring of society and its destiny would be based on ethnographic considerations, either by safeguarding the hegemony of existing ethnicities or through the construction of new ones. What happened in Europe in the 18th century, with the creation of ethnic states, was the process of structuring society on ethnic lines. Here, ‘ethnic community’ was construed to mean a people who share a common [myth of origins](#) and descent, a common history, elements of distinctive culture, a common territorial association, and sense of group solidarity.⁶

However, since then, the idea of nationalism has transformed into various forms, particularly in the redefinition of the notion ‘ethnic’ and the construction of new ‘ethnicities’. According to Wikipedia, a “nation refers to a large group of people who share a common language, [culture](#), [ethnicity](#), [descent](#), or

³ *The World Guide 2003/2004*, Oxford: New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2003-2004, p. 21.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation>, accessed August 2014

history.”⁷ The definition of nation was therefore broadened. *Webster’s New Encyclopedic Dictionary* defines a *nation* as “a community of people composed of one or more [nationalities](#) with its own territory and government”. The American Revolution was a new nationalism, through the creation of a new *ethne* called ‘*American*’. This is where the notion of a nation-state comes. The nation-state was a construction of “a geographical area that can be identified as deriving its [political legitimacy](#) from serving as a [sovereign nation](#).”⁸ A state is therefore a [political](#) and [geopolitical](#) entity. The term “nation state” implies that the two coincide. The key distinction is the identification of a [people](#) with a [polity](#) in the nation state.

Uganda – a Nation-State or a State with Nations?

The colonial states in Africa were simply one outworking of the nationalist ideology, perfected by European leaders at the time, notably Otto Eduard Leopold, Prince of Bismarck, Duke of Lauenburg, *Pour le Mérite* (1 April 1815 – 30 July 1898), known as Otto von Bismarck. The idea was the creation of new-ethnic identities: creating new ‘ethnic’ societies, ‘new nations’ that would serve social-economic ends of the colonists, through a process of demarcation of boundaries, which suited the colonialist agenda. Hence, the priority was put on the creation of states through geographical engineering with the hope that those states would become nations—the formation of nationhood—no longer based on ‘common descent’ but ‘common habitation’—which is better termed as territorial nationalism.

It is instructive that the genesis of Uganda is associated with the visit of the British explorer-journalist, Henry Morton Stanley, to the Kabaka (king) of Buganda in April 1875. The latter extended an invitation through Stanley to the Church Missionary Society (CMS)—a Protestant Mission agency in Britain—to send Christian missionaries. This opened the way for Britain to Buganda, making the latter a potential Protestant country. The first CMS missionaries arrived in Buganda in 1877. The Berlin Conference of 1884–85 and its resultant Berlin Treaty, which formalised the scramble for Africa among colonial powers, place Buganda and her neighbour within the British sphere of interest. It was the arrival of Captain Frederick Lugard, on behalf of the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC), a commercial association founded to develop trade in Africa in the areas controlled by the British colonial power, which began the process of demarcating a territory that was later ‘baptised’ *Uganda* derived from one nation, the *Baganda* who lived in *Buganda Kingdom*. It all began with the declaration of Buganda as a British Protectorate in 1894.

This is where the question of national identity starts—the imposition of boundaries on nations. The new nation-state, Uganda, was superimposed on existing polities—kingdoms and chieftainships—with the Kingdom of Buganda enjoying a pre-eminent status. This pre-eminence in British policy, though not stated explicitly, was implied in the various agreements with the British of 1892, 1893, 1894, 1900 and 1955.⁹ The emerging question was whether the inhabitants of geo-political entity defined themselves as subjects or citizens. Since the sense of ‘belonging together’ was no longer determined by “a common language, [culture](#), [ethnicity](#), [descent](#), or history”, it would hitherto be determined by the extent to which there was the sharing together of public resources. This was exacerbated by the fact that the very

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation_state, accessed August 2014.

⁹ D Anthony Low, *The Mind of Buganda: Documents of the Modern History of an African Kingdom*, London: Heinemann (1971).

foundations of Uganda were built on religious sectarian lines. As early as the 1880s, Buganda had been divided into two parties—the ‘Bakatoliki’ and the ‘Bapolostante’, otherwise called ‘Bafalansa’ and ‘Bangeleza’ respectively, both referring to the Christian traditions and countries of origin of the two missions that had brought Christianity. Rather than diminish, these divisions were deepened by the colonial establishment as more territory was added to Buganda. Political affiliation and organisation in the colonial period was along religious lines.

Although the two most dominant factors in the alignment of political forces in the period immediately after the Kabaka Crisis (1953-55) and prior to independence were religion and the question of Buganda,¹⁰ it is the place of Buganda in a united and independent Uganda that tipped the balance of power. As A G Gingyera Pinycwa observed:

The reaction from outside of Buganda’s political dominance was one of suspicion, fear, and even hatred in some quarters, resulting in political parties being formed in other parts of the country to face up to the challenge or ‘Question of Buganda’.¹¹

No doubt that at the time of independence, Uganda was a state—a “political and geopolitical entity” whose only sense of shared history was colonialism, foreign religions and social services—factors that did not create cohesion, but introduced new lines of division. Uganda was a state with nations, rather than a nation-state. There were 14 regional governments that negotiated and signed the federal agreement in Lancaster (England),¹² of an independent Uganda: Acholi, Buganda, Bugisu and Sebei, Bukedi, Bunyoro Kitara, Busoga, Karamoja, Kigezi, Lango, Teso, Tooro, West Nile and Madi. The agreement also granted the Kingdom of Buganda full federal status, and the other kingdoms (Bunyoro, Tooro, Ankole and Busoga) semi federal status. Uganda at independence was therefore simply a geographical expression rather than a country of a people who “share a common language, [culture](#), [ethnicity](#), [descent](#), or history”. One of the most dominant issues was what has come to be known as “the Buganda question”.

The period since independence has been characterized by entrenching of divisions—religious and tribal-ethnic-regional. In the 1960s, during the Obote I regime, attempts made to de-construct the Ugandan state towards a republic were not executed in a consensual manner. The 1965-67 crisis in Buganda, during which there were violent clashes between the central government of Milton Obote and the Kingdom of Buganda and the flight to exile of Kabaka Mutesa, culminated in the overthrow of the 1962 Constitution. As George W Kanyeihamba narrates, Obote “declared himself the new President, dismantled traditional infrastructures of the country, established an authoritarian regime, suppressed the electoral processes and negated much of what many Ugandans had aspired for with the coming of independence.”¹³ The adoption of the Republican Constitution in 1967 abolished the traditional kingdoms. It is noteworthy, that both the Protestant and Catholic Church leadership are reported to have

¹⁰ Roman Catholic marginalization from political power was the most significant inspiration for the formation of the Democratic Party (DP) (cf. D A Low, *Political Parties in Uganda 1949-62*, University of London: The Anthlone Press (1962), pp. 22-23; and Samwiri R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*, Heinemann Educational Books (1980), pp. 158-162).

¹¹ A.G. Gingyera Pinycwa, “Is there a Northern Question?”, in Kumar Rupesinghe (ed), *Conflict Resolution in Uganda*, Oslo: International Peace Research Institute (1989), p. 52.

¹²<http://d4nations.com/webpubl/articles/the-federal-agreement-signed-on-ugandas-independence-in-1962.html> (accessed August 2014).

¹³ George W. Kanyeihamba, “Power that rode naked through Uganda under the muzzle of the gun”, in Holger B. Hansen and Michael Twaddle (eds), *Uganda Now: Between Decay and Development*, London: James Currey (1988), p. 76.

welcomed the proposals leading to the 1967 Constitution “as necessary to stabilise the country and promote a greater national unity”.¹⁴ The military led by Idi Amin, was at the centre of this scheme. Hitherto the military would be the primary means of taking and retaining power in succeeding regimes.

Although Ugandans were all united in their suffering during the Idi Amin regime, the dosage of suffering was administered in such way that pitted various ethnic and religious communities against each other, in various phases. The announcement of the military coup¹⁵ brought joy and celebration to many, particularly in Buganda,¹⁶ and mourning to others, especially in the heartland of the Uganda People’s Congress (UPC)—the North, the East and large sections of populations in the West. The Muslim community celebrated, that one of their own had ascended to the highest position in the hope that Islam was once again to enjoy the benefits of established religion. Amin exploited this sentiment, and began to project a pro-Islamic posture. Prominent positions in all sectors of public service went to either Muslims or those from his home area, West Nile.¹⁷ However, by the time the regime was toppled, the whole country was unanimous on the demise of the regime.

The Obote II regime resurrected the ethno-religious-partisan sentiments and rivalries of the 1960s. The only significant change in my view is that the military became the most critical arbiter of structuring and restructuring political power. It did matter which region, tribe and religion the commanders of the armed forces hailed. The Forces were led by officers from Acholi, Lango and Teso, ethnic bases of the Obote II regime. The Buganda-based (Luwero Triangle) military rebellion and campaign against the regime was led by commanders from western Uganda, particularly Ankole. It is no wonder that the demise of the Obote regime was sparked off by a crack in the loyalty of the troops, a cleavage along Acholi-Langi lines sparked off by the death in a helicopter crash of his most trusted commander, Oyite Ojok a Langi. His replacement by another Langi, Smith Opon-Ocak, caused disaffection among top Acholi commanders, leading to the military coup of August 1985 led by the two top Acholi commanders, Tito Okello Lutwa and Bazilio Okello.¹⁸

In spite of the fact that the Museveni/ National Resistance Movement (NRM)/ National Resistance Army (NRA) rebellion and campaign had as one of its pillars the “consolidation of national unity and elimination of all forms of sectarianism”,¹⁹ it is arguable that national cohesion still evades Uganda to this day. In addition to the ethnic factor (particularly as it relates to the military), the grounds for the Northern Uganda rebellion and military campaign against the Museveni regime have been identified in part as the marginalization of that region economically. DA Low in his essay, ‘The dislocated polity’ in *Uganda Now*, noted that “within Museveni’s first 33-man government, there were 13 Baganda, 12 more southern

¹⁴ Reported in *Uganda Argus*, 30 June 1967.

¹⁵ For a detailed account of the events leading to the coup, see Ammi Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda 1890-1985*, London: Macmillan Press (1987), pp. 78-101;

George I. Smith, *Ghosts of Kampala*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson (1980), pp. 67-81;

Phares Mutibwa, *Uganda since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, Kampala: Fountain Publishers, pp. 71-77.

¹⁶ Mutibwa, *ibid*, p. 88-89, has produced the praise showered on Amin, from various prominent Baganda. These include: Prince George Mawanda-Chwa, elder brother of Kabaka Mutesa II; Joshua Mayanja Nkangi, the last Katikiro of Buganda prior to the attack of the Lubiri; Abu Mayanja, leading politician and chief architect of the UPC-KY alliance; Amos Sempa, prominent politician in Buganda and formerly a minister in the Kingdom.

¹⁷ Jan Jelmert Jorgensen, *Uganda: A Modern History*, London: Croom Helm (1981), p. 282.

¹⁸ Mutibwa, *op cit*, pp. 160-165; see also Omara-Otunnu, *op cit*, pp. 160-165.

¹⁹ Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, *op cit*, p. 217.

Bantu, and 8 from various other districts in the east and north of the country.”²⁰ This was a trend that has continued to this day. Sadly, Low’s characterization of the Museveni/NRM/NRA as a “southern-based regime”²¹ is still true today.

The Politics of Religion in Uganda

As we have observed, from the genesis of Uganda, religion has defined to a very large extent the development of the body-politic of Uganda. The declaration of Buganda as a British Protectorate in 1894 was supported actively by the Protestant missionaries and the extension of the Protectorate borders was simultaneous with the spread of Christianity beyond Buganda, favouring Protestants over the other two competing faiths—the Roman Catholics and Islam. As Holger B. Hansen stated:

Religious divisions became the most important mechanism for allocating resources within the political system and therefore membership of a religious group served as the obvious means of securing one’s share. The valued goods were channelled through this structure, and in the eyes of individuals, membership of a religious group served as the obvious means of securing one’s fair share. To put it differently, religious factionalism as also political factionalism.”²²

Distribution of chieftainships was based on religious lines, with Protestants taking the largest share in all the regions of the country: in Buganda, of the 20 Saza chiefs, 11 were Protestant, 8 Catholic and 1 Muslim; in Toro, of the 59 chieftainships, 47 were Protestant, 10 Catholic, and 2 Traditionalists; in Ankole, of the 11 Saza Chiefs, 10 were Protestant, and only 1 Muslim with none allocated to Catholics (in 1920); and, in Busoga, of the 54 Chieftainships, 45 were Protestant, 4 Catholic, 4 Muslim and one allocated to Traditionalists.²³

The development of social services, in particular education and healthcare, was along religious lines. In the field of education, in the initial period there was a deliberate policy of monopoly by both the Christian missionaries and the colonial government, to the extent that when the colonial authority proposed starting non-sectarian schools in Kampala and Entebbe, the missionaries protested. Hansen has made reference to Bishop Tucker of the Protestants who took strong exception to it. He noted, that Tucker:

As a matter of principle he argued that, however small a matter the establishment of two non-sectarian schools might be, it would be taken as a sign of that the government was committing itself to a policy of non-sectarian education... His main concern was to preserve the missionary of general education at the various levels; and to that end he had to fight against the establishment of a non-sectarian school system, as the result could be a government board of education which would not countenance the teaching of religion in schools.²⁴

Up until the 1940s, the Protestant and Catholic missions were the dominant educational agency at primary, high school and technical training levels. The education system therefore entrenched religious

²⁰ D A Low, “The dislocated polity”, in Hansen and Twaddle, *op cit*, p. 52.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² Holger B. Hansen, *Mission, Church and State in a Colonial Setting: Uganda 1890-1925*, London: Heinemann (1984), p. 18.

²³ See a full discussion on the distribution of chiefs in Buganda, Toro, Ankole, North and Eastern Uganda, see Hansen, *op cit*, pp. 110-115, 325-344.

²⁴ Hansen, *op cit*, p. 225.

identity as the critical pillar of social mobility and organisation. Religion was therefore a factor of exclusion rather than inclusion.

The first independence government did not really change this. The formation of Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC), an umbrella organisation for the two rival denominations, did not diffuse the rivalry but only served as a joint platform for social service policy advocacy with the Government. Obote's attempts to 'include' Muslims, were not intended to address the divisions in the country, but rather to 'buy' their political support. He facilitated the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Muslims (NAAM) in the 1960s to strengthen UPC's political standing.²⁵ As Hamidullah observed, "even after achieving the political support Obote needed from Muslims, there were neither reciprocal benefits nor any attempts to redress the unjust treatment suffered throughout the colonial and post-independence periods."²⁶

The Idi Amin regime is what really shifted the religious power base. Amin needed to re-draw the religious map of Uganda, for the sake of Islam and also to create a constituency that would provide a political support base at home and abroad. He changed the command of the Armed forces, by rapidly promoting soldiers that in his judgment would be loyal. Two factors determined loyalty: ethnicity and religion, the Nubi and Kakwa (his ethnic group), and Muslims. The Nubi in the army were the key loyal force that enabled Amin to overthrow Obote and decimated Obote's loyal troops. Amin needed them to keep his hold on power. Therefore he had to service their interests, among which was building the Islamic faith.

The creation of the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC) in June 1971 and its subsequent inauguration in June 1972, was a cornerstone in setting the foundation for the ascendance of Islam. Hamidullah appraised the benefits of the UMSC to the Muslim community thus:

Wishing to symbolise the achieved unity [resulting from the creation of the UMSC], Idi Amin donated the twelve acres on the historical Old Kampala Hill to the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council to be used for the construction of a national mosque and the headquarters of the UMSC pointing out that this was the *first piece of land officially given to the Muslims for religious purposes by the government as they had received no land as a religious organisation in the 1900 Uganda Agreement*. Again to make the whole exercise workable, Idi Amin launched a fund for the construction of the UMSC and the national mosque. On this occasion, the officials of the Supreme Council were inaugurated, Idi Amin appealed to all countries of the Muslim world to contribute towards the realisation of the noble venture pointing out that for years the *Muslims had had no external help as there had been for Christians*. In answer to this call, several Muslim countries poured millions into the newly created UMSC.²⁷

Amin therefore sought to weaken Christianity's hold on social-political power, and in particular Protestants who hitherto had enjoyed socio-political dominance and were therefore seen as allies with his arch enemies, Obote and the UPC. Initially, he sought to court the Roman Catholics who were aggrieved by the dominance of their rivals, the Protestants, since the colonial period. As Jorgensen has rightly observed:

²⁵ NAAM was created as a rival to the Uganda Muslim Community (UMC), that was Buganda-based and therefore more inclined to supporting Kabaka Yekka.

²⁶ M. Hamidullah, "Islam in Uganda and its contribution to National Development", in Abidi AH Syed, *The Role of Religious Organisations in Development of Uganda*, Kampala: Foundation for African Development (1991), p. 78.

²⁷ Hamidullah, *op cit*, p. 83 (italics mine).

Whereas the Obote regime had united Protestants and Muslims (as very junior partners) against the Catholic DP, the Amin regime attempted to forge a Muslim-Catholic alliance (with Catholics as the junior partner) against the Protestants. Even in West Nile the alliance proved shaky. Although Christians (mostly Catholic) outnumbered Muslims among the 17 West Nilers (sic) who served in Amin's cabinet, the Christian 'majority' was an illusion. Christians simply experienced a higher turnover, whereas Muslims enjoyed staying power.²⁸

The year 1972 was momentous: Amin visited Muammar Gaddafi in Tripoli; King Faisal visited Uganda; and, in the same year, he expelled the Asian business community. The expulsion of the Asian community afforded Amin the opportunity to further his Islamic cause. A large percentage of the properties were allocated to Muslims, and the UMSC. His association with the two world Muslim leaders and the admission of Uganda to full membership to the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) at the Lahore Pakistan Conference in 1974, cemented the posture of Uganda as an Islamic country. All this strengthened his positioning of Islam as the religious power base for Uganda.

To further curtail the hitherto dominant position of Christianity, Amin employed law and public policy re-formulation through decrees, to further consolidate and entrench the pre-eminence of Islam over other faiths.²⁹ He banned all other Protestant Churches and organisations except the Church of Uganda, encouraged public conversions from Christianity to Islam, made Friday a day of rest in addition to Sunday, de-gazetted various Christian holidays and replaced them with a number of Islamic public holidays.³⁰ The marginalisation of Christianity in Idi Amin's Uganda, which at the time boasted of more than 60% of the population, was later to play role in igniting dissent against his regime.

There is not much need to rehash the story of the politics of religion in the post-Idi Amin regimes. It is very much the same story: religious identity as agency for accessing political power as well as exclusion. The rivalry has continued to be between the Protestant Church, the Roman Catholic Church and Islam. Thus, although Museveni promised that the "change of government was a fundamental revolution and not a 'mere change of guard'" and that their "thinking was radically different from previous regimes which had been sectarian and neo-colonial"³¹, the evidence is to the contrary.

Given that the Museveni/NRM/NRA struggle was executed on the back of sectarianism, instead of eliminating it, it is arguable that Uganda is more divided now both vertically and horizontally, than it has ever been. For although Museveni castigated previous regimes for structuring the body politic along religious and ethnic lines, the Museveni administration has consistently used religious and ethnic lenses in building a patronage system. My analysis of the current regime is that the difference with previous regimes is the same. 'Eating' is still along religious and ethnic lines, primarily for regime longevity and patronage. Stories are rife on how Museveni relates to each of the major religious communities by manipulating their leaders!

²⁸ Jan Jelmert Jorgensen, *Uganda: A Modern History*, London: Croom Helm (1981), p. 306.

²⁹ Kasozi makes this point as well in his essay, 'Christian-Muslim Inputs into Public Policy Formation' in Hansen and Twaddle, *op cit*, p. 238.

³⁰ In 1976, Amin added Idd-el-Azhur; in 1977, he added the birth of Mohammed, and in 1978 he issued decree no. 10, the Public Holidays Act (Amendment) Decree, 1978, which formalised these additions as well as making Friday a day of rest. In the same decree, he de-gazetted Good Friday, Easter Monday, and Boxing Day. Decree signed on 8 July 1978, *Public Holidays Act, Decree no. 10*, Entebbe: Government Printers, 1978.

³¹ Museveni, *op cit*, p. 172.

Key positions in Government are ring-fenced for particular religious institutions, in particular for Catholics and Muslims; the Protestant bishops (Church of Uganda) are given goods, especially cows and cars; Pentecostals and ‘born-again’ church leaders receive sponsorship of one kind or the other; and as one Muslim cleric put it, “political leaders have used their influence to confuse religious leaders for political ends.”³² Thus, although Museveni has consistently accused religious and cultural leaders that make politically critical statements of his regime as meddlers and advised them to “stay out of politics and stick to minding Ugandans’ cultural and spiritual wellbeing”³³, he is the first to use them for his political ends when it suits him. There are many religious leaders that Museveni has appointed to political positions in his governments over the years.³⁴

Conclusion

Uganda’s story from its beginnings is one of unending ethno-regional-and religious conflicts, to the extent that it is possible to draw a religio-ethnic-economic map of Uganda – showing Catholic, Protestant and Muslim heartlands, with the attendant social-economic disparities. It is a story of exclusion rather than inclusion; a story whereby those in leadership use the diversity as an instrument of divide, in order to propel and perpetuate themselves in power. In the earlier dispensation in the pre-independence period as well immediately after independence, the Protestants kept out the Roman Catholics and the Moslems. Idi Amin was watching this. When he took power in 1972, he excluded Protestants and Roman Catholics. Obote II and the Museveni eras have been construed by some to be ‘Protestants in power’. No wonder to this day, the undertone within the Catholic Church for a Catholic President.

Greed for power or wealth, usually a combination of both, is the root cause of the divide-and-rule regimes that have degenerated to autocratic military dictatorships. Greed for power breeds corruption and injustice. While speaking at a Brown-bag Lunch Seminar at the World Bank, Africa Technical Division, in Washington, D.C., on April 26, 2000, Professor Ayittey stated:

One word, power, explains why Africa is in the grip of a never-ending cycle of wanton chaos, horrific carnage, senseless civil wars and collapsing economies: The struggle for power, its monopolization by one individual or group, and the subsequent refusal to relinquish or share it. ... Those who win power, capture the state and proceed to transform it into their own personal property. State institutions, such as the military, the judiciary, the media, the civil service, police and the banking system, are taken over and debauched. Key positions in these institutions are handed over to the president's tribesmen, cronies and loyal supporters—to serve their interests and not those of the people or the nation. Meritocracy, rule of law, property rights, transparency and administrative capacity vanish. ...

Incumbent autocrats appoint their own Electoral Commissioners, empanel a fawning coterie of sycophants to write the constitution, massively pad the voter's register and hold fraudulent elections to return themselves to power. ...

Those excluded from the spoils of political power eventually rise up in a rebel insurgency or secede (Biafra in 1967). And it takes only a small band of determined rag-tag malcontents to plunge the country into mayhem.

³² Statement by Sheikh Amani Sulaiman Asimwe at the State of the Nation Platform, June 4, 2010, contained in the *ACODE Policy Dialogue Series No. 13, 2010: Politics of Patronage and Religion in Uganda*.

³³ *ACODE Policy Dialogue Series No. 13, 2010: Politics of Patronage and Religion in Uganda*, p. 9.

³⁴ A contemporary example of this is Rev Fr Simon Lokodo, currently Minister of Ethics and Integrity

The resolution to the question of national identity and national cohesion does not lie just in peace talks and cease-fires, desirable as they maybe. The answer certainly does not lie in more religion. It is not even multi-party politics that will resolve the political quagmire that we face in Uganda in particular and Africa in general. What is required is redressing the structural inequalities embedded in our history and restructuring of political power for the democratisation of access to socio-economic services, levelling the ground of access to social, economic and political privilege. This requires at least a three-pronged national agenda: national dialogue and truth telling; affirmative action; national reconciliation and inclusive government.

The objective of a national dialogue and truth telling process is a national consensus on the story of Uganda—a shared narrative, as well as arriving at collective vision of a shared future. Sadly, today the constituent regions, religious groups and ethnicities have each their own narrative of being Ugandan. Consequently, there are no shared aspirations and hopes of the future. Spaces must be created that will enable un-encumbered discourse about our painful past and a more desirable future. Justice Benjamin Odoki was right to describe the making of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda a “search for a national consensus”.³⁵ Sadly, rather than progress on that path of nation building, Uganda has experienced reversals since the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution. It is time to re-engage in a similar process.

However, dialogue and truth telling is not enough. It must be accompanied with commitment and action toward addressing the structural historical injustices that has led to the divided society that Uganda has become. Hence, the need for affirmative action as a necessary part of re-constructing the Ugandan state. The Museveni-NRM affirmative mechanisms (such as those directed to women and youth) have only achieved the entrenching personal rule and therefore further divided Uganda. Mechanisms and processes must be put in place that will guarantee ‘never again’. Building institutions is the way to a secure future.

National reconciliation must aim at ensuring that Ugandans eat together; that none is denied access or has privileged access because of religious affiliation or other identities. We must bring an end to ‘politics of exclusive eating’ and focus on peaceful transition from the current ‘eating regime’! This means that effective transition from the current dictatorship to democratic governance will entail inclusive government. The current regime is inherently incapable of putting in place mechanisms and processes for genuine national dialogue and affirmative action. The priority now is to ensure a peaceful transition from the current regime. Therefore the Museveni regime should be succeeded by a transitional government of national unity that will ensure that the agenda of dialogue and national reconciliation is implemented and foundations are put in place for genuine democratic governance.

³⁵ Benjamin Odoki, *The Search for a National Consensus: The Making of the 1995 Constitution*, Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2005, which is a chronicle from his perspective on the process that delivered the *1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda*.

Chapter 3

THE POLITICAL GOVERNANCE CRISIS OF UGANDA @50: INSTITUTIONAL FAILURE, RULE BY LAW AND LAW OF RULER

Dr D Zac Niringiye

Political governance in Uganda @50: A Question and a Crisis

Psychologists have characterised the age range 40-60 as midlife.¹ Certainly, this is using life expectancy figures from high-middle and high income countries, where it is above the worldwide average of 71.0 years.² Thus the 50-year mark in the life of a person, according to this measure, is reckoned to be the midpoint of midlife, which is an important time. Therefore, one ought to evaluate and assess progress and achievements in life, as one transition toward old age. Studies have shown that for some, this period of transition is also a period of crisis. I suggest that the 50-year mark for Uganda since independence also provides an important point for critical assessment of Uganda's progress and achievements, particularly in the area of political governance. The political governance path that Uganda has pursued over the last 25 years is one of democracy, where, as envisioned in our Constitution, "All power belongs to the people"³ who "shall express their will and consent on who shall govern them and how they should be governed, through regular, free and fair elections of their representatives or through referenda"⁴. Accordingly, the people exercise their power directly through elections and indirectly through their elected representatives. The power and authority of Government and its organs derives from the Constitution, "which in turn derives its authority from the people who consent to be governed in accordance with this Constitution."⁵

My argument is that an honest assessment will lead to the conclusion that political governance in Uganda@50 is in a crisis; rather than progress. The country has experienced reversals, particularly in the last decade-and-a-half. In this lecture, I show that this is the case, based on a conceptual model of political governance that I have developed and the results of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Process presented in *The Republic of Uganda: APRM Country Review Report No. 7 January 2009*. The APRM process was premised on the conclusion that African states continue to lag behind in socio-economic development because of deficits in governance.

The promise of APRM, under the overall framework of the [New Partnership for Africa's Development](#) (NEPAD), was that this time around the hope of the peoples and nations of Africa for political stability, high economic growth and sustainable human development through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice across Africa, would be realized since APRM would address the key constraint—governance. The APRM is grounded in the premise that good governance is an imperative and a fundamental pre-requisite for "human security and political stability, high and

¹ Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counselling: A Comprehensive Guide*, W Publishing Group (1988), pp. 197-210; also retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midlife_crisis (accessed August 2014).

² According to the list by the World Health Organisation (2013), Uganda's life expectancy at birth is 56 years.

³ Republic of Uganda, *Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995*, Kampala, Article 1. (1).

⁴ Ibid, Article 1. (4).

⁵ Ibid, Article 1. (3).

sustainable economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration”.⁶

The APRM was the space created for African Union member states to voluntarily subject themselves to peer scrutiny and to promote adherence to and fulfilment of their commitments, among other things, the rule of law; the equality of all citizens before the law; individual and collective freedoms; the right to participate in free, credible and democratic political processes; and adherence to the separation of powers, including protection for the independence of the judiciary and the effectiveness of parliaments. The framework was built on the philosophy that African states take responsibility for their own compliance and development.

I will therefore draw from my experience and participation in APRM in Uganda since February 2007,⁷ when I was appointed, together with a team of eminent Ugandans, to serve on the APRM National Commission as its Vice Chair and Chair of its Programme and Contracts Committee. The National Commission completed its mandate in July 2008, having led and managed the Country Self Assessment, the preparation of the National Programme of Action (NPOA) and the process leading to the peer-review at the 9th APR Summit at Sham El Sheik, Egypt on 29 June 2008. The National Governing Council⁸ was appointed and inaugurated, following release and launch of the Country Review Report (CRR), in March 2009. I served as the Chair of the National Governing Council up to the end of its tenure in December 2012.

In conclusion, I propose that what will get Uganda out of the governance crisis is addressing the leadership crisis.

Assessing Political Governance

The question here is: On what basis does one assess governance, for a verdict of good or bad; progressing or retrogressing; thriving or in crisis? First, I think there is need to understand the governance process and governance outcomes. The verdict should be based on the outcomes.

Political Governance: A Conceptual Model

There are five critical components to democratic governance:

⁶ *The Republic of Uganda: APRM Country Review Report No. 7 January 2009*, p. xxxi.

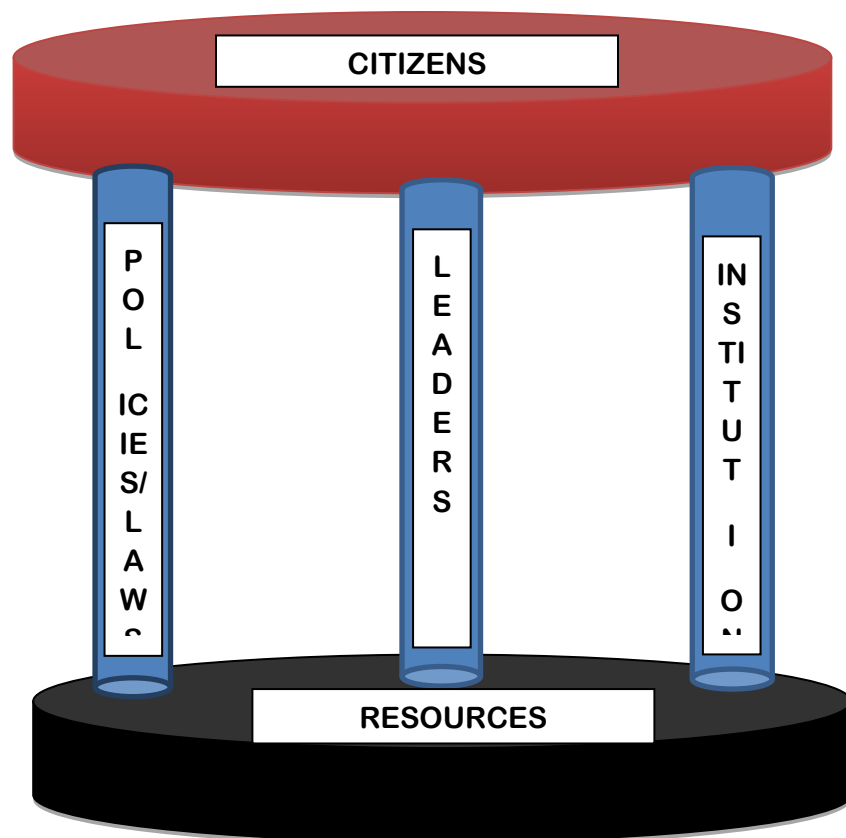
⁷ APRM was implemented in Uganda, in summary:

1. Country Self-Assessment process commenced in February 2007, led by the National APRM Commission;
2. Country Self-Assessment Report – November 2007;
3. Country Review Mission – February 2008, which resulted in the Country Review Mission Report which was produced after a wide consultative country review process to cross check with Ugandans on the contents of the Country Self-Assessment Report.
4. Uganda was “peer reviewed” on 29th June 2008 in Egypt;
5. The Uganda APRM Country Review Report and national Programme of Action was officially released in January 2009 and launched to the public on 23rd March 2009.
6. Appointment of the National Governing Council – March 2009.

⁸ The mandate of the National Governing Council was to provide leadership in ensuring that the CRR was well disseminated and its content understood, appreciated and owned by all the key players, particularly Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). It was also the work of the Governing Council to be the overall monitor and to report on the implementation of CRR recommendations.

1. **Citizens**—the people, who are *raison de etré* of democratic governance;
2. **State and Government institutions**—as established by the Constitution;
3. **Policies and Laws**—enacted by appropriate institutions according to the Constitution;
4. **Leaders**, both technocratic as well as political—situated in the institutions of the State and Government; and,
5. The **country’s resources**—natural, created and generated (including the people);

The diagrammatic model, which I offer is that of a three-legged African stool.



- The primary service of the stool is to provide comfortable seating. In the same way, democratic governance ought to foster a “peaceful and prosperous Uganda with happy people”⁹—the comfort of Citizens. Citizens come in their diversities: age, gender, religion, region, ethnicity, race, social standing, etc.

⁹ This is the way *The Citizens’ Manifesto* (Revised Edition, Kampala: UGMP, November 2010) summarized the aspirations and hopes of the people of Uganda. *The Citizens Manifesto* is a publication arising out of compilation of views from over 10,000 Ugandans on the demands and expectations from those entrusted with authority to govern.

- Just like the base of the stool that provides a stable base, resources are the base for the stability, prosperity and progress of any country. The model is inadequate in this that the primary resource of a nation is its people, who generate and create resources by sustainably exploiting natural resources.
- The three legs of the stool not only connect the base to the seat, but are really what makes comfortable seating possible; they are what make a stool work. Should one or two legs be deformed or broken or un-even, the stool will not make for comfortable seating. So it is with institutions, policies, laws and leaders. These are the three pillars of democratic governance. They harness and utilise the resources for the citizens.

The value and effectiveness of a stool is judged on whether it provides for comfortable seating. This is the evidence that the three legs of the stool function. The evidence that democratic governance is delivering its promise – that the three pillars of democratic governance are effective, is the peace and prosperity of the citizens. Assessment of political and democratic governance therefore must focus on the quality of life of the citizens.

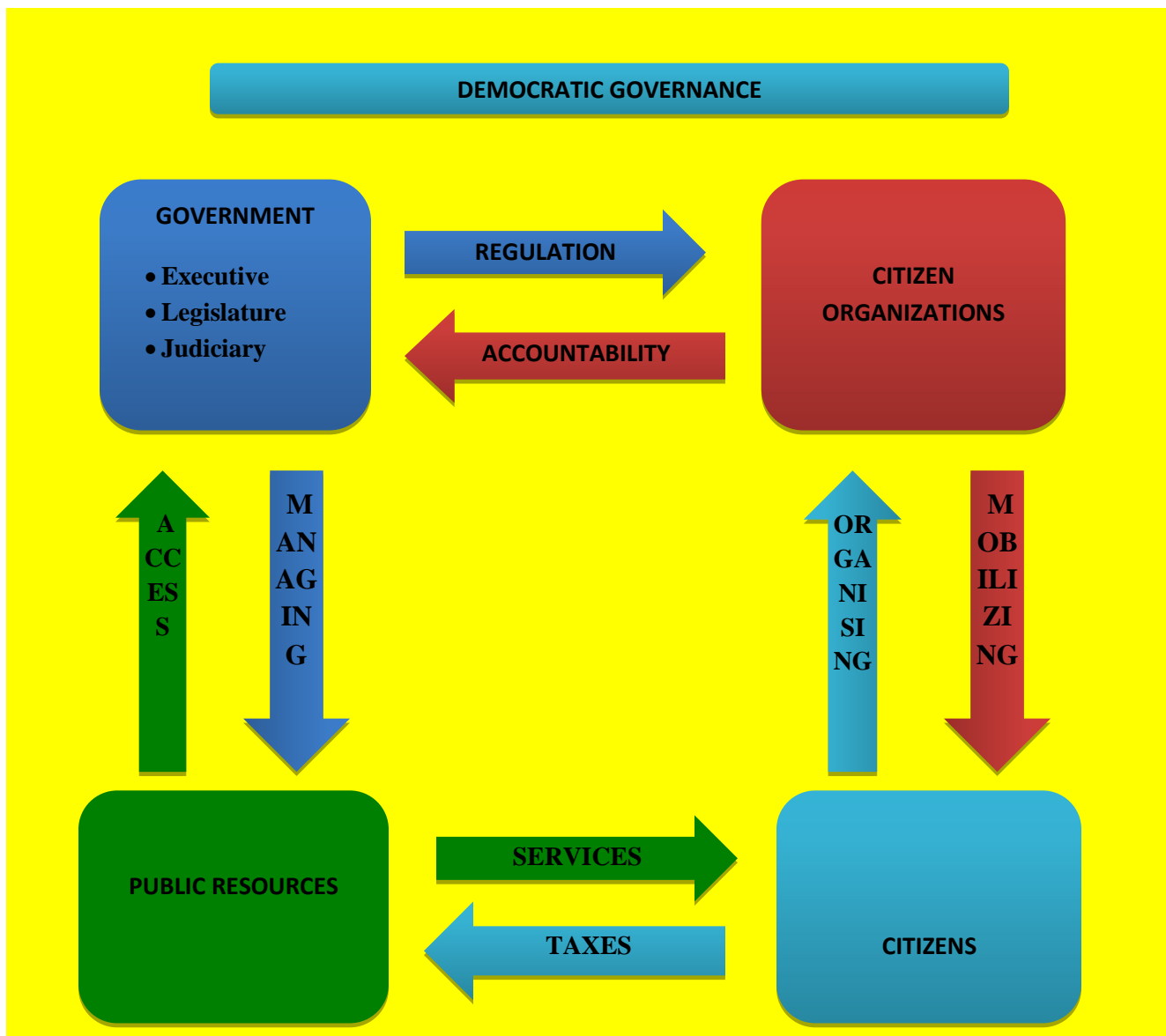
Democratic Governance Process: A Conceptual Model

Once a people have elected their representatives and therefore a government, then the business of Government is to govern according to Constitutional dictates, which secure the peace and prosperity of the people. The figure below is a model on the political governance process.

Note the four components of the process:

1. Government—constituted of the three arms: Legislature, Executive and Judiciary, which function through institutions and their leaders and workers, by set policies and laws. Governments have authority to mobilise and distribute public resources.
2. Public Resources—natural resources, tax revenues (direct and indirect), instruments of coercion, etc. These resources are to benefit the people, particularly as public good and services.
3. Citizens—in their diversities (age, gender, religion, region, ethnicity, race, social standing, etc.) have rights and responsibilities. They must fulfil their duty of paying taxes as well organising themselves to hold government accountable.
4. Citizen organisations – Economic, such as cooperatives; professional such as medical, teachers, lawyers, etc; Labour unions; religious, political (political parties, pressure groups, etc); and others. It is through these that citizens hold their governments accountable. Government's responsibility is to regulate.

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF HOW DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE SHOULD BE STRUCTURED



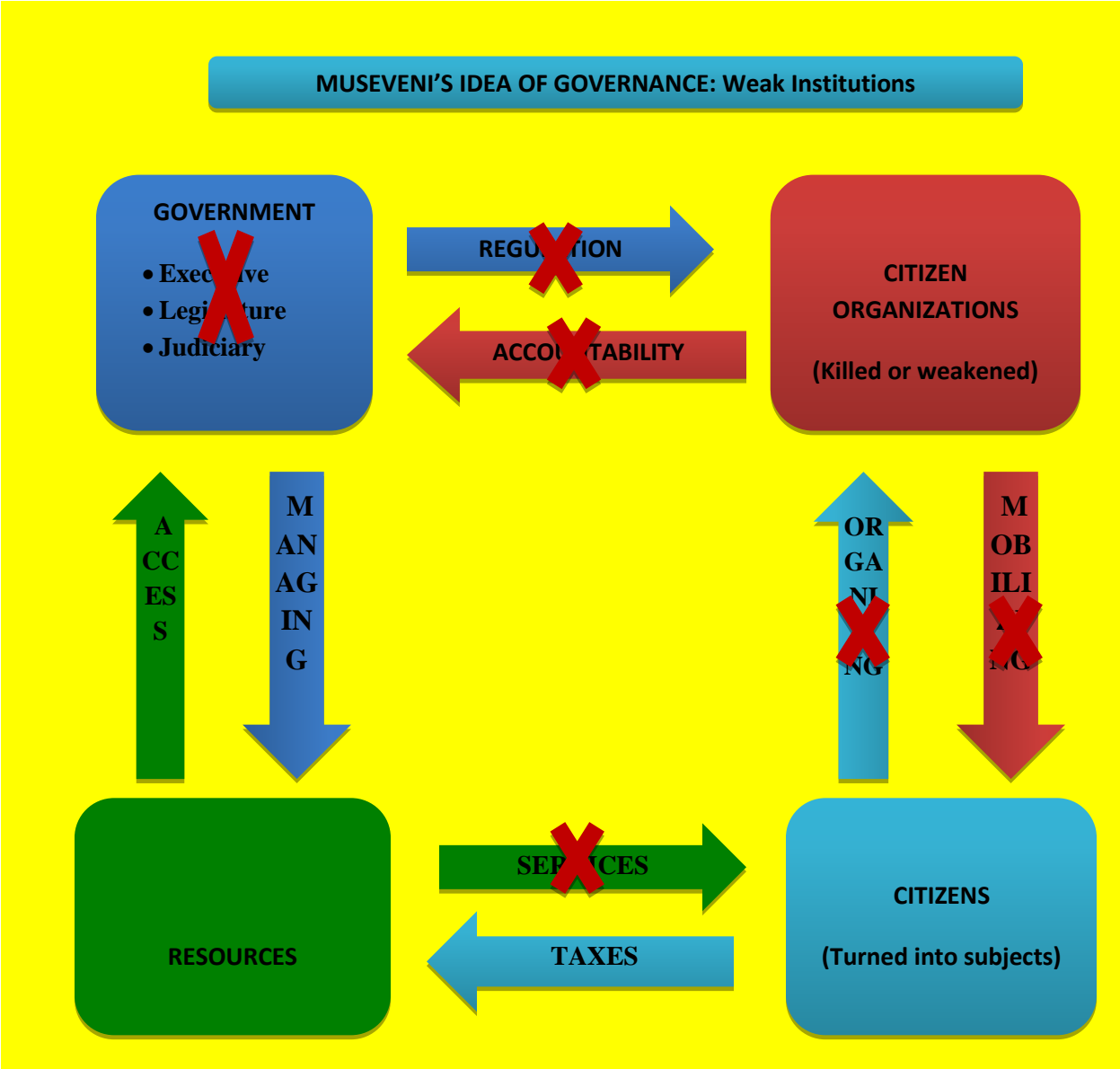
The reciprocal functions of each component are what makes politics work for the people. When any of the functions are curtailed, the political process fails. Ultimately, the judges that government is governing are the citizens. And it is not their views or opinions that we interrogate, but rather the quality of life judged on the basis of human development indicators. For example, citizens are obligated to pay taxes, contributing to the revenue base of government; government in turn must deliver services. Improved service delivery improves the quality of the life of the beneficiaries—the citizens. This is part of the social contract. Democracy dictates that governments that do not deliver services to the people cannot claim any credibility to the citizens.

Roots of the Governance Crisis

Looking at the ‘African Three-legged Stool’ Model, the question to ask is: Which of the three legs or pillars of democratic governance are failing? Which one of the three legs is deformed or broken or creating the un-evenness that has resulted in the well-being crisis of Ugandans.

It does not take long to conclude that the critical governance fault lines are in leadership. Institutions have failed because leadership has crippled them; the rule of law is quickly degenerating into the rule by law because those entrusted with authority to govern want the law of the ruler; and all the great policies are failing with distinction, because as soon as they are developed they are set aside. This is the clear message of *The Republic of Uganda: APRM Country Review Report No. 7*. There is a chasm between policy and implementation, because of lack of political will on the part of the political leadership, beginning with the highest office. Thus, Uganda’s governance challenge is corruption, arising from the corrupt leaders. Leadership is Uganda’s governance challenge; also leading to failures in social service delivery.

The governance process model helps us understand what leadership has done or failed to do—the ‘sins of commission and omission’. Below is what I have called Museveni’s idea of democratic governance’, but one could replace his name for previous leaders.



The essence of this is personal rule, or what the *APRM Country Review Report* called “neo-patrimonial rule”, characterised by authoritarianism, militarism and patronage. The Report warned:

After an extended period of political liberalisation, which resulted in the strengthening of Parliament, the judiciary, watchdog agencies such as the Inspector General of Government (IGG) and a free media, Uganda is in danger of slipping back into a period of neo-patrimonial rule. The apparent militarisation of society has not helped the democratic cause, while democratic gains from the decentralisation process are in serious danger of being eroded. The recent mushrooming of districts in the country has given impetus to the situation.¹⁰

¹⁰ *The Republic of Uganda: APRM Country Review Report No. 7 January 2009*, p 37.

The model above also helps us understand the second root of our governance crisis: **citizenship**. Not only have political leadership dis-empowered citizens, over time Ugandans have surrendered their rights and reneged their responsibilities and accepted to be ruled by the law, the ‘law of the ruler’. Citizens have been turned into subjects. Citizen organisations have either been killed, such as cooperative societies, or weakened and replaced with patronage networks. Even Religious institutions are co-opted. The so-called Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs) are the epitome of patronage networks, created by the regime as a way of buying loyalty.

Assessing Political Governance in Uganda @50

We have shown that assessing political governance should focus on the quality of life of the citizens. In other words, the performance of any government should be judged by the extent to which it delivers services to the people. The questions to pose here are: What is the quality of the life of Ugandans? What is the level of service delivery by government?

APRM Assessment

The APRM Country Review Report provides baseline information on the Uganda’s performance in the four APRM thematic areas of governance with clear recommendations on what needed to be done to plug the governance gaps. The four are: Democracy and Political Governance; Economic Governance and Management; Corporate Governance; and Socio-Economic Development. There was wide consensus that should Uganda implement the CRR recommendations with resoluteness, progress will be realised in rapid social-economic development, thereby improving the welfare of the people of Uganda.

What is sad, however, like many other crucial policy processes in Uganda, the political will to ensure full implementation of the recommendations of the CRR has been absent. Hence the critical recommendations, whose implementation required the will of political leadership at the highest level, have fallen through the cracks. Consequently, the challenges identified through the APRM process remain.

Ten cross-cutting critical areas were identified.¹¹ These were:

- The **ratification and domestication of international standards and codes**: Uganda has been lagging behind in signing, ratifying and domesticating key international codes and standards.
- The **high population growth rate** – that is unsustainable (currently the annual population growth rate is 3.2%), noting that “rapid population growth can affect both the overall quality of life and the degree of human suffering”.¹² Uganda has the “world’s youngest population,

¹¹ A full chapter is dedicated to discussing these issues. See *Republic of Uganda: APRM Country Review Report No. 7 January 2009*, pp. 281-301.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 283.

with more than half of its people (56 per cent) under the age of 18”.¹³ There is no doubt that any gains made in economic growth are negated by this factor.

- **Policy implementation gaps** –As the CRR noted that “at the crux of good governance is the effective implementation of all policies and programmes. In this way, the government’s relevance is validated and is able to fulfil the mandate given to it by the electorate”.¹⁴ Sadly, Uganda is a county of great policies and start-up institutions, but lacks in implementation and institution building. For example, the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) programmes are some of excellent policies that have collapsed due to poor implementation.
- **Managing political transition**—Since Independence, regime changes in Uganda have been violent. What is more, the transition from monolithic politics to pluralist politics (without reverting to ethnicity and tribalism) has been undermined by patronage, militarism and dominance of the executive. The controversial removal of the constitutional limit of the tenure of the President to two terms in 2005 was retrogressive and undermined Uganda’s fledgling democracy and the culture of constitutionalism.
- **The land Question**—this is a multifaceted issue touching on the roots of conflict all over Uganda. About 75% of the conflicts in Uganda are land related. The majority of Ugandans, of whom over 80% are based in rural areas depend on land. Although parliament enacted the Land Act 1998, which has undergone a number of amendments including that in 2010, this has not resolved the land question and land grabbing is a growing phenomenon.
- **Resolving the conflict in the Greater North**—the northern Uganda region experienced a conflict that dragged on for over twenty years, leading to over 1.8 million people internally displaced, with wider impact beyond the region. Although the guns are silent, there remain outstanding unresolved issues, in particular addressing extreme poverty in the region and redressing the social-economic inequality with other regions of the country.
- **Decentralisation**—there are concerns that the gains made in the first phases of decentralisation are being eroded by tendencies towards recentralisation and district proliferation. It is not an overstatement to argue that the notion of local government for effective service delivery has been hampered. The creation of more districts is part of patronage politics and impinges negatively on service delivery.
- **Managing diversity**—the challenge of managing horizontal and vertical diversities: economic, political, religious, ethnic, regional and tribal, leads to polarisation and huge social economic inequalities. The biggest challenge here is to address inequalities that continue to exist. The urgency for the full implementation of the Equal Opportunities Commission agenda cannot be over-emphasised.
- **Corruption**— At endemic and crisis levels, the vice of corruption has eroded the gains and progress being made. The CRR noted that the country loses more to corruption than it

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 285.

receives in international aid.¹⁵ An enviable anti-corruption policy, legal and institutional framework is important in effectively reducing corruption, which has become the modus operandi of the NRM government.

- **Overdependence on International Aid** for social economic development: Although government continues to point to the growing and significant percentage contribution of local revenue to the national budget, the most crucial social development sectors depend heavily on donor funding.

During the period 2009-2012, the National Governing Council recommended that two more be added to this list:

- **Management of Natural Resources** in particular the recently discovered **Oil and Gas in the Albertine Region**, noting that it was crucial that appropriate policy, legal and institutional mechanisms are in place to avoid the ‘oil curse’ scenario.
- **Regional Integration, with particular reference to the East African Community:** This is crucial, as the region opens unprecedented economic opportunities.

It is my contention that failure of government to give sufficient attention to the above critical areas is the reason for the continuing degraded life of Ugandans.

‘Wellbeing’ of Ugandans – ‘life on the edge’

I find the Luganda word for survival appropriate for describing the quality of life for the majority of Ugandans: *obukenke*, literally translated as ‘life on the edge’. The following are a few examples:

- We have noted that Uganda is a ‘child country’. Consider the state of Uganda’s children, and therefore the state of the majority of Ugandans: high malnutrition levels among children below 5 years – national average at around 40% (Kisoro District has highest at 51%); under the UPE program, the majority of the children have joined school, however, very few complete Primary 7 (completion rates have been dropping from 60% in 2004 to 38% in 2006)¹⁶ Currently at an average 25%; the many in school are not learning (schooling without learning!)¹⁷; and, the challenge of early marriages for young girls – the average marriage age in Uganda is 17 years¹⁸.
- The condition of Uganda’s women is also alarming: they marry as children and therefore very high maternal mortality rates (at 19 mothers per day!), resulting from among other reasons “deliveries outside health facilities (74 per cent); pregnancy among young mothers who are not

¹⁵ Ibid, p 298.

¹⁶ Ibid., p 249.

¹⁷ In a recently published Assessment report on Education by Uwezo, *Are our Children Learning? Annual Learning Assessment Report Uganda 2012*, it notes: “Only one out of every ten children assessed in Primary 3 was able to read a Primary 2 level story and correctly solve Primary 2 level numeracy questions up to division level”, p 10.

¹⁸ *The Republic of Uganda: APRM Country Review Report No. 7 January 2009*, p 241.

fully developed physically to handle child delivery; and poor quality of healthcare public facilities”¹⁹.

- As though it were not enough that Uganda has the youngest population in the world, at 83%, it has also the highest unemployment rate among the youth – a staggering 83%, according to the *Africa Development Indicators 2011*.

The above few examples are enough to show that the well being of Ugandans is indeed ‘living on the edge’ – *ku'bunkenke!* The numbers also do not give much hope in the immediate and medium term. The much touted Vision 2040, following after a number of false starts – such as Vision 2035, may not see the light of day unless some determined efforts are undertaken to plug the holes. So we asked, what went wrong? Why the crisis in democratic governance in Uganda @50?

Conclusion

The evidence that progress is being made in addressing the political governance crisis is the quality of the life of the people and not in political posturing. There is need for a civic-political agenda that puts top of the agenda uplifting the wellbeing of the people. This will be achieved with a determined and focussed two pronged agenda: rebuilding citizenship and renewing leadership.

Rebuilding citizenship is what will **build the demand side of governance**. It is crucial that we focus energies on mobilisation and organisation in order to generate a critical mass that will push for change toward democratic governance. The objective must be to recover citizenship and restore genuine citizen organisations. This is where the youth bulge of the population becomes a dividend, because the youth can easily be mobilised and organised. Women mobilisation and organising is also very crucial.

There is also a **need for a renewed leadership**. Ugandans must reject authoritarian and militaristic leadership. The kind of political (public) leaders who will transform political governance and deliver sustainable social-economic development exemplify the following qualities:

- **Character** in particular, humility (as opposed to pride and arrogance) and selflessness (as opposed to self-centredness and greed);
- **Convictions**: This has to do with the ideas, values and beliefs that inform personal choices, decisions and style of leadership;
- **Competence**: There must be evidence that the individual leader has had some positive influence on others prior to ascending the particular leadership office;
- **Courage**: This is grounded in the convictions that are held, and it is about boldness to stand, without fear or favour. This is especially crucial in the current autocratic leadership environment;
- **Candour**: This is the quality of truthfulness, forthrightness and honesty. Speaking and other forms of communication are primary to the task of political leadership. There is a big trust deficit in Uganda. What will restore trust are leaders who are truthful and honest in their communication.

¹⁹ Ibid, p 242-243.

- **Commitment:** This has to do with choice to stick to a cause in spite of any odds.
- **Consistency:** This has to do with the fact that a good public leader must have a track record of dependability and faithfulness;
- **Co-mission:** A good public leader is one who serves under the compulsion of the sense of mission; a mission that is bigger than the individual, derived out of a deep sense of calling (being sent).

Uganda deserves to have leaders that are endowed with the above characters. These are the leaders we should seek to be. And these are the leaders that will take Uganda forward.

Chapter 4

CORRUPTION AND GOVERNANCE IN UGANDA: The Role of Religion

Dr D Zac Niringiye

Introduction

Corruption in Uganda is a widespread vice in all sectors and is a subject of debate.¹ The vice is manifest in schools, government, hospitals, markets, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), religious institutions, and businesses. However, the practice in the country is that the citizens either applaud the corrupt, or simply fear to expose them. Others have resigned themselves, helpless under the weight of this monster.

The cancer of corruption has also infested the organs of the State—parliament, judiciary, Government ministries, departments and agencies.²

What is being debated is: Who is more corrupt than whom? Which government minister signed off fraud? What was the role of the President? Where are the Religious leaders? Have they also (religious leaders) been compromised?

This paper contributes to that debate, by focusing on the role of Religion generally and religious leaders in particular, in confronting the cancer of corruption in Uganda. It further discusses the interplay between religion and politics in the country's history. The paper also looks at the history of corruption in the country.

There have been calls from a wide spectrum of society, especially politicians that religious leaders should stay out of politics and keep religion in the 'spiritual sphere'. However, I argue that the evidence from all the sacred texts of any religious traditions affirm that it is precisely because the world is a spiritual sphere and humans are spiritual beings that we must discuss the place of Religion.

In this regard, two texts, one from the Old Testament and the other from the New Testament, suffice as examples:

A quotation from Prophet Jeremiah Chapter 22, against corrupt kings states:

¹ Uganda is listed as No. 1 in East Africa, in overall likelihood of bribery. See, Transparency International-Kenya, *The East African Bribery Index 2013*, p. 1. Uganda is also listed among the top 14 countries with the highest Bribery reporting, high than 50% See Also Transparency International, *Global Corruption Barometer 2013*, p. 10.

² Uganda is listed among the countries whose defence departments have corruption risk levels rated as 'very high and critical'. See Transparency International UK Defence and Security Programme, *Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index 2013*, p. 19.

³ *This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place....*

¹³ *“Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness,
his upper rooms by injustice,
making his own people work for nothing,
not paying them for their labor.*

¹⁴ *He says, ‘I will build myself a great palace
with spacious upper rooms.’
So he makes large windows in it,
panels it with cedar
and decorates it in red.*

¹⁵ *“Does it make you a king
to have more and more cedar?
Did not your father have food and drink?
He did what was right and just,
so all went well with him.*

¹⁶ *He defended the cause of the poor and needy,
and so all went well.*

*Is that not what it means to know me?”
declares the Lord.*

¹⁷ *“But your eyes and your heart
are set only on dishonest gain,
on shedding innocent blood
and on oppression and extortion.”*

Prophet Jeremiah’s words, a man of God speaking to ancient Israel powers, are relevant for Uganda today.

Another quotation from Matthew Chapter 6, words of Jesus to his disciples:

⁹ *“This, then, is how you should pray:*

*“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,*

¹⁰ *your kingdom come,
your will be done,*

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ *Give us today our daily bread.*

¹² *And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

¹³ *And lead us not into temptation,^[a]
but deliver us from the evil one.^[b]*

The above message is clear that the wish, prayer and indeed pre-occupation of a follower of Jesus is to see God's kingdom and will manifest in our world, in ways that include; provision for daily bread, and to continually plead for deliverance from the evil one, who is active also in the world.

The Roots of Corruption in Uganda

In order to interrogate the role of religion in this context, it is crucial to determine the roots of corruption in the country. Today, corruption may be likened to a cancer that is in the advanced phase (also known as the final stage of a 4 staged-diagnosis), when the cancerous cells have spread either to all the other vital organs or throughout the body—a stage, treatment is very difficult and does not have a high rate of success, and often involves surgery. It is in identifying the roots that we are able to ask whether religion has a role in incising the tumor!

It is crucial to attain the right diagnosis. It is important to distinguish roots from shoots; causes from symptoms; so that in proposing prospects we are addressing roots and shoots, causes and symptoms. Sadly, too many efforts are directed at the shoots and symptom.

According to anti-corruption watchdogs such as the Inspectorate of Government and Transparency International, the incidence of corruption in Uganda is multi-dimensional. However, the two;—bribery and embezzlement, capture in total the nature of corruption in the country.

(i) Bribery—The Anti-Corruption Act, 2009 defines bribery as the offering or granting, soliciting or accepting, directly or indirectly, something of value – “money or any gift, loan, fee, reward, commission, valuable security or other property or interest in property of any description, whether movable or immovable”³, for the purpose of influencing the action in favour of the giver.

(ii) Embezzlement—This is defined as the diversion or use by a public official, for purposes unrelated to those for which they were intended, for his or her own benefit or that of a third party, of any movable or immovable property, monies or securities belonging to the State, to an independent agency, or to an individual, which that official has received by virtue of his or her position for purposes of administration, custody or for other reasons⁴.

This is the act of wrongfully appropriating funds that have been entrusted into one's care—simply put, theft). The **Diversions of public resources**, according to the Act, is defined as involving “A person who converts, transfers or disposes of public funds for purposes unrelated to that for which the resources were intended, for his or her own benefit or for the benefit of a third party”⁵, is in my view part of embezzlement.

Bribery and theft of public resources are endemic, in both the public and private sector—schools, churches, private enterprise, NGOs, etc. All this has an impact on the delivery of services. The Black Monday Movement has documented and published in the Black Monday Newsletter various major corruption scandals in the country, which have resulted in a cumulative loss of around 5 trillion shillings

³ *Anti-Corruption Act 2009.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

in the last ten years⁶, with the attendant grave repercussions on service delivery: 40% of Uganda's children are stunted; completion rates at Primary level stand at 25%; youth un-employment rate stands at 83%; on the health side, about 300 people die daily due to Malaria, and 16 women also die daily because of maternal-related cases.

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Process outcomes reported documentary evidence indicating that “corruption is most rife in procurement, privatisation, administration of public expenditure and revenue, and the delivery of public services”⁷ and that the country loses more to corruption annually than it received from international aid.⁸ Furthermore it warned:

Corruption poses a serious development challenge and, in the political realm, it seriously undermines democracy and good governance. In elections and in legislative bodies, it reduces accountability and representation in policy making; and in the judiciary, it erodes the rule of law. Corruption undermines fair play, justice, equal opportunities, equity and non-discrimination, which are underlying principles of human rights.⁹

The same Report pointed out that, although there was a reputable legal and institutional framework,¹⁰ government failure in combating corruption is due to weak enforcement of the existing law and poor resourcing of Anti-Corruption government Agencies.¹¹

One would hope that with all this data and information, a government in power would do all that it takes to marshal political will to fight this vice—with the same resolve that was evident in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is on record that “President Museveni did what no other African president or leader had ever done before... and was the first major African leader to speak out publicly about the dangers of the pandemic. He mobilised his entire government to combat this threat... traversed the country, promoting abstinence among children and unmarried adults...”¹² The same approach should be adopted in combating corruption in the country. However, he shields and protects loyal political and civil service leaders who are implicated in corruption scandals.¹³ President Museveni has often blamed it on the lack of bankable evidence to cause conviction in the courts of law and a corrupt civil service.

It is safe to conclude that corruption is the modus operandi of the Museveni/NRM regime. The root problem of corruption is the governance crisis that Uganda is in, which problem spills from bad

⁶ Black Monday Newsletters may be accessed on <http://www.actionaid.org/cat/tags/black-monday> (Accessed August 2014).

⁷ *Republic of Uganda: APRM Country Review Report No. 7 January 2009*, p. lxii.

⁸ *Ibid*, p 298.

⁹ *Ibid*, p 298.

¹⁰ Among the laws are: The Whistle Blower's Act 2010; The Audit Act 2009; Access to Information Act 2009; and the Anti-Corruption Act 2009. The institutions include: The Inspectorate of Government (IG); the Ministry of Ethics and Integrity in the President's Office; the Anti-Corruption Court, the Office of the Auditor General.

¹¹ See *APRM Country Review Report*, op.cit. p. 299; *The East African Bribery Index 2013*, op.cit, p. 44.

¹² *APRM Country Review Report*, op.cit, p. 257.

¹³ The President defended the former Permanent Secretary, who is the accounting officer in the Office of the Prime Minister, Mr. Pius Bigirimana, as a 'whistle blower', in the highly publicized corruption scandal where more than 50 billion shillings from Donors meant for the war ravaged Northern Uganda was stolen. See <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/OPM-scam--Museveni-explains-why-he-stood-by-Bigirimana/-/688334/2418294/-/12kb68/-/index.html> (Accessed August 2014). However, he was transferred to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Community Development in the same position.

leadership. Considering the three pillars of governance: leadership, institutions, and, legal/policy framework (the African three-legged stool), there is no contention that the crisis lies in leadership. In young and emerging states, leadership is the more defining element. Leadership is *a priori*. Good leaders recognise the place and value of strong institutions and make building institutions a priority. Good leaders are accountable and therefore work to develop institutions and ensure that policies, processes and mechanisms to deliver development for the people are implemented. President Museveni put it well, in examining the problem of corruption in Uganda, in 2000:

The major problem in this country is that the guardians themselves have to be guarded. We require, at all levels, a leadership that has the moral authority to lead. The leadership cannot have that authority if they are themselves tainted with corruption. I condemn corruption in all its forms and I wish to emphasize here that corruption can only disappear if the leaders are themselves clean. Only then can they exercise that moral authority, and only then will corruption be stamped out...in the name of our revolution, therefore, I beg our leaders to change their ways.¹⁴

Uganda's corruption crisis is a symptom of bad leadership. Uganda's is reputed for its good laws and policies, and its institutional framework is envy on the continent of Africa. However, its failure to implement programmes is also endemic. As already pointed out, these failures are not due to lack of institutions or appropriate policies and laws. It is those entrusted with authority to implement policies and laws, who run those institutions that have crippled implementation. The root problem of corruption in Uganda are leaders: corrupt, thieving political leaders and technocrats. Indeed the problem is "the guardians themselves have to be guarded". A corrupt society is a symptom of corrupt leadership. Part of the function of leadership is creating and shaping culture.

The primary challenge for Uganda is leaders who are not accountable. The critical character trait of public leadership is accountability. Accountability is the basis of the social contract between the public leaders and the people. Leaders deliver their mandates, for the prosperity of society, when they adhere to set laws and policies that govern how institutions function. The reason therefore for the staggering levels of theft and bribery is public leaders—those entrusted to manage public resources. What continues to fuel corruption is a syndicate between political leaders and the technocrats—civil servants.

The impunity with which our leaders flout established laws, policies and bypass institutions is beyond comprehension. Sadly, this is true at every level, led by President Museveni. It is called patronage. Again, the evidence is overwhelming the way President Museveni derogates the Constitution, laws, policies and institutions. The bloated State House and Defence expenditure gives credence to this fact. The APRM Uganda Country Review Report warned that Uganda was "in danger of slipping back into a period of neo-patrimonial rule" with the apparent militarisation of society and the proliferation of districts in the country.¹⁵ Indeed, the warning raised in the report has come to reality.

While the immediate casualty of corrupt and un-accountable leadership is service delivery, the long term impact is on citizenship. Patronage kills citizenship; citizens are turned into subjects; both the assertion rights and the exercise of responsibility die. Hence the current state of Ugandan citizenry: fear, apathy and slumber.

¹⁴ Yoweri K. Museveni, 'Was It a Fundamental Change?' in *What Is Africa's Problem?* Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

¹⁵ *APRM Country Review Report*, op.cit, p. 37.

The Role of Religion

There are two critical questions to consider in discussing the role of religion:

- (i) Where was religion when Uganda's political leadership was decaying?
- (ii) What should be the role of religion in combating corrupt leadership?

In answering the first question, religious leadership in Uganda became co-opted in the political patronage network. Religion was used by both religious and political leaders as a tool for negotiating power and creating patronage. Religious identity became a tool for greedy politicians for buying loyalty and subjugation of the masses. Hence, many religious leaders, instead of speaking out like Jeremiah, they capitulated to the corrupt political leadership.

In answering the second, there is no doubt that religious leadership should play a Jeremiah role, and therefore contribute to addressing the cancer of corruption in Uganda. Religious leaders should be at the forefront of advocating and promoting accountable leadership as well as modelling it.

As community leaders, they have a critical role to play in mobilising the people for this cause. Firstly, efforts must be directed toward assaulting the continuing theft in government; secondly, efforts must be directed at resuscitating citizenship, by mobilising the people to take appropriate action against corruption; and thirdly, efforts need to be directed to revamping political leadership for the country. The first focuses on the need to halt the haemorrhage of public resources and provide services to Ugandans; the second focuses on building the demand side of governance—the need for citizen's agency. Citizens must reclaim their place. And the third focuses on the political process of transition—the process of building consensus on the future that we want: a country and a people with dignity; and, opportunity for all. One of the most daunting political challenges that Uganda faces is the transitioning from Museveni's rule of close to 30 years. Religious leaders, acting as the custodians on the morality of society, can summon the country to "never again a violent transition" agenda.

Chapter 5

A UNIVERSITY AS A GROUND FOR ACADEMIC AND INTELLECTUAL EXCHANGE AS WELL AS AN AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Dr Maximiano Ngabirano

Introduction

Reflection on the nature of universities in Uganda, regarding scholarship and social engagement provokes a number of questions. These questions range from scholars' (students and staff) place in society and the role of university itself in society. What meets the ordinary eye, in our contextual society and university bodies, is a university dedicated to teaching, with a number of lecturers moonlighting from one university to the other,¹ lecturers involved or yearning for winning consultancies, with little or no time for research, strong devotion to personal welfare and insufficient devotion to academics, community outreach and concern for the good of social and political life. A university has thus been rendered as a place where personal concerns, for both staff and students, take lead. These concerns are largely on their welfare. It becomes even worse at the different campuses that universities are opening in different towns. Consequently, there is decline on academics, the atmosphere of intellectual activity in some universities is non-existent and much less to the concerns in the social problems. Critical intellectual exchange, according to Terry Eagleton , has shifted outside the university walls to journalists and artists.² It is the latter who are landed with the unenviable role of acting as the custodians of human values in a social order, turning those values in theory and flouting them in practice.³ The universities voice is not heard.

The above mentioned changes have taken university life in Uganda by storm and raise a number of questions. Most of the questions that arise lead one to wonder whether a university in a liberalized higher education can still be called academic, or a university can still be referred to as a place with an intellectual culture or if a university can still be an agent of social change. My argument on this is that a university by its nature is an agent not only for generating and expounding knowledge, or a place where fascination through debates, papers, books, poems, drama, science shows, medical innovations, music and with ideas is to be found, or a place where training of human resource and skill development is done, but also a place

¹Kasozi A. B. K. (2003) "University Education in Uganda: Challenges and Opportunities for Reform", *Fountain Series in Education Studies*, Fountain Publishers, Kampala

² Egleton Terry (2008), *Death of the Intellectual*, retrieved from <http://www.redpepper.or.uk/death-of-the-intellectual/>.

³ Ibid.

where the good of society both politically and socially is generated and enforced. My argument is however not new. In the 19th Century, John Henry Newman had already hinted on the role of a university in society. He calls a university “a community of thinkers, engaging in intellectual pursuits not for any external purpose, but as an end in itself”.⁴ Newman envisioned a broad and liberal education which exhorts students to think and to reason, to compare and to discriminate, to analyze not with narrow minds born of narrow specialisation but with a solid grounding in all areas of study mandated to serve the common good and to achieve what is required in order to be well prepared agents of social change. His argument has since died out in our old university, Makerere, and in upcoming universities which have been taken up with teaching and earning a salary and allowances. In our current context, academic and intellectual engagement is not even a dream, while being agents of social transformation is none of any ones concern. To Kasozi, a university as a thinking community for the nation and social systems is long gone.⁵ Intellectual leadership literature are foreign to many universities and worse so in the upcoming institutions.

Where is the Academic and Where is the Intellectual?

Terry Eagleton helps us to understand an academic culture where academics spend their lives researching momentous questions (how many souls can dance on the nose of the needle). Currently, there is an ongoing study in Russia on the effect of microgravity on sexual behavior. Five geckos are in space for a study of the effect of weightlessness on their sex lives and development. This is an academic inquiry. Intellectuals on the other hand, Eagleton adds, have an “arduous job of bringing ideas to bear on society as a whole while universities are places where both academics and intellectuals are to be found in considerable numbers”.⁶ He believes that this is long dead. In a live university, academics and intellectuals get involved in exiting thinking at both main campuses and their affiliated campuses. In the case where rhetorically a university has re-designed its focus and placed research on its top priority, what is expected is to see a vibrant engagement. However, it would not be an over statement to say that we do not have a vibrant and militant young brand of academics, intellectuals and social movers at our universities.

We are operating in a mess of campuses without a research culture,⁷ without an intellectual engagement,⁸ but campuses that use notes from foreign researchers. We are operating in a mess where lecturers are

⁴ Newman, J. (1996), *Originally Published in 1852, this reference is taken from The Idea of a University* London: Yale University Press.

⁵ Kasozi, A. B. K. (2006), The State of Higher Education 2005: Executive Summary. *The Uganda Higher Education Review* 3 (1): 3-5.

⁶ Eagleton, op. cit.

⁷ Namuddu Catherine (1983), “Educational Research Capacity and Environment in Uganda: 1970 -81”, in Shaeffers

critical of students' poor researched work when their own researches are nonexistent.⁹ In addition, at our campuses, what we have is what *Jonathan Jansen* looked at as "people appointed at senior levels of leadership who are ignorant of the purposes of the university and the threats to it".¹⁰ He adds that what we have is a university that has descended into endless confrontations between rival factions over all kinds of nonsense (the indecent salary of a vice-chancellor, the constant fight over leadership positions, the sleeping patterns of a lecturer, *et cetera*) that absolutely have nothing to do with the academic project.

Jansen further still observes that what we have is that young generation of academic staff has been taken up "in the economies of the state, juggling around consultancies, money making ventures and a university is reduced to a degree machine and diploma mill".¹¹ A generation of money making in addition of the product of the intakes at our campuses affects the activity of the university.¹² The toll is that public confidence in academics is dropping as the general public begins to understand that primary education, through its mismanaged Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme¹³ and in a similar mismanaged Universal Secondary Education (USE) programme, have reduced students' capacity to read, comprehend, reason as well as have general knowledge as it used to be the case. All this is happening at the cost of higher education. This is compounded by government failing to fund higher education. As a result, private universities, some of which are not-for profit and others with profit motives come into play that we begin to see the cost of education rising much faster than inflation, students being asked to pay considerably more and get considerably less. As the concern of costs join with the growing concern about quality, the University must soon face a major crisis of public confidence.

There is need to interrogate whether liberalised third world societies have spearheaded Universities in developing academic cultures, intellectual exchanges, understanding and thinking critically about the social, political, economic, and cultural dynamics transforming the world. This is because intellectuals and universities can only change the world which they understand.¹⁴ Research creates and feeds knowledge; it propels intellectualism and creates a vibrant academic and intellectual class badly needed

& J. A. Nkinyangi, *Educational Research Environment in the Developing World*, Ottawa IDRC.

⁸ Namuddu, op. cit.

⁹ Mahmood Mamdani (2008), *Scholars in the Marketplace, The dilemmas of neo-liberal reform at Makerere University 1989-2005*.

¹⁰ Jonathan Jansen (2014), *The slow death of the intellect: A culture of inquiry and debate must be resurrected at all universities*, retrieved from <http://mg.co.za/article/2010-08-27-the-slow-death-of-intellect>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Mahmood, op. cit.

¹³ Ngabirano Maximiano, "Cultural Issues Affecting the School Drop-Out Rate among Rural Boys in Uganda" in Jacques Zeelen et al. *The Burden of Education Exclusion: Understanding and Challenging Early School Leaving in Africa*, Sense Publishers, Rotterdam, (2010), 175-192; Kasozi A. B. K. (2002) "The Role of the State in Addressing Challenges and Opportunities posed by the Rapid Growth of Universities in Uganda". *African Studies Review*, vol. 45, No. 2. Special Issue: African Universities in Crisis and the Promotion of a Democratic Culture, (123-139).

¹⁴ Namuddu, op. cit; Tibenderana P. K. (2012), *Modernisation of University Education in Uganda: Prescription for Progress*, Makerere University Printery.

by a university.¹⁵ Just like journalists and artists, academics and intellectuals can be militant to defend individual freedoms and civil liberties.

The Academic, Intellectual and Social Change in History

Deep research and informed thinking have been drivers in Institutions of higher learning in effecting social and political changes in the world.¹⁶ Beginning with the medieval period, students of the University of Paris in 1229, through what they referred to as the "[town and gown](#)" power struggles. The intellectual thinking led to a number of reforms of the [medieval university](#) and the French society where the patronage of the Church in the French society was broken by student protests.¹⁷ The brutal response of the police, which affected innocent bystanders as well as the rioting students, won the student movement broad popular support. Within weeks, the protests had escalated and gained more popular support in huge protests against repression. Students' power was able to pull doctors, lawyers, shop-workers and administrators to join the general strike and staged protests at their own occupations of work places. This led the government to announce that there would be new legislative measures to attend to the demands of protesters.

Similar situations happened among university students in Germany in 1815 where a student union concentrated on national and democratic ideas. In 1817, inspired by liberal and patriotic ideas of a united Germany, student organisations led protests to eventual [revolutions in the country's states in 1848](#). [Madison Grant](#) shows that the revolution stressed [pan-Germanism](#), and emphasised popular discontent with the traditional, largely autocratic political structure of the thirty-nine [independent states](#) of the Confederation that inherited the German territory of the former [Holy Roman Empire](#).¹⁸ For Priscilla Robertson, the revolution demonstrated the popular desire for increased [political freedom](#), liberal state policies, democracy, [nationalism](#), and freedom from censorship.¹⁹ Although the student power failed to unify Germany, it led to the Frankfurt National Assembly which finally was able to take up the issue of a German constitution.

¹⁵ Kasozi A. B. K. (2003) "University Education in Uganda: Challenges and Opportunities for Reform", *Fountain Series in Education Studies*, Fountain Publishers, Kampala.

¹⁶ Rositsa Bateson & John Taylor (2004), Student Involvement in University Life — Beyond Political Activism and University Governance: a view from Central and Eastern Europe, *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2004, Blackwell Publishing Ltd 2004.

¹⁷ Brad E. Lucas (2006), *Radicals, Rhetoric, and the War: The University of Nevada in the Wake of Kent State*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

¹⁸ [Madison Grant](#), (2004) *The Conquest of a Continent*, Liberty Bell Publications

¹⁹ Priscilla Robertson (1952), *Revolutions Of 1848 A Social History*, [Princeton University Press](#)

In the 1960s, the worldwide uprising in student and youth radicalism manifested itself through the [German student movement](#) and organisations such as the [German Socialist Student Union](#). The movement in Germany shared many concerns of similar groups elsewhere, such as the democratization of society and opposing the [Vietnam War](#), but also stressed more nationally specific issues such as coming to terms with the legacy of the [Nazi](#) regime and opposing the German Emergency Acts. Students' uprising is marked as part of the Germany success against the Nazi regime.

In Belgium, it was no different in 1968. Belgium was the only country in Western Europe where the student protest movement brought the government to its knees. That says something about the power of the Leuven student movement. Students' through-thought-lead activism took a lead in social change²⁰ against the oppressive systems that divided the country against the French speaking South and Flemish speaking North. The protesters called for equality among the two groups. Even at its Theology faculty, student and staff used academic debates to usher in winds of change. Latin American students of the faculty began debates and intellectual engagements that led to Liberation theology. This began a string of changes in the body theological and in the most conservative church, the Catholic Church. The Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* of Pope Paul VI of 1969 with its stance on option for the poor and the call on the rich nations to share and help poor nations was a result of this academic and intellectual protest. This is intellectualism at its best; well focused, weighed and debated.

Cohen Robert, searching for student power in Britain, finds that it was not until the 1960s that student activism became important in British universities.²¹ Like many other countries, the Vietnam War and issues of racism became a focus for many other local frustrations, such as fees and student representation. In 1962, the first student protest against the Vietnam War was held.²² The 1960s also saw the first student teach-in at Oxford, where students debated alternative non-violent means of protest and protests at the [London School of Economics](#) against the government of [Ian Smith](#) in [Rhodesia](#).

During communist rule, Tőkés L. Rudolf asserts that students in [Eastern Europe](#) were a strong force behind several of the best-known instances of protests.²³ Tőkés gives the example of a chain of events leading to the [1956 Hungarian Revolution](#) that was started by peaceful student demonstrations in the streets of [Budapest](#), later attracting workers and other Hungarians. Tőkés further gives the example of [Czechoslovakia](#), which experienced one of the most known faces of protests following the [Soviet](#)-led invasion that ended the [Prague Spring](#). This protest was started by [Jan Palach](#), a student who committed

²⁰ Astin, A., et al. (1975). *The Power of Protest*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

²¹ Cohen, Robert. (1993), "When the old left was young." New York: Oxford University Press.

²² Ibid.

²³ Tőkés, Rudolf L. (1998). *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution: Economic Reform, Social Change and Political Succession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[suicide](#) by setting himself on fire on January 16, 1969. The act triggered a major protest against the occupation first led by students.

Student-dominated youth movements have also played a central role in the "[color revolutions](#)" seen in post-communist societies in recent years. Olena Nikolayenko narrates at length how the [Serbian Otpor](#) ("Resistance" in [Serbian](#)), formed in October 1998 by university youth as a response to repressive university and media laws that were introduced that year.²⁴ In the presidential campaign in September 2000, the organisation engineered the "Gotov je" ("He's finished") campaign that galvanized Serbian discontent with [Slobodan Milošević](#), ultimately resulting in his defeat.²⁵

American society saw an increase in student activism again in the 1990s with the ushering in of the [neoliberal community service](#) policies of [Bill Clinton](#). The popular education reform movement has led to a resurgence of [populist](#) student activism against standardized testing and teaching, as well as more complex issues including military/industrial/prison complex and the influence of the military and corporations in education. There is also increased emphasis on ensuring that changes that are made are sustainable, by pushing for better education funding and policy or leadership changes that engage students as decision-makers in schools. Major contemporary campaigns include work for funding of [public schools](#), against increased tuitions at colleges.

This explains that academic work, followed by intellectualism have spearheaded student activism. These happening began on campus, were reflected on and acted to bring the change that people want. Felt experience is a very important part in change and development. This is so because all of the critical activities share a certain characteristic seriousness and energy; they act together to provoke people's curiosity about the world, to draw them into disciplined thought and discussion, and [thus](#) to create an *environment* of collective reflection. This has worked in history and today's society is losing out on this.

These are part of the success stories, however, there are other stories where students have been suppressed like China, and other autocratic societies and the human rights in those societies leave a lot to be desired. If a state is led by thugs, abusers of human rights, or self-seekers, it is highly likely that anything can happen. However, the Arab uprising of this century and decade can still give us strong lessons.

²⁴ Olena Nikolayenko (2012); "Origins of the movement's strategy: The case of the Serbian youth movement Otpor", Sage publications, *International Political Science Review*, 34(2) 140–158.

²⁵ Bunce V and Wolchik S (2011) *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

The African Story

At the inception of universities in Nigeria, Uganda and elsewhere in Africa beginning with 1930 to 1940s, Pan African ideals were major academic, intellectual and activism activities at the young campuses. This culture formed a brand of African leaders. Academic and intellectualism of the time gave birth to nationalists ideas borrowed from intellectuals of African descent, France's Caribbean and African colonies.²⁶ Léopold Senghor, who propounded nationalism and pan-Africanism together with students from the Caribbean in university of Paris in 1933, is a product of this intellectual culture.²⁷ The pan-Africanists key idea was that all Africans, whether in exile or at home, shared an 'African personality'. In essence they began a Pan-African movement which became an argument for African nationalism that was peculiar to the French colonial context.²⁸ When its leaders eventually took power in an independent state, as Senghor did in Senegal in 1960, they held power on behalf of a Westernized, pro-French élite. Most prominent among the critics of *négritude* was the writer, Frantz Fanon, who put his own Pan-Africanism on the line by joining the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria. These ideas of shaping Africa were all created and nurtured in Universities.

Nationalist ideas were again groomed by Universities and brought to personalities like Kwame Nkrumah who soon became the voice and organizing force not only of Pan-Africanism but also nationalistic ideas.²⁹ His time as a student in America showed him how a “Western country which stood untainted by territorial colonialism in Africa”³⁰ but gaining a lot from the African colonies in addition to adding confusion and conflicts. It is this fascination to which the world he understood that led him in the late 1940s and 1950s to promote the idea of an independent West African Federation, seen as the first step towards a United States of Africa. When, he became a leader of the newly independent state of Ghana in March 1957, one of his first thoughts was to use his new position to help other Africans transcend the old colonial boundaries and work towards uniting the continent.

At the university of Yaoundé Cameroon, Piet Konings believes that the struggle for political liberalization that started at the end of the 1980s unleashed an unprecedented wave of student rebellion on university campuses in West and Central Africa.³¹ University students were often at the forefront of these struggles, sometimes with the support of secondary school students, their teachers, and other socio-professional

²⁶ Thompson, Peter, *Négritude and Changing Africa: An Update*, in *Research in African Literatures*, Winter, 2002.

²⁷ Gary Wilder (2005), *The French Imperial Nation-State: Négritude & Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars*, University of Chicago Press.

²⁸ Thompson, op. cit.

²⁹ Felix Kumah-Abiwu (2013), Rethinking the Ideas of Pan-Africanism and African Unity: A Theoretical Perspective of Kwame Nkrumah's Leadership Traits and Decision Making *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.6, no.6.

³⁰ Nkrumah, Kwame.1965. *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization and*, p.1.

³¹ Piet Konings, “University Students' Revolt, Ethnic Militia, and Violence during Political Liberalization in Cameroon”, *African Studies Review*, Volume 45, Number 2 (September 2002), pp. 179-204.

groups. The reasons for their widespread revolt seem to be similar. Political liberalization allowed space for students to voice their longstanding grievances about the deteriorating living and study conditions at most African universities. The lack of basic infrastructure needed to cope with the massive growth in the student population since independence resulted in rapidly falling academic standards. The severe economic crisis and subsequent Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) aggravated the situation with an increasing withdrawal of state support for universities, university students, and university graduates.³² Governments were compelled to make further cuts in university budgets to request that students pay tuition fees and additionally levies, and to virtually stop recruiting new graduates into already oversized state bureaucracies. Some were politically motivated, but most were prompted by the students' frequent worries about *bourse et bouffe* (grants and food), especially the quality and quantity of food and the number, amount, and timely payment of scholarships.

Uganda's Share

Higher education in Uganda is counted among the old in the sub-Saharan region. Beginning with Katigondo Major Seminary in 1911, followed by Makerere Technical College in 1922, transitioning into the University of East Africa in 1952. Uganda does not have remarkable distinguished academic novelty as has been in most countries of the world. It is not until late 1960s that most academic engagements are seen involving Mahmood Mamdan, Ali Mazrui and others. The early contributions in the academic world was in art and literature, with prominent scholars like Ngugi wa Thiong, Oki Sanyal and others who engaged scholarship in the context of nationalism and independence. John Stephen Mbiti also engaged vigorously in positioning African religion and philosophy in a context where western philosophy and religion were posing threats to African way of life. A simple realization is that very few Ugandans were imbued in serious scholarship at Makerere, while Katigondo has up to now remained at the periphery in academic endeavors except its graduates who have made significant academic contributions outside the seminary walls.

A report of the visitation Committee to Makerere University in 1970 envisaged Makerere University to be part and parcel of the Uganda nation. It posts Makerere to identify with the aims of the Ugandan society and meeting the goals of society. The report, in a way holds that a university in Uganda must not hold itself as a disinterested observer of society, but must throw in its lot with aspirations of society. It is from this understanding that a university in Uganda is expected to be a full participant and social actor in Ugandan society.

³² Albert, I. (1995), "University Students and the Politics of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria." In T. Mkandawire and A. Olukoshi, eds., *Between Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa*, 374-92. Dakar: CODESRIA; Federici, S. (2000), "The New African Student Movement." In C. B. Mwara, S. Federici, and J. McLaren, eds., *African Visions: Literary Images, Political Change and Social Struggle in Contemporary Africa*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press (49-66).

From that standpoint, Fredrick Byaruhanga distinguishes three types of activism at Makerere: "welfare-related," ideological, and "survival."³³ The first significant protest in 1952 was a boycott of the dining halls in a demand for better food. This is a concern for student "welfare". It was a conflict that erupted over the seemingly issue of the quality of food. Ideology-inspired protests began in the late 1950s with Kikuyu students who identified with the Mau Mau movement in Kenya because of their dissatisfaction with the British colonial rule. Although the protests were not at the campus but in secret places in the outskirts of Kampala, the kind of thinking was ideologically recommendable and a precursor to the later protests.³⁴ The dissatisfaction by the Kikuyu influenced protests in the 1960s as students demonstrated against American bombing in northwestern Uganda (a spill-over from conflict in Congo) and the hanging of three African nationalists by the Smith government in Rhodesia. A decade later, in 1976, students plotted, bravely but unsuccessfully, to overthrow the Amin government.

Byaruhanga continues to show that "survival" demonstrations, increasingly frequent from the early 1980s to the present, are a post-Amin version of the earlier "welfare" protests, with two differences.³⁵ First, student leaders have emphasized the principle of self-determination. Second, both the student demonstrations and the ensuing government repression have been characterized by serious violence. This process of "institutional liberalization" has been highly resented by the students in their pursuit of upward mobility. Comparing themselves with the preceding generations who could count on getting government jobs because of their degrees, students were seeing themselves as an "abandoned" or "lost" generation.³⁶ In December 1990, the Student Guild spearheaded a rejection of a Guild constitution imposed by the Ministry of Education. Even though they forwarded a host of economic "survival" issues such as the abolition of allowances for books, transportation, and stationery, the protests were also connected with the government's costly pursuit of the war in the north and its tolerance of corruption. The government sent police to campus just as students were discussing calling off the strike. The police shot two students to death, and the university was closed. The student leaders through history have learned to take power from repressive authorities and use it to make Makerere University—and other universities that they would influence more responsive to students and to society.

New challenges have emerged in form of private funded university education and the introduction of tuition fees in public universities, parallel to the emerging view of strengthening private higher education

³³ Byaruhanga Frederick Kamuhanda (2006), "Student Power in Africa's Higher Education: A Case of Makerere University". *History, Politics, Economics and Culture Series*. New York and London: Routledge.

³⁴ Jean de Bunsen (1995), *Adventures in Education*, Titus Wilson, Kendel.

³⁵ Byaruhanga, op. cit.

³⁶ Kukunda Elizabeth Bacwayo (2010), Private Higher Education in Uganda: Implications for Equity, Access, Knowledge Creation and Research, in Kassahun Berhanu et al (eds.). *Reshaping Research Universities in the Nile Basin Countries*, Fountain Publishers, Kampala.

sector.³⁷ This in a way has changed the traditional relationship between the university, the student, and society since most students think much of their survival and how to make ends meet while at university.³⁸ Rositsa Bateson and John Taylor have observed that a growing number of paying students covering the cost of their (publicly funded) education in part or in full or in private higher education sector in the region has strongly influenced the willingness of students to pay more for a different kind of experience which better meets their needs and expectations.³⁹

Although this choice offers innovation, educational choice, new instructional paradigms and higher education services, it also has serious consequences to the idea of a university as such: It has led to the degeneration of the universities. They have turned in-ward to students' survival. It is therefore not a surprise to notice a shift over time; from Pan Africanism, to nationalism and now to individualism. The thinking today for professors is on salaries, not intellectualism or fascination of ideas. Students are on food and allowances. And as such, universities have produced the leaders we see; corrupt, insensitive of societal needs, and easily compromised. One should therefore not wonder if university students see corrupt and authoritarian regimes as responsible for their predicament and to perceive a "democratic transition" as a necessary precondition for change in society in general and in universities in particular.

Conclusion

I conclude by proposing what Oliver once proposed: "an institutional audit to inform us whether we either remain stark with the old organizational practice by defying institutional pressure or actively adopting a new one".⁴⁰ That is, we remain with the taken-for-granted cognitive schemas and inter-subjectively shared academic and intellectual cultural norms⁴¹ which we are today lamenting, or we take exceptions and carry out institutional change in which is a current dominant institutional model, supported by a group of actors with vested interests in it. The contestation is either we remain with the current norm or we go into what a university is supposed to be; that is academic, intellectual and social movers.

We could also think of remaining with the recent alternative at Uganda Martyrs University where academic life and intellectualism is regulated and controlled by the Finance Office, where the Budget

³⁷ Tibenderana, op. cit.

³⁸ Bakkabulindi E. K. Fred (2006), "Financing Higher Education in Uganda", *Nkumba University Educational Journal*, Vol. 1 March 2006 (42-59).

³⁹ Bateson & Taylor, op. cit.

⁴⁰ Oliver, C. 1991. Strategic responses to institutional processes. *Academy of Management Review*, 16: 145-179. See also, Oliver, C. 1992. The antecedents of deinstitutionalization. *Organization Studies*, 13: 563-588.

⁴¹ R. Keith Sawye (2011), The Western Cultural Model of Creativity: Its Influence on Intellectual Property Law Notre Dame Law Review 86 (5) Symposium: Creativity and the Law 2027-2056.
<http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1099&context=ndlr>

Office regulates what takes place in the academic arena and intellectual sphere. The invention of Uganda Martyrs University will be the end of the academic and intellectual life at our campuses. This definitely means that the proponents of change must be ready for conflicts among groups of actors who have different sets of interests at both university campuses and the broader Ugandan society. We must be ready to face the internal conflicts which must get rid of managers who do not know what a university is all about, those who are only occupying jobs and bring in a brand of personnel imbued with what a university does and what it ought to do. As we speak of social change, the larger society most especially the political arena may also need to have an academic population that sings its successes.⁴² For example in Rwanda, before the genocide, the National University of Rwanda supported the ruling party and up to now academia is less critical of the political status quo.

Secondly, students need information from their first entry to university about existing programmes and activities, how to organise themselves, promulgate student initiatives, what their limits are, and who to help them with the practical arrangements. There is need for a paradigm shift; the numerous student activities should incorporate information gathering through research and distribution through intellectual activities which are often lagging. Also, due to the highly decentralised structure of the separate faculties, the information is only available to the students enrolled in the individual faculty.

The above leads us to believe that giving students the freedom to form various associations, clubs, interest groups and to organise activities of their own — while a necessary pre-requisite — is only the beginning of a process of building a ‘campus’ climate that nurtures student involvement not only in the university experience but also in thinking about their stake in the bigger society which lies beyond the university campus. Hopefully this will lead to end of student indifference to the marked inequalities of access to Uganda’s university and equal opportunities for both students in government-aided and private universities.

⁴² Tade Akin Aine (2010), “Beyond Reform: the Politics of Higher Education Transformation in Africa”, *African Studies Review*, vol. 53, no. 1 April 2010 (2010).