Ethnicity and Federalism in Uganda:
Grassroots Perceptions

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Abstract

The "scramble for Africa" resulted in random and unlikely borders that still remain to this day. These artificial borders, the colonial policy of divide and rule, as well as the resultant segmental cleavages in most post-colonial African states, may be blamed for both the horizontal inequalities rampant since the formation of nations, and the severe violent conflicts that the continent has suffered in the past half a century.

In Uganda, as in many other African countries, the most evident of such cleavages have been tribal and/or ethnic. One of the main features of politics and power in post-independence Uganda is that tension is institutionally enforced between ethnicities. What Stephen Ndegwa wrote about Kenya is also true of Uganda and many other multi-ethnic African countries that the socially enacted relationship between ethnic identity, authority, and legitimacy competes with the legally sanctioned membership, authority and legitimacy of the nation-state. The role of Uganda's five kingdoms and other boundaries of ethnic identity has, for example, always been difficult to negotiate. The position of Buganda in independent Uganda has particularly been an issue of contention since the run-up to independence. The Kingdom of Buganda, which was one of the most powerful kingdoms in Uganda and in the whole of the Great Lakes region, had been used by the British to extend colonial rule to the rest of what eventually became Uganda. Uganda as a protectorate had indeed been built around Buganda as the centre of colonial administration. Furthermore, as Phares Mutibwa notes, "the people of Buganda and their king perceived Buganda as superior to the rest of Uganda and were willing to be amalgamated into Uganda only if Buganda was conferred with special status."

The debate about federalism is thus older than independent Uganda. It was a subject of contention before and after the framing of the 1962 independence constitution. Some of the leaders at the forefront of the decolonization process considered federalism an effective way of preserving the interests of regional, ethnic institutions while at the same time reconciling unity

within the diversity. Other leaders, however, stood for the nationalist cause, and were determined to fight what they considered to be Buganda's hegemony. The independence constitution finally adopted a federal and semi-federal approach. Buganda was granted full federal status. The other kingdoms of Ankole, Bunyoro, Busoga, and Toro were, however, only granted semi-federal status, while the rest of the country with no traditional kingships was divided into administrative districts that were incorporated into independent Uganda on a unitary basis. In hindsight, the independence constitution was only as good as the purpose it was meant to serve: to prevent the cessation of Buganda.

Like in most parts of independent Africa, federalism in Uganda collapsed almost as soon as it had been conceived. In February 1966 Prime Minister Milton Obote suspended the 1962 constitution in a move he argued was in the interest of national unity. It was a move, however, that was soon to tear Uganda apart. Obote had allowed the army to enter the political arena by using it to overthrow the constitution and to consolidate his power. He had also paved the way for Idi Amin to stage a coup in 1971. Since then, the dominant system has always been some form of dictatorial, unitary republicanism. The result has been a chronic erosion of democracy, the entrenchment of state-sponsored corruption, and deteriorating levels of social inequality along ethnic and political lines.

Since 1986, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government has helped in rebuilding a semblance of democratic rule, and the last 31 years of Yoweri Museveni and the NRM rule have been particularly exciting for what most Ugandans refer to as the *federo*[1] debate.

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[1] *Federo* is the popular version of the concept of federalism in Luganda the language spoken by the Baganda of Uganda. Federo, a term coined in Buganda, but now widely used countrywide, is a hybrid of federalism and Buganda Monarchism. It is, in other words, a Bugandanised demand for federalism, which for Baganda also means the restoration of all the three separate but interrelated pillars of the Baganda social

Some people have even been suggesting that the state of Uganda in its present form ought to be dismantled and restructured so that its future legitimacy can be redefined to be based on the rights of the different nationalities and according to their value systems and norms.

But who is promoting these issues? It is mainly the political elite, and there seems to be a dearth of research into the mind frame of the very people politicians claim to be debating for, and for whose political problems researchers and writers directly or indirectly claim to be positing solutions. The main objective of this research, therefore, was to discover what people at the grassroots levels of the different tribal areas of Uganda think about the issue of federalism. These are typically thought of as people or society at a local level. In political terms, they are distinct from the active leadership of (political) parties or organizations; they are the rank-and-file citizens, or the voters themselves, rather than people at the centre of major political activity. This research was also designed to move from the most abstract to the most grassroots level and discover how the Ugandan situation fits within the existing theories of federalism.

Views from conversations with selected samples of ordinary people in ten different tribal areas of the country reveal that ethnic federalism, a recognition of Uganda's indigenous peoples and their indigenous systems of governance, is seen as one possible way of restoring and guaranteeing accountability in national politics. These results have helped to illustrate that the debates for, or against, federalism are not just part of the political leaders' manipulation of identity groups for instrumental purposes. They are also at the heart of the political ambitions of the ordinary people in the various units of local and ethnic governments. These units have

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organisation: the clan, spiritual systems and form of governance, as well as the kingdom property confiscated in the 1966 abolition of the kingdom.

existed and functioned as such since pre-colonial days. They also represent what can be clearly cut out as federal units in the event that such a system is officially adopted.

In this research, a qualitative approach to data gathering and analysis was used, including an analysis of books, papers and official documents that discuss the perspectives of the different players in colonial and post-colonial Uganda with regard to the roles of its five kingdoms and other boundaries of ethnic identity. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were also conducted with people from the selected 10 major tribal areas of Uganda. The outcome of these perception surveys is narrated and analysed in the thesis to illuminate the grassroots views on a federal solution.

Key Words: Ethnicity, Federalism, Grassroots, Horizontal Inequalities, Perceptions

Dedication:

To my late father Dominic Ssali (RIP), and to the two women in my life:

Theresa Ssali and Chikako Ssali.

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List of Abbreviations

ACT	: Ankole Cultural Trust
AFDL	: Allied Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo
ANC	: African National Congress
BCF	: Banyankole Cultural Foundation
BCU	: Bugisu Cooperative Union
CA	: Constituent Assembly
CAO	: Chief Administrative Officer
CCM	: Chama cha Mapinduzi
CDU	: Christian Democratic Union
CSU	: Christian Social Union
CUF	: Civic United Front
DP	: Democratic Party
DRC	: Democratic Republic of Congo
EPRC	: Economic Policy research Centre
EPRDF	: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product
GSU	: General Service Unit
HIs	: Horizontal Inequalities
HSM	: Holy Spirit Movement

IDP	: Internally Displaced People
JICA	: Japan International Cooperation Agency
KADU	: Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	: Kenya African National Union
KAR	: King's African Rifles
KY	: Kabaka Yekka
LC	: Local Council
LRA	: Lord's Resistance Army
MP	: Member of Parliament
NARC	: National Alliance Rainbow Coalition
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCC	: National Consultative Council
NFD	: Northern Frontier District
NGO	: Non-Government Organisation
NP	: National Party
NRA	: National Resistance Army
NRM	: National Resistance Movement
PD	: Power Dispersing
PEAP	: Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PSU	: Public Safety Unit
RC	: Resistance Council
RCD	: *Ressemblement Congolais Pour la Democratie*
RDC	: Residential District Commissioner
SNNPRS	: Southern Nations' Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State
SPLA	: Sudan People's Liberation Army

SPLM   : Sudan People's Liberation Movement

SRB   : State Research Bureau

TPLF   : Tigray People's Liberation Front

UPC   : Uganda People's Congress

UPDF   : Uganda People's Defence Forces

UPM   : Uganda Patriotic Movement

VIs   : Vertical Inequalities

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Chapter 1

Introduction: On the Relevance of the Problem

1.1 Background to the Study

The "Scramble for Africa" resulted in random and unlikely borders that still remain to this day. Indeed the Europeans' establishment of arbitrary and sometimes ridiculous rules for the partition of Africa is well documented (Herbst, 2000; Parker and Rathbone, 2007; Pakenham, 1991; Mamdani, 1996; Mayiga, 2013; Meredith, 2005). Martin Meredith's succinct claim is worth noting:

> African societies of the pre-colonial era – a mosaic of lineage groups, clans, villages, chiefdoms and empires – were formed often with shifting and indeterminate frontiers and loose allegiances. Identities and languages shaded into one another. At the outset of colonial rule, administrators and ethnographers endeavoured to classify the peoples of Africa, sorting them out into what they called tribes, producing a whole new ethnic map to show the frontiers of each one. Colonial administrators wanted recognizable units they could control. In many cases tribal labels were imposed on hitherto undifferentiated groups (Meredith, 2005: 154).

These artificial borders may be blamed for the horizontal inequalities (HIs)[2] rampant since the formation of nations. They have also often been cited as being the cause of some of the severe violent conflicts that the continent has suffered in the past half a century. William Easterly (2006) labels this artificial demarcation "White Mischief", and argues

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[2] HIs refer to inequalities in economic, social or political dimensions or cultural status between culturally defined groups (Stewart, 2008: 3).

that the West partitioned territory for the sake of its own short-term goals of influence or masterly, with little thought of the long-term consequences for the people living there. Easterly argues further that decolonization was not much better than colonization as it was also a crash utopian program to create whole new nations overnight from the existing arbitrary colonial boarders. "One thing today's nation-builders could learn from their colonial predecessors", he argues, is that "once you get in, it is very hard to constructively get out" (Easterly, 2006: 290). Jeffrey Herbst (2000) argues that many of the pathologies of modern Africa can be traced to the particularities of colonialism: to systems of boundaries and frontiers and a host of other changes new to the continent. Crawford Young refers to colonialism as one broad trail that "leads us backwards to the historical determinants that have moulded the contemporary state and shaped its behavioural imperatives" (Young, 1994: 9).

I would like to note, however, that it would be unfair to blame all of Africa's problems on the Europeans' partition of and rule over Africa. In the last half a century our post-independence leaders and policy makers have contributed significantly to the mire of corruption, economic collapse, ethnic resentment, violence and civil war. They have exploited Africa's ethnic differences to consolidate patronage-driven democracies and economies, meanwhile piling all the blame on past colonial and present neo-colonial establishments as well as on their like-minded predecessors. Africa, and indeed Uganda, has had too many tyrants who use 'freedom' as only a slogan to attain power, with the only visible change that the 'colonisers' are now black Africans ruling worse than the white colonialists but even without the efficiency of the latter. The question that we must ask is, how has the continent so rich and diverse come to this point?

It has been demonstrated that the Power Dispersing (PD) design of political institutions, which is typically decentralising and power-sharing, is more suited for Africa's horizontal cleavages which are characterized by ethnic, cultural, religious and geographical divides (Lewis, 1965; Lijphart, 1977; Mine et al., 2013). However, most post-independence African leaders were convinced that in order to forge national unity, they needed to build very strong centralised states. They therefore "turned a blind eye to the challenges associated with ethnic diversity" (Fessha, 2012: 267). At the heart of the nation-building projects were also the rather ambitious aspirations to achieve homogenised societies.

One can argue then, with hindsight, that Africa's multicultural states would have functioned better with a Swiss-like consensus federalism model.[3] The main reason is that in these multi-cultural societies, cultural values, beliefs and languages are not only heterogeneous, but may lead to different political preferences that do not change. Moreover, as Wolf Linder and Isabelle Steffen argue, in such a consensus model "structural minorities have a better chance of inclusion" (2006: 223). In prioritising 'nation building', however, most independent African states inherited a strongly centralised apparatus at the time of their independence. The argument leading to independence was that unitarianism was the only way to keep culturally diverse nations together. It was in very few countries, as discussed in section 2.2.3, that concessions were made to include the federal idea in the independent constitutions. Even there, as Fessha observes, there was no political commitment to these constitutional promises. "The

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[3] Also called a *consociational* or power-sharing model of democracy, in this system minorities are integrated through proportional representation with a vertical division of power which ensures utmost autonomy and political participation for the smaller units.

consequence was the strangulation of federalism at birth in several African states. Large centralized states became the preferred mode of governance" (Fessha, 2012: 269).

As most countries adopted the winner-takes-all, Westminster parliamentary system, they ended up concentrating power in just a few hands. Inevitably, many groups of people in these countries have over the years felt left out and excluded from the socio-political and economic arena. Access to state power and resources has more often than not become ethnicized. The reality of disgruntled ethnic groups in the face of gross inequalities has not only led to violent confrontations, but has also "forced the restructuring of the state and, more specifically, the introduction of subnational autonomy on the political agenda of several African states" (Fessha, 2012: 273). Uganda is one such African state where "the socially enacted relationship between ethnic identity, authority, and legitimacy competes with the legally sanctioned membership, authority and legitimacy of the nation-state" (Ndegwa, 1997: 602). The debate about federalism in Uganda "has been a constant that stretches back to the time of independence and remains on-going" (Tangen, 2012: 3). It is also a sensitive debate – as sensitive as the issue of ethnicity itself.

Ethnic sensitivity, nevertheless, is not only a Ugandan problem. Problems like ethnic inequalities, as has been reiterated above, are as typical of Uganda as they are of other African countries. Resolving Uganda's problem can be a microcosmic answer to an African problem. If Uganda's future is promising, Africa's future can be promising. As a matter of fact, some African countries have of late set precedents by re-organizing to address the issue of 'group' equality. In 1991, multi-ethnic Ethiopia adopted a new constitution using ethnicity as the fundamental organizing principle of a federal system

of government. Kenya, as discussed in section 2.2.3, had, by the time of writing, adopted a new constitution. Approved in a referendum by 67 % of the population and promulgated on August 27th 2010, it stipulates a devolved system with two levels of government and various checks and balances which considerably trim the powers of the executive while empowering regional or county governments. Thus, as well as in Uganda, in some other African countries the last three decades have been interesting times for the subnational autonomy debate. Uganda has itself seen a flurry of debates and counter debates on federalism, locally known as *federo[4]* regional-tier units, and the on-going decentralisation which has seen the number of districts in the country more than triple.

The role of Uganda's post-colonial boundaries of ethnic identity has always been difficult to negotiate. The British colonialists, who ruled indirectly, had tended to give the traditional kingdoms, especially Buganda, considerable political autonomy. They also largely favoured the recruitment of the Baganda to the colonial civil service. This was mainly because by the nature of its political forms and social institutions, Buganda had been the main focus of the white adventurers who had heard of the kingdom's sophisticated structure of governance and its position as the most powerful kingdom in the East and Central African region. Buganda was indeed the centrepiece from where both political and religious adventurers spread their influence to the whole of the country now called Uganda. The Baganda, as the people of Buganda kingdom are called, were also used as agents in the annexing and colonization of the rest of Uganda. Over the colonial years, therefore, other tribal groups sought differing avenues of advancement. The Langi and

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[4] See abstract note 1.

Acholi, for instance, are known to have become dominant in the military. It can be argued thus that the extent to, and mode in which the different tribal groupings were ruled largely influences their current political development and involvement.

Politicians debate the relevance or irrelevance of these tribal groups in the modern unitary republic, and scholars and researchers write about the relationship between them and the rise and frequency of ethnic problems. However, there seems to be a dearth of research establishing the mind of the very people politicians claim to be debating for, and for whose political problems researchers and writers directly or indirectly claim to be giving solutions. I think therefore this topic, "grassroots perceptions of ethnicity and federalism," is easy to justify. Without even going too deep into the scholarly concept of "populism," one can still argue with Fallers (1964) that "legitimacy resides in the people's will." Most political decisions, policies, and administrative systems ultimately directly affect the masses. It is legitimate, therefore, that now and then people at the grassroots level of society are engaged in conversations on critical issues affecting the cultural, socio-economic and political norms of leadership in their respective regions and the country at large.

But who are the people at grass-roots level? They are typically thought of as people or society at a local level. In political terms, they are the ordinary people as distinct from the active leadership of (political) parties or organizations; they are the rank-and-file citizens, or the voters themselves, rather than people at the centre of major political activity. Although at a later stage this research looks at the views and hopes of the more elite opinion leaders, the main focus is on people at the local level, mostly peasants. They were interviewed with the purpose of understanding their perceptions of ethnic identity

and horizontal inequalities, as well as the relevance of a federal solution. The interviewees collective feeling of inclusion, or exclusion for that matter, impacts tremendously on the evaluation of their respective societies in relation to responsibility towards them.

Looking back to the colonial era (1894 – 1962), the British protectorate government made numerous political proposals and signed many agreements, especially with the kingdom of Buganda. The first agreement or treaty was signed in 1893 between Sir Gerald Portal, a British commissioner, and *Kabaka* (king) Mwanga. A similar treaty was signed in the same year between the embattled Mwanga and Col Colvile in which the former accepted the so-called Buganda protection by the British. In 1900, the well-known Buganda agreement was signed by the regents of the then four-year-old *Kabaka* Daudi Chwa and Sir Harry Johnston, another British commissioner. The 1955 Buganda Agreement was an amendment of sorts of the 1900 Agreement. The above agreements were further amended in the little known 1961 Buganda Agreement. Post-independent leaders like Milton Obote (1962) and Yoweri Museveni (early 1980s) have also made deals with the kingdom. In 1962, the then President of Uganda People's Congress (UPC) and later Prime Minister of independent Uganda, Milton Obote, had a secret meeting with *Kabaka* Mutesa II. In the meeting, a gentleman's agreement was reached to form the now infamous a UPC/KY (The pro-Monarch *Kabaka Yekka* = 'King only') alliance.[5] (Mutiibwa, 1992: 30-35; Nugent, 2012: 128; Reid, 2012: 281).

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[5] In part brokered by the British, the UPC/KY alliance conveniently took Uganda to independence in 1962. It turned out to be a "marriage of convenience" that was to become a source of misery (Mutiibwa, 1992:30) as five years later the Buganda monarchy was abolished and the *Kabaka* was forced into exile.

There have also been reports that during the National Resistance Movement (NRM) bush-war in the 1980s there was a secret understanding between the then guerrilla leader Museveni and Buganda to help each other in return for the restoration of the kingdom and its properties (Kalinaki, 2013: 89-90).What was exactly promised to Buganda is however still contested to this day. While monarchists and other traditional leaders claim they were promised the restoration of the kingdom to its pre-1966 status, Museveni and the NRM say they meant to restore Buganda and other kingdoms only as cultural institutions but not as political or economic entities (Kalinaki, 2013; Legget, 2001; Mwesigwa, 2012). Whatever the case, what is common in all these circumstances is that the process is leadership-centred and not citizen-centred. As the Makerere University Don Mwambutsya Ndebesa (2013) argues, all these deals, including the crucial pre-independence 1961-2 agreements, are undemocratic understandings which did not involve citizens. They were tools used by both the colonial and post-colonial authorities to preserve patronage and control of the centre. Others have argued that "part of the problem was that political alliances in Uganda were based on relations of clientage that were inherently unstable" (Nugent 2012: 128). This study seeks, therefore, to approach the issue of federalism, and subnational autonomy at large, in a pluralistic, anti-statist manner.

1.2 Objectives

My research proposal was born out of my interest in the political aspect of our ethnic identities, namely that politics and power in Uganda institutionally enforce tension between these ethnicities. This tendency is the legacy of colonialism in Africa. The last 30 years, the longest spell of relative stability since independence, have been exciting times

for the theory of ethnic federalism. This topic has generated a lot of lively, sometimes hot-tempered, but often inconclusive debates. But these are debates usually among the political and media-savvy part of society. There is, therefore, one main objective in this investigation of the federalism question in Uganda: to find out and compare what selected samples of ordinary people in the different tribal areas of the country think about the issue of ethnic federalism. Do they believe that a federation with ethnically defined regions is the most suitable form of government in Uganda today?

Understanding this will shed light on whether the debates for, or against, federalism are not just part of the political leaders' manipulation of identity groups for instrumental purposes, but are also at the heart of the political ambitions of the ordinary people in the various units of local and ethnic governments. These groups have existed and functioned as such since pre-colonial days. They also represent what can be precisely cut out as administrative units if a federal system is officially adopted. This study, therefore, takes a top-down approach, moving from the most abstract to the most grassroots level. It is the interest of the ordinary people that is at stake. How do they think their cultural, socio-economic and political values have hitherto been represented or promoted, and what is the way forward?

The purpose of this research can, therefore, be summarised into two simple and complementary research questions:

1. Do Ugandans support the idea of an ethnically based federal arrangement for Uganda, and do they think it is likely to happen soon, or later?
2. Do they think this would be a better system for Uganda: culturally, socially and politically?

To gauge the grassroots hopes and aspirations, however, respondents were also asked a complementary question: in terms of ethnic federalism, where do you see Uganda, and particularly Buganda, in the next 10 to 20 years?

The two main questions formulate the necessary framework for the understanding of grassroots perceptions of ethnicity and issues of governance in Uganda. This inquiry, therefore, is rooted in the old English school of political thought called political pluralism. It is a school of thought which, though neglected in recent years, is now enjoying a revival of interest as it offers a critique of centralised sovereign state power (Hirst:1993). It also assumes that diversity is beneficial to society and that autonomy should be enjoyed by disparate functional or cultural groups within a society, including religious groups, trade unions, professional organisations, and ethnic minorities. English political pluralism had its leading theorists in G.D.H. Cole, J.N. Figgis and H.J. Laski. Writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, they "challenged the theory of unlimited state sovereignty and a centralised unitary state embodying such sovereign power in a hierarchy of authority" (Hirst, 1993: 3).

The colonial government of Uganda, in its representative form, was inevitably built on the principle of state sovereignty and resulted in a system that centralised power and created a bureaucratic society with two separate communities, dividing the governed Africans and the governing officialdom. This principle created a pattern that became most difficult to alter even after Uganda gained independence. This study seeks to establish the grassroots views on the form of government most suited for Uganda. Are the people in the tribal groupings being sampled more comfortable with the long run and tested unitary form of government? Or, are they nostalgic of their (almost) natural settings where,

especially in the political kingdom of Buganda, as Apter puts it, "politics is the arrangement not only of the state but the society" (Apter, 1967: 9)?

The fundamental hypothesis undergirding this study is that ethnic federalism is a better system for Uganda, culturally, economically and politically. At the crux of this debate are the original identities of the traditional ethnic groups that make up Uganda, and their relevance to the lives and experiences of people at the grassroots of society. Traditional authorities such as monarchies and chieftainships are closer to the lives and experiences of the ordinary people than any other authorities. They are also positively capable of playing an active role in addressing the central issue raised in this research, namely combatting bad leadership and the intractable challenge of HIs it breeds, as well as ensuring justice and stability for all cultural groups in Uganda.

Chapters in this thesis will be spread over two broad parts: In the first part, chapters 2 and 3 will be devoted to the definition, analysis and understanding of the key concepts that constitute the paradigm of this study, and to connecting them to some specific and comparative experiences. In any research field terminology can confuse and obscure the real issues. Chapter 2 will, therefore, specifically attempt to lay out the conceptual framework for understanding ethnicity and federalism. Ethnicity, ethnic diversity, ethnic identity and federalism will be examined in depth, and this will pave the way to understanding, in a top-down approach, how the realities of the former three have a bearing on the relevance of the latter, and subsequently on the main inquiry of this study. The latter part of this chapter will also attempt to connect theories to reality by looking at examples of African nations where the nature of ethnic diversity has made experimentation on the federal formula imperative. Chapter 3 is a critical examination of

the Ugandan experience against a background of dominant colonial and post-colonial centrist states. It focuses in particular on the suppression of sub-unit claims and the increasing ethnic and parochial strife which the current study presumes warrants a restructuring of the state. In the second section, the main part of this thesis, chapter 4 examines the outcome of perceptions surveys in selected traditional, ethnic areas of Uganda to establish, in a pluralist approach, both the grassroots consciousness about Uganda's historical-political dynamics and views on the feasibility of the federal solution. Chapter 5 reports on the results of the final phase of the research, which sought to have 'another view' from a more selective group of opinion leaders. These included religious and cultural leaders, journalists, university professors, and a couple of active politicians. They were presumed more capable of analysing the practicability or impracticability of not only of having, but also of implementing a federation of ethnically defined regions. The final chapter will focus on the general implications for the study, hopefully with a realistic pointer to the way forward and/or with a strong case for a continuous bargain.

1.3 Methods and Procedure

1.3.1 Research design

A qualitative approach to data gathering and analysis was used, including an analysis of such primary sources as archival materials, as well as secondary sources like books, papers and journals. These discuss the perspectives of the different players in colonial and post-colonial Uganda in regard to the roles of its five kingdoms and other boundaries of ethnic identity. Also, since the federal debate in Uganda is relatively recent, additional information was found from different sources on the internet. In addition, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with people from at least ten tribal

areas, and the outcome of these perception surveys has been thematically analysed to illuminate the grassroots views on a federal solution. Another phase of interviews was conducted with a selected group of 'opinion leaders'. They were selected with special consideration for their higher educational levels and positions in society. They were presumed more capable of discerning the principles imperative in designing an ethnically defined federal system as well as identifying the challenges and remedies for adopting such a system.

The methodology for this study was, therefore, largely qualitative. It is only partly accentuated by quantitative data in as far as the numbers and type of responses to perceptive questions is concerned. The study was characterised by both desk research and fact-finding field work. As a desk research, it entailed the collection of detailed descriptions and explanations of the various concepts, facts and phenomena related to ethnicity, inequality, federalism, and Uganda in general. As field work it was in the form of qualitative research based on in-depth conversations and observation. I opted for this research method on the assumption that interviews are the best method of gaining insight into people's experiences, beliefs and perceptions, and that the semi-structured interview approach would help me cover the topics I want to cover while leading me to important new perceptions as it develops (when it does) into unexpected directions. The interviews consisted mainly of time perspective questions (looking at the future through the past and the present) and people's perceptions of self (identity) *vis-a-vis* the ethnic region to which they belong; of self (identity) with regard to the central government; and perceptions of the politico-economic dimensions of individual respondents and their respective groups.

During the interviews, I took into account the varying knowledge and educational standards of the respondents, as well as their subjective interpretation of historical facts. Thus, although a set of open-ended questions were prepared, the actual questions used depended primarily on the respondents and their disposition at the time of the interview.

As far as *type* is concerned, this is a study in both social sciences and humanities. It is a social sciences research as it deals with studying and describing various social phenomena, cultural attitudes and behavioural patterns, explaining their causes and effects. It is also a study in humanities as it deals with human beings, conceptualising and analysing their perceptions and values.

1.3.2 Data gathering procedure

Since all the empirical research was done during short fieldwork-trips from Japan to Uganda, I employed one permanent assistant who helped me to locate other assistants in each of the 10 tribal areas where interviews were conducted. The latter, a single man or woman, mainly university students generally familiar with empirical research, would locate the eight men and women in the tribal area that were willing to take part in the in-depth interviews. They would also act as interpreters in cases where the respondents were not fluent in, or confident with English. The assistant would only inform the respondents that this is a directed research project for a doctoral dissertation, and leave it to the author and researcher to give them a short explanation of his mini-project topic and ask them for at least thirty minutes of their time as well as the permission to record the interviews. Most of the interviews were thus recorded, and they were later transcribed by the author. There were a few cases, however, where respondents refused to be recorded. During a few

other interviews recording failed due to technical issues. In such cases I scribbled notes as the interviews went on.

1.3.3 Respondents and locale of study

At the time of independence, Uganda had 15 ethnicities, including kingdoms, which were represented at the Lancaster Constitutional Conference in 1961-62. Of these, the kingdom of Buganda was granted full federal status. The other kingdom areas of Ankole, Bunyoro, and Toro, as well as the territory of Busoga, were only granted semi-federal status, while the rest of the country with no traditional kingships was divided into administrative districts that were incorporated into independent Uganda on a unitary basis (Mutibwa, 1992: 24).

Interviews for this research were conducted with people from 10 of the 15 administrative areas formerly represented in the independence arrangements. They are the kingdoms of Ankole, Buganda, Bunyoro and Toro; the territory of Busoga; and the former administrative districts of Acholi, Bugisu, Kigezi, Teso and West Nile (See 4.1.1 for details). It was partly due to limitations of time and resources that not more people, and from all the original 15 areas, were surveyed. Data collected may thus look rather limited in scale given Uganda's relatively big population and ethnic diversity. It can be argued, however, that there were enough interviewees "to reflect the range of participants and sites that make up the population so that others outside the sample might have a chance to connect to the experiences of those in it" (Seidman, 2013: 58).

These 10 areas were selected because they were deemed to be "qualitatively" representative of the various trends in the experiences of colonial and post-colonial

Uganda. Buganda has always occupied a special position in Uganda, and the "Buganda question"[6] has dominated political debates since the onset of colonialism. The kingdoms of Ankole, Bunyoro, and Toro, together with the territory of Busoga, were also relatively sophisticated political organizations before and after independence. Acholi, Bugisu, Kigezi, Teso and West Nile were on the other hand selected as part of the more peripheral former administrative districts, Acholi, Teso and West Nile particularly significant as part of the so called "political north."[7]

The main respondents for this study were eight people selected from each of the 10 selected tribal areas, and they included two men in their 20s and 30s, two women in their 20s and 30s, two men in their 50s and 60s, and two women in their 50s and 60s. It must be noted, however, that the samples were not selected at random, in the strict sense of the word. While I followed the age brackets and interviewed men and women who were available, some of them were probably known either directly to my field assistants, or to their acquaintances. The main criterion, however, was that they were selected from the people at the grassroots level or the ordinary citizens in the tribal areas, rather than people at the centre of major political activity. These are the people in whose interest, this study presumes, is the nature and process of both the common good and the distribution of power in societies.

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[6] The *Buganda question* refers to what is seen in Uganda's political history as the failure of the colonial government to define a precise relationship between the Protectorate Government and the Buganda Government. It meant that towards independence, "Buganda regarded federalism as the only safeguard for her monarchy and her traditions" (Nsibambi, 1966: 41). It is still a difficult question for post-colonial Uganda to negotiate.

[7] There has been an ethnic fragmentation, post-independence, between the northern and the southern tribes of Uganda. This is widely understood to be one of the casualties of British colonial policy and its effects on the post-colonial society, and it has often been a cause of conflict.

Chapter 2

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

2.1 Understanding Ethnicity

Before attempting a definition of ethnicity as a concept, two observations must be made:

1. Although most countries in the world are multi-ethnic, to echo Yusuf Bangura (2006: 2), "Africa, Asia and the Pacific are the most ethnically segmented regions".[8] Africa in particular boasts an astounding diversity of humans, a dizzying variety of languages, and a multiplicity of cultures, which some even use as evidence that "the history of mankind in Africa is older than in any other continent" (Parker and Rathbone, 2007: 26).

2. In some cases ethnicity is difficult to pin down to any objective attribute. In the case of Rwanda, for instance (see sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.4.1), it has come about as a human construct paved out of group differences and boundaries. The Belgians could only have been driven by their divide and rule ambitions to differentiate between the shorter, arable farmers as Hutu, and the taller pastoralists as Tutsi. They conceived of the minority Tutsi as "natural aristocrats" and "less African", and favoured them over the majority Hutu. "It took work to turn difference and inequality into group boundaries, into ethnicity" (Cooper, 2009: 6). These labels have unfortunately been understood, or misunderstood, to be a primeval tribal distinction. But from what we know, Tutsi and Hutu speak the same language, Kinyarwanda; many Hutu were also cattle keepers before and during colonialism; Hutu could, and did, become Tutsi, just as Tutsi became Hutu. There have

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[8] Bangura makes this observation in light of the typology of ethnic structures and their influence on civil wars, democratization and development problems in plural societies.

been dramatic changes therefore in the meaning of these tribal or ethnic differences, and "the volatility of those identities was one of the consequences of change as well as being one of the authors of change" (Parker and Rathbone, 2007: 26).

2.1.1 Etymology and ethnicity

The term "ethnicity" denotes many meanings since it is widely used in the social sciences. As Baumann (2004) puts it, however, it has been best defined within cultural anthropology. But even then, Baumann argues, "there is no single definition or theory of how ethnic groups are formed" (2004: 12) The English origins of "ethnicity" can be traced to late Middle English (1470 – 1550), and are connected to the term "ethnic", which itself has origins in the Greek *ethnos,* meaning nation. Its adjectival form, *ethnikos*, which entered ecclesiastical Latin as *ethnicus,* referred to heathen, that is to say neither Christian nor Jewish (Cornell and Hartman, 1998). The original meanings were therefore heavily religious, and they denoted a minority outsider in the sense of a pagan, heathen or gentile. The current usages of "ethnic", which are relatively new, date from the nineteenth century, and only one of them, "characteristic of or belonging to a non-Western cultural tradition", is still true to the original. The more general, newer usages of "ethnic" are:

1. Relating to a population subgroup with a common national or cultural tradition.
2. Relating to national and cultural origins.
3. Denoting origin by birth or descent rather than by present nationality.

It took some time before "ethnicity" was used in terms of a "majority" group or, in a more general way, to describe "ourselves", rather than just "minorities" or "others".

Later, scholars like Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, as Sekulic (2008) testifies, would carry on the evolution, claiming that the importance of ethnic groups had extended beyond minorities to all the groups of a society characterised by a distinct sense of difference because of culture and descent. "Ethnics" thus slowly lost both its original Greek and Latin religious meanings and its reference to "others" as opposed to "us", and, as Cornell and Hartman (2001: 77) point out, it increasingly "referred to a particular way of defining not only others but also ourselves". Table 1 gives a summary of the evolution in the meaning of ethnicity from 'minority outsiders' to 'groups distinguishable by a common culture and descent'.

Table 1. Ethnicity: Etymology and evolution in meaning.

Origins	Meaning and features
Original Greek	*Ethnos* for nation
Early ecclesiastical Latin	*Ethnicus* for religious pagan, heathen or gentile
Middle English (1470-1550	"Ethnic" for minority, outsider groups
Nineteenth century and new usage	*Ethnicities* NOT only as "minority others" but also as "ourselves", as belonging together with common traits
Ethnicity then	Defined "others" as "outsiders"
Ethnicity now	Defines "us" as a "characteristic human group"

Source: author.

To exemplify this sense of ethnicity, my ethnicity would mean my belonging to a characteristic human group, sharing such traits as race, religion and language in common. My ethnicity is my race, nation or tribe, as the specific human group maybe, in whose

customs and traditions I share. I live in Japan but I am not ethnically one of the Japanese who uniquely are both an island-nation and ethnically highly homogeneous. Even from my native Uganda, I inherit a "nationality", but not "ethnicity". I am an ethnic "Muganda", as opposed to the ethnic "Mutoro", "Musoga", "Acholi", "Karamajong" and many other tribes in multi-ethnic Uganda. I am ethnically a Muganda, not Ugandan, because it is with the Ganda tribe, and not with the nation Uganda, that I share all the characteristic traits that are only attributable to this particular human group, and not to any other group in Uganda. All we share with them is nationality, but not ethnicity. And all we share with other black Africans, to stretch it further, is race, but not ethnicity.

All in all, ethnicity as understood in the Ugandan and broader African context "is a fluid, not a fixed condition of African politics" (Kasfir, 1976: 53). It is a term with no concrete definition, and among other things it "can refer to nationality, provincial identity, community, village, chiefdom or kin-group" (Lancaster, 2012: 1). Within this dissertation the term "ethnicity" will be used to describe the different cultural groups of Uganda: four of them have been kingdoms for centuries (Ankole, Buganda, Bunyoro, and Toro), and others chiefdoms or an integration of minor chieftainships, and they are separated by distinct regions, languages and cultures. They are also defined in almost all secondary literature as "separate ethnic entities or groupings" (Lancaster 2012: 1).

2.1.2 Ethnicity and race

Gerald Barreman (1972) is one author who has articulated the meaning of ethnicity in this broader context. He provides a clear distinction between ethnicity and race. Ethnicity is differentiated from race in that racial stratification is associated with birth-ascribed status based on physical and cultural characteristics defined by outside groups … Ethnicity is

also ascribed at birth, but the ethnic group normally defines its cultural characteristics itself. Barreman also differentiates ethnicity from class in a latter work, in that "social class membership and ranking is based on attributes regarded as extrinsic to the people who comprise the class ... such as amount of income, occupation, education, consumption patterns, and 'life style'"(Berreman 1981: 15). He argues thus that an individual's class is not predetermined at birth; that an individual's accomplishments during his or her life can help an individual to rise or fall in social status within the community. Barreman argues further that although there are exceptional cases where ethnic classifications and ethnicity are viewed as static cultural processes, this is normally more accurate for a cultural group than racial characteristics which are defined by outsiders and are more often laced with inaccuracies and stereotypes. He cites cases like the Burakumin of Japan and the ranked groups of Rwanda, where parts of a society have been "seen" and "described" as physically and morally distinct, "and their segregation and oppression are explained on that basis when in fact they are not so at all ... instead, they are recognizable only by family (ancestry), name, occupation, place of residence, life style, etc" (Barreman, 1972: 392).

This observation and distinction is important for the current study which takes interest in tribal groups in Uganda, whose historical and political dynamics, and indeed the future of their status in the country, cannot be attributed to "racial" differences. They are, from a socio-scientific point of view, the same race because of their common physical characteristics. They are, however, different ethnically because of their respective perceived common descent and shared history as well as characteristic cultural distinctions. These different ethnic settings have undoubtedly become fragmented over

time by such cleavages as geography and colonial strategies. Nevertheless, this inquiry will not approach them as racially oppressed groups seeking unranked pluralism, but rather, to borrow the words of Barreman (1972), as groups with real and valued social and cultural differences like language, values and social organization which they are aware of—and are presumably proud of their own distinctive character—and as potentially valuable tools in shaping their political destiny. Central to the definition and understanding of an ethnic group therefore is a people's perception of what is common among them; their common point of identity, a point to which I shall now turn.

2.1.3 Ethnic identity

Several scholars now agree that ethnicity is not a fixed and absolute entity, but that it is dynamic, negotiable and subject to change (Bangura, 2006; Parker and Rathbone, 2007). This is also obvious in the various attempts to define the terms "ethnic", "ethnicity" and "ethnic groups" and what ultimately makes them what they are: identity. Bandana Purkayastha, for instance, has argued that "the concept of negotiating ethnicity is grounded in the scholarship on the social construction of ethnicity, transnationalism and gender" (2008: 459). Purkayastha suggests that there are multiple actors involved in constructing the content and boundaries of ethnicity, with structural restrictions and opportunities depending on the local, national and transnational contexts. Yusuf Bangura (2006: 4) argues in the same tone that "ethnic identities are not always easy to pin down, since they are, for the most part, situational." He makes the observation that this is due to the fact that objective attributes such as language, religion, culture or shared history may not always describe a person's ethnicity, and that ethnicity overlaps with many other forms of identity.

Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartman posit a sociological shift toward the subjective in the meaning of ethnicity. They refer to the German sociologist Max Weber who, in his great work *Economy and Society,* written early in the twentieth century and re-published in 1968, ties ethnic identity to the subjective belief a (human) group has in their common descent "because of similarities of physical type, or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration" (Weber, 1968: 389). Cornell and Hartman see Weber's theory and definition as consisting of four main features:

1. The fact that the foundations of ethnic identity lie in real or assumed common descent.

2. That the fact of common descent is less important than a people's belief in their common descent; that what people perceive is more important than what is.

3. That there are multiple potential bases of this belief – anyone or a combination of such factors from physical resemblance to shared cultural practices to a shared historical experience of intergroup interaction.

4. That an ethnic group exists wherever this distinctive connection of common descent is part of the foundation of community (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 17).

Weber's theory is supported by Kanchan Chandra who refers to ethnic identities as "a sub-set of categories in which descent-based attributes are necessary for membership" (Chandra, 2012: 9). He argues that, among other attributes, by definition all ethnic categories require descent-based attributes, although all descent-based categories are not ethnic categories.

Weber and Chandra's definitions of ethnic identities are supported further by George De Vos's observation that "members of an ethnic group cling to a sense of having

been an *independent* people, in origin at least, whatever specific role they have collectively come to play in a pluralistic society" (De Vos, 1995: 18).

Descent is, in the final analysis, the main attribute of ethnic identity. And as Chandra observes, "virtually all social science definitions of an ethnic identity emphasize the role of descent in some way ... But they specify it differently, to mean a common ancestry, or a myth of a common ancestry, a common region of origin, or a myth of a common region of origin, or a 'group' descent rule" (Chandra 2012: 10). Various authors and commentators agree, however, that definitions of ethnic identities do typically combine descent with other features such as a common culture, a common language, a common history, a common territory and a communal character (Chandra, 2012: 10; Ringer and Lawless, 2001: 49ff; Sekulic, 2008). Indeed, for some time, in what Sekulic refers to as "the traditional 'static' approach to ethnic relations" (Sekulic, 2008: 457), the tendency was to consider the most common elements of culture such as language or religion to be the universal characteristics of ethnicity. They were taken as the property that groups owned and which ultimately determined their ethnicity (Sekulic, 2008). It is the seminal work of Frederik Barth (1969) that signalled a new understanding of the relationship between culture and ethnicity. He shifted from the traditional idea of an ethnic group as being defined by a common culture. He argued that cultural content such as language, customs, religion and so on, serve not as the 'properties' that define an ethnic group and give it its identity, but rather as 'markers' that distinguish members from non-members in the process of social interaction with others. Barth thus refers to the main aspect of an ethnic group as the "boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it contains" (Barth, 1969: 15).

For the purpose of this study, and in view of the state of tribes and/or ethnic groups in Uganda, I will opt for a middle ground arguing that the cultural elements of a human group act both as its defining features and, automatically, as the markers of boundaries between them and other ethnic groups. While the perceived common descent of ethnic groups in Uganda is an important feature of their identity (see chapter 3, section 3.2), their cultural "stuff" is important not only as a marker of their boundaries with other ethnic groups (tribes), but also as their defining property. Tribes define themselves by their common descent, migration patterns and historical-political experiences, as well as by their cultural features. There is a cultural independence implied in an ethnic definition. Cultural elements like language, religion, and customs, both define the collective ethnic identity and strictly mark the boundaries between the "us" and "them" categories.

Where does this leave Barth's argument then? As Chandra observes, many later definitions and discussions of ethnic identity have been untouched by his argument:

> They continue to conceptualise ethnic groups as groups defined by common "cultural stuff." Gellner (1983), for instance, uses the words "ethnicity", "culture" and "nation" interchangeably, Laitin (1986) presents a theory of ethnic cleavages as "cultural" cleavages, and the large body of work on "multiculturalism" (Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995) is premised on the assumption that ethnic groups are self-standing cultural units. Everyday understanding of ethnicity often echoes the same idea. This is best illustrated by the definition of "ethnic groups" offered in Wikipedia: "Ethnic groups are also usually united by certain common cultural, behavioral, linguistic and ritualistic or religious traits (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_group) (Chandra, 2012: 70).

Other scholars who have linked ethnicity closely with culture include Tharailath Oommen (1997), who, citing Roosens (1989), conceptualizes ethnicity and ethnic groups as being relatively small, sharing a common culture with and tracing its descent to a common ancestor, and a tribe being the favourite example. Oommen has however cautioned about equating an ethnic group to a nation, arguing that the former should only be referred to as the latter only when "they adopt the territory into which they have immigrated as their homeland" (Oommen, 1997: 35). Oommen was reacting to such definitions as Anthony Smith's (1986) which characterise what he alone calls an "ethnie", as in a human group with a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity, characteristics which fit the concept of a nation equally as well. Andrew Greeley and William Mccready define an ethnic group as "a large collectivity, based on presumed common origin, which is, at least on occasion, part of the common definition of a person, and which also acts as a bearer of cultural traits" (Greeley and Mccready, 1975: 210). From their study of immigrant groups in the US they concluded that much cannot be explained about their present behaviour without investigating the cultural background of the country of origin. Robert Schermerhorn defines an ethnic group as "a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more *symbolic elements* (emphasis mine) defined as the epitome of their peoplehood" (Schermerhorn, 1970: 12). Schermerhorn includes in the symbolic elements, language or dialect, kinship, religion, physical proximity, nationality or physical features of the people. He thus underlines the significance of both the physical and cultural-spiritual factors determining the identity of an ethnic group.

All in all, ethnic identity is generally acquired at birth, though membership in an ethnic group is a matter of social definition: an inter-play of the self-definition of the members of a group, as well as the group's definition of other groups. There are also possibilities of changing individual identity or even group identity in the sense of conscious modification of group behaviour and identification (Horowitz, 1975). This author has grown up with and experienced such trends in Uganda with the changes in the self-definition and integration of Rwandan and Burundian refugees into the Buganda region of Uganda. Both countries with similar (but not identical) ethnic demography descended into chaos at independence, and into genocidal slaughters and subsequent movements of refugees that went on well into the 1990s. Many Rwandans and Burundians have taken up Baganda clans and clan names and define themselves as such. Changes in individual identity have thus brought about changes in group boundaries and collective identity, the latter becoming either wider or narrower. In this particular case the Baganda clans and the tribe as such have become wider, incorporating many Rwandans and Burundians, while the latter groups have been narrowing as a result. It can be argued that this phenomenon has also occurred in other tribes and ethnicities (mainly in Western Uganda) that welcomed these refugees during the period of political turmoil dating from the late 1950s and early 1960s Hutu-Tutsi revolutions in Rwanda and Burundi.

2.1.4 *Ethnicity and social theory*

The preceding sections have dwelt on the concept, nature and boundaries of ethnicity as an identity. Ethnicity has been understood as a permanent and significant identity, both personally and socially. This is especially because an ethnic group, and consequently one's ethnic identity, is determined by a self-perceived inclusion of people who claim to

themselves (and the group) a common ancestry and a set of shared cultural traits. It is also, as underlined above, determined by how the individual within the group is perceived by those outside (Barth, 1969; Steward, 2010). But why and when are some perceptions (both of group members [of] themselves and by others) seen as being more significant than others? Anthropologists have, over the years, had sharply different views on this question. Ronald Atkinson (1999) for instance, citing Crawford Young (1993), identifies a three-part typology of the various approaches to ethnicity among Africanist scholars from the 1950s to the 1990s: at one extreme is instrumentalism, and at the opposite extreme there is primordialism. The third approach, social constructivism, is depicted as having more in common with instrumentalism.

2.1.4.1 *The instrumentalist theories of ethnicity*

Instrumentalists view ethnicity "as being developed instrumentally, to be used by groups and their leaders in order to achieve political or economic goals" (Stewart, 2008: 8). It is used by them, as it were, as a weapon in political combat and social competition. Instrumentalism thus has a material focus. It has been exploited in history, instrumentalists argue, by members of the political elite for their own class interests. Stewart, cited above, identifies several such instances:

i) Migrant groups in the US maintained and enhanced ethnicity in order to promote their economic interests.

ii) Ethnicity has been used by both the Nazis in the 1930s and the Hutus in 1994 to enhance group identities and mobilise support prior to conflicts with the Jews and the Tutsis respectively.

iii)   More recently, Osama bin Laden and several Al-Qaeda-allied extremist Islamists have appealed to Muslim consciousness in what they call a 'religious war' against the West.

Ironically, and it has been stated earlier in this chapter (section 2.1.2), many historians believe that the 'Hutu'-'Tutsi' tags in Rwanda were a creation by the Belgians of two purported 'tribes' out of a people who had never before considered themselves different except for their occupational inequalities. Effectively, two tribes or two ethnicities were instrumentally created out of one and the same people to serve the colonial strategy of divide and rule. Uganda itself, the main subject of this study, is no stranger to the political elite overemphasizing the ethnic divide for class interests (see chapter 3, section 3.2), probably one of the reasons tribal divisions have been more pronounced than in its neighbours Tanzania and (until very recently) Kenya.

One could thus see in instrumentalism both the reality of creating and of enhancing and using (existing) ethnic blocks to promote political interests. Only in this way can one account both for 'ethnicities' and 'group identities' that have been created purely to enhance particular interests, and others that have existed and defined their unique identity even without, or before any encounter with political machinations.

The instrumental utilization of the tribal factor has been highlighted in the introduction to this study as emanating from the early days of African colonization. 'Tribes', where they existed at all, were more finely defined and considered as distinct units, each under a chief to facilitate indirect rule. In many other cases, as Meredith (also cited in the introduction) reiterates, "tribal labels were imposed on hitherto undifferentiated groups" (Meredith, 2005: 154). Later on, while pro-independence

nationalists would manage to unite the African populace and galvanize them for the anti-colonial cause regardless of their ethnicities, once independence had been achieved they reverted to their ethnic loyalties. To quote Meredith again:

> Ambitious politicians found they could win votes by appealing for ethnic support and by promising to improve government services and to organise development projects in their home area. The political arena became a contest for scarce resources ... Primary loyalty remained rooted in tribal identity. Kinship, clan and ethnic considerations largely determined the way people voted. The main component of African politics became, in essence, kinship corporations (Meredith, 2005: 156).

The instrumentalists' interpretation of ethnic identity, itself on the extreme end of a three-part typology, is thus tenable both as a creation and/or a conscious depiction of a people as a disparate ethnic entity, at one extreme, and as the utilization of existing and self-defining ethnic groups as weapons in political combat on the other. And given the facts from our contemporary history, it can be argued that this ethnic construct, as far as Uganda (and Africa at large) is concerned, is as real as it is theoretically logical.

2.1.4.2   *The primordialist theories of ethnicity*

Primordialists, on the other hand, view ethnic identities as a given – as an inner essence. Primordialism as a theory contends that culture has a fundamental mandate in ethnicity. The minimal defining features of primordialism, according to Chandra (2012), also referred to in section 2.1.3 above, are the three propositions that unite the many variants from social science, comparative politics and economics, and are consistent with the

dictionary definition,[9] namely that "ethnic identities are singular, fixed and *exogenous* to human processes" (2012: 136). On some of the views to which the primordialist interpretations of ethnic identities are imposed as a label, Chandra writes:

> The view that they are *sui generis*, with no social source (Eller and Coughlan 1996); the view that they are biologically determined; the view that they involve strong emotional attachment and behaviour based on such attachment (Eller and Coughlan 1996; Gil-White 1999); the view that they are historically given (Eller and Coughlan 1996; Motyl, 2002: 233); the view that conflicts take place because of ancient hatreds (Fearon and Laitin, 2000b: 849); the view that emotions matter in ethnic conflict (Brubaker, 1996: 14); the view that ethnic attachments are "deeply rooted" (van den Berghe, 1981: 17).

"For primordialists", argues Stewart, "ethnic identity is etched deep in the subconscious of the individual from birth" (Stewart, 2008: 8). With primordialism, ethnicity is viewed as a pre-determined weapon in the pursuit of collective advantage, to the effect that ethnic tensions cannot be helped anyway. Naturally pre-existing groups share what journalist – scholar Harold Isaacs, cited in Atkinson (1999), calls "basic group identity", which provides "at least the promise of emotional security, belongingness, and self-esteem for its members" (Atkinson, 1999: 22). Epstein sees in primordialism a viable explanation for the "powerful emotional charge" of the "affective dimension" of ethnic behaviour (Epstein, 1978: 5). Crawford Young, one of the most articulate scholars of African political

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[9] Chandra specifically refers to the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of "primordial" as "Of, pertaining to, or existing at or from the beginning; first in time, original, primeval. Also, from which another thing develops or is derived; on which another thing depends; fundamental, radical." (Oxford English Dictionary, under "Primordial").

systems, is cited by Atkinson as seeing in primordialism a compliment and/or completion of instrumentalism. It can do this, Atkinson writes,

> by explaining the power of the 'affective tie' through which interest is pursued, and by capturing the passionate dimension latent in ethnic conflict, its capacity to arouse deep fears, anxieties, and insecurities and to trigger collective aggression inexplicable in terms of simple material pursuit of interests (Atkinson, 1999: 22).

It will be argued in chapter 3 that in the multi-ethnic society that Uganda is, instrumentalism is seen in light of the ethnic groups that have existed, defined their unique identities, and become historically antagonistic even before they were linked into the same colony; even before any encounter with colonial and post-colonial politics. There is a sense of complementarity between primordialism and this particular understanding of instrumentalism. Naturally existing groups are seen, in their ancient primeval entities, to have set the stage for today's instrumentalist state of the African political setting. It is with this complementary relationship between primordialism and instrumentalism, as well as my own interpretation of the latter - which emphasizes both the realities of creating and of enhancing or using (existing) ethnic blocks to promote political interests – that we can explain such possible objections as to why ethnic groups change over time,[10] as well as the many tribal distinctions in Africa that were the invention of colonial

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[10] Several authors have written about the possibilities of change in both individual identity and group boundaries and collective identity (Horowitz, 1975); change in ethnic attributes and activated categories and concepts related to them (Chandra, 2012: 133-134); and change because ethnicity is neither fixed nor inherently absolute, but rather dynamic, negotiable and subject to change (Bangura, 2006; Parker and Rathbone, 2007).

powers.[11] Consideration of the former objection leads us to the third and last approach to ethnicity among Africanist scholars: constructivism.

2.1.4.3 *The constructivist theories of ethnicity*

Constructivism, as mentioned earlier, is depicted by social theorists as having more in common with instrumentalism, especially with that aspect and/or interpretation of instrumentalism this author has underlined above as the enhancing and using of existing ethnic boundaries of ethnicity for social-political purposes. Stewart succinctly supports this view:

> Constructivists too believe that ethnicities are frequently used instrumentally for political purposes, but their emphasis is on the 'making' and 'remaking' of ethnic boundaries that must occur to make such instrumentalism possible. Differences are emphasized, even invented, by leaders in order to construct social groups. Such construction is an ongoing process which may reinforce existing group boundaries or develop new ones following the political and social motivation of the leaders responsible for such construction (Stewart, 2008: 9).

There is an instrumentalist tone to this depiction of constructivism, and it is embedded in the dual aspect of making and re-making ethnic boundaries; emphasizing or even inventing differences; and reinforcing existing group boundaries or developing

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[11] I have already cited the example of the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda as a creation of colonial powers. In addition, it has been claimed that "Modern Central African tribes are not so much survivals from a pre-colonial past but rather colonial creations by colonial officers and African intellectuals" (Frances Stewart [2008], citing van Binsbergen 1976, and Ranger, 1983: 248).

new ones. Constructivism, greatly influenced by Anderson's conceptualisation of nations as 'imagined communities' (1983), is thus seen as evolving, redefining itself, and being re-defined by others (Atkinson, 1999). Constructivism thus defines ethnicity not as an empirically observable and static social system, but rather as a processional and fluctuating social phenomenon. With constructivism "ethnic groups arise, crystallize, decay and even disappear as identifiable units under certain historical conditions" (Amone, 2010: 10). Constructivism is, as it were, premised on human agency, and on the inherently dynamic and negotiable nature of ethnicity.

Constructivism has, under the circumstances, been depicted as refuting the primordialist view of ethnicity as a given. As Chandra puts it, constructivist arguments about ethnic identities, taken together, refute their "singularity" and demonstrate that individuals can have "repertoires" of multiple ethnic identities. They refute their "exogenous" nature, and demonstrate that ethnic identities can often be "endogenous" to processes such as modernization, state collapse, institutional design, violence, and political and economic competition. Ethnic identities, according to constructivists, can therefore be "multiple, fluid and endogenous" (Chandra, 2012: 140).

My sense, however, is that the three positions are not mutually exclusive. With the risk of sounding extreme, I would like to argue that there is a conciliatory aspect to constructivism and primordialism as there is to instrumentalism and primordialism. It follows therefore that constructivism neither denies nor takes the two earlier theories for granted, but builds upon them. Indeed not all ethnicities and ethnic identities, at least going by the working definitions for the current research – namely, one's belonging to a characteristic human group, sharing such traits as race, religion and language in common,

and membership and identity being generally acquired at birth and maintained by an inter-play of the self-definition of the members of a group, as well as the group's definition of other groups – have been the instrumental creation and/or re-creation of social-political leaders. Some have been, but most have just evolved with time and due to imposed incentives like political competition and modernization, and it is not entirely illogical to assume that they have at one time been (even in the short term) singular, fixed and exogenous. Constructivism, like instrumentalism, cannot and does not start *ex nihilo*. It is exercised on naturally existing ethnicities, which, in the constructivist's view, may not be taken for granted and may not be accepted as givens.

The state of Africa, and indeed Uganda, during and after colonialism, testifies to this phenomenon. Constructivism, like instrumentalism, has proved its political effectiveness on three chronological fronts: during the pre-colonial reconstruction of the continent, as the Europeans bargained over their respective spheres of influence; during the pro-independence movement days, when nationalist African leaders built new and often instrumentalist boundaries and loyalties; and now, and the ongoing, often gruelling and far too costly opposition to the post-colonial order. The state of the nation in Uganda will be briefly discussed in chapter 3 with examples from our colonial and post-colonial days of both the premordialist and instrumentalist dynamics of our ethnic settings. It can be assumed that in the current inquiry into "grassroots perceptions of ethnicity and federalism", constructivism, like instrumentalism, will be a big factor upon which the future and a new order might be predicated. Table 2 summarises the theory, perception and emphasis described above in the three-part typology of the various approaches to ethnicity among Africanist scholars.

Table 2. Social theories at a glance.

Theory	Ethnic Identity perceptions	General Emphasis
Primordialism	Social bonding is immemorial, discrete and timeless	Ethnicity is a cultural given
Instrumentalism	Social bonding can be 'fused' by the powerful, whether it is natural or artificial, from a variety of ethnic heritages	Ethnicity is often the creation of the political elite as a weapon in political combat
Constructivism	Social bonding is socially constructed even if individuals are not conscious of it	Making and remaking of ethnic boundaries which are also necessary for the instrumental achievement of political goals

Source: author.

2.1.5 Ethnicity and horizontal inequalities

> "Remove the secondary causes that have produced the great convulsions of the world
> and you will almost always find the principle of inequality at the bottom. Either the
> poor have attempted to plunder the rich, or the rich to enslave the poor. If, then, a
> society can ever be founded in which everyman shall have something to keep and little
> to take from others, much will have been done for peace" (de Tocqueville 1835, quote
> from 1954 edition, p. 266, cited in Stewart, 2009: 1).

For better or worse, ethnic groups tend to have, as part of their identity, a conscious
feeling of both belonging and of having an important role to play in carrying out the
group's shared destiny. They tend to be generically organised, with "a loyalty among
members which binds them into a moral community" (Reminick, 1983: 11). In multi-
ethnic societies, therefore, the experiences of one group tend to be the experiences of its
members. But these experiences are almost always likely to be different. Each group in
Africa's ethnically divided societies "has its own egalitarian impulse, but that impulse
does not extend across ethnic lines, either by virtue of insurance or altruism" (Ranis,
2009: 5).[12] Thus groups tend to either dominate others or be marginalised. Dominant
groups tend to become dominant because of their privileged position as far as the control

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[12] Ranis attributes this phenomenon to Africa's generally low population density which makes it difficult to
generate the kind of trust which crosses ethnic boundaries that is required for the provision of public goods. The
more densely populated Asian countries where land scarcity and labour abundance lead to cooperation across
ethnicities tend to have less HIs.

of socio-economic and political resources is concerned. This results in horizontal inequalities (HIs).

HIs are inequalities among culturally defined groups that share a common identity within society. [13] HIs differ from vertical inequalities (VIs) which are a measure of inequality among individuals or households, rather than groups. HIs, according to Stewart (2008), have four status dimensions: cultural, social, economic and political. Each of these dimensions contains a number of elements, whose relevance in a particular case, as far as HIs are concerned, "depends on the nature of the society, its political system, its economy and its social structure" (Stewart 2008: 13). There is in fact the possibility of HIs becoming a source of deep resentment, and possible violent struggles when cultural differences coincide with economic and political differences between groups (Stewart and Brown, 2007). Indeed, while HIs might always have been in societies all over the world, identity-based conflicts have become much more pronounced since the end of the cold war. During the cold war whole countries and/or so-called liberation movements used to be identified with either the Warsaw or the NATO block. Dictators like Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia proclaimed Marxism-Leninism as the official ideologies of whole countries, and there was no room for socio-economic differences while everything from banks to rural land were being nationalised and private ownership abolished. With the obvious East-West divide gone, previously invisible social identity conflicts have become more visible. One can argue, however, that the pronounced economic, social and political inequalities Africa is fraught with today are not only ethnic

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[13] See note 1

identity problems, but also religious and political party ones. Sometimes they are a combination of all of these.

Both tribe and religion were for example major factors in marginalizing huge sections of the Ethiopian and the Sudanese population from the run-up to independence. The 'fault line' running across the Sudan around the twelfth parallel, as Meredith (2011) notes, has been the cause of endless conflict. It divides the Muslim north from the non-Muslim south, and 'Arab' from 'African'. At independence, the British were replaced mainly by northerners, who dictated the pace of cultural, socio-economic and political domination of southerners until 2011 when the country was finally split into two. As stated elsewhere (see section 2.2.3.2), during the first and so-called formal federation (1952-1962), the Ethiopian government was aided by Christian Tigrayan politicians to consolidate control over Muslim interests in the province of Eritrea. In a well-calculated orchestration of cultural, social and political domination, Eritrea's two main languages, Arabic and Tigrinya, were replaced by Amharic. The Eritrean flag was discarded, and Ethiopian law was imposed. Finally, the Eritrean assembly was persuaded to vote for the dissolution of the federation and its own existence in favour of annexation by Ethiopia. The formal federation had lasted only 10 years, and had succumbed to the undesirable domination by one section of the federation of another. These severe inequalities would end up in one of the most violent ethnic conflicts the continent has known: the Ethiopian-Eritrean war.

The political party, not necessarily ethnic or religion-based, is also often a key factor in bringing about inequalities. It is indeed a big factor in the current identity and inequality crisis in Uganda. There, the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM),

having transformed itself from a liberation front to a political party, has for almost three decades used government power to entrench itself politically, has enhanced the economic interests of its supporters, and has created a whole new culture of marginalising political opponents.

HIs are thus part and parcel of human society, though different societies experience them in different dimensions and intensities. First though a word on the nature of the four dimensions of His.

2.1.5.1 The economic dimensions of HIs

The economic dimensions of HIs include inequalities in access to and ownership of assets – financial, human, natural resource-based and social. In addition, they comprise inequalities in income levels and employment opportunities, which depend on such assets and the general conditions of the economy (Stewart 2009: 5). It can be argued that economic HIs are almost inevitably prevalent where political HIs exist. Also, because of the direct connection between accessing or owning of assets and the social welfare of individuals, the economic dimensions of HIs are sometimes referred to socio-economic inequalities.

Uganda, for instance, has had a history of unequal distribution of and access to all types of assets. It began with the colonial masters' own paternalistic formula. The 1900 Buganda agreement stipulated the redistribution and allocation of land to "the beneficiaries of the colonial order" (Mudoola, 1993: 13). These included the colonial power itself, the *Kabaka* (king of Buganda), leading Baganda chiefs, princes, princesses and the churches. Hundreds of common people, the *Bakopi*, were thus uprooted from

their ancestral lands. Political power meant economic power, both of which were unequally distributed. Most of the chiefs were Protestant following the defeat of Catholics and Moslems during the religious wars of 1888 and 1892.[14] The agreement, as Mudoola observes, consolidated the ascendency of (mainly Baganda) Protestant chiefs who constituted themselves into an establishment that jealously guarded their interests up to the events of 1966. Then there was the strategic north-south division of the economic life of the country by the colonialists (see section 3.2). This created an imbalance that resulted in gross economic HIs throughout the colonial period. It would also have consequences on the different ethnic groups' relative positions on the socio-economic prosperity index. Post-independence socio-economic inequalities in Uganda are discussed further in chapter 3.

Elsewhere in Africa, there have also been cases, notably Apartheid South Africa, of very sharp HIs of every type, mainly manifesting themselves in the economic sphere. As

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[14] At the peak of the religious rivalry in the kingdom of Buganda, the Muslims, as the most powerful group in terms of numbers and fire power, were able to oust the Christian groups, who in October 1888 fled to Kabula, on the border with Nkore. The Muslims proceeded to establish a Muslim state, but were eventually overcome by a revamped Christian force, helped particularly by the Protestant Lord Lugard. The Protestants clang to him and took the bigger share of the spoils, while the Catholics were unhappy that this help should be British and, therefore, Protestant. Lugard, as Ward (2002) observes, chose to side with the only group which supported him--the Protestants. When open warfare broke out in 1892, Lugard threw in his lot decisively with the Protestants. He directed his Maxim gun against the Catholics and routed them. This marked the beginning of Protestant hegemony in Ugandan politics.

Stewart observes, "HIs between blacks (77% of the population in 1996) and whites (10.9%) were entrenched by a white political elite (initially colonial) over the centuries preceding the democratic transition in 1993" (2008: 14). Citing Schrire (1996), Stewart reiterates thus:

> The history of South Africa's polity is dominated by the use of political power to attain and maintain socio-economic ends. A white minority inherited political power in 1910 and during the next eight decades used this power to entrench itself politically and to enhance its economic, cultural and social interests ... The real *per capita* GDP of blacks in 1980 was 8 per cent of that of whites; this had risen to 10 per cent by 1990 and just over 12 per cent by 2000 (van der Berg and Louw, 2004). Whites still owned 90 per cent of the land in 2007 (Stewart, 2008: 14, 17).

Cote d'Ivoire's descent into violence at the end of the 1990s was directly linked to the economic grievances of northerners as well as their resentment at insufficient state recognition of the Muslim religion (Langer, 2004; Stewart, 2010). With regard to Cote d'Ivoire, Langer offers a hypothesized interaction between political horizontal inequalities at the elite level and socio-economic horizontal inequalities at the mass level as a common respite for a breakdown into violence:

> Côte d'Ivoire's political stability during the period 1960-1980 illustrates that severe socio-economic inequalities at the mass level in and by themselves are not sufficient to produce violent conflict. An important factor that contributed to reducing the political salience of these prevailing socio-economic inequalities in this period was the positive economic environment. The strong economic progress mitigated the general discontent and prevailing socio-economic inequalities (Langer, 2004: 34; 2013: 68).

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It can be argued indeed that in the case of Apartheid South Africa, on the other hand, it was the existence of both severe political horizontal inequalities at the elite level and socio-economic horizontal inequalities at the mass level that contributed to the continuously explosive socio-political situation until the power sharing agreement of 1993-4.

Figure 1 shows the socio-economic prosperity inequalities among Cote d'Ivoire's main ethnic groups in 1994 and 1998 at the national level, while figure 2 shows similar inequalities in the same years at urban level.

Figure 1: Socio-Economic Prosperity Index of Cote d'Ivore, 1994 and 1998, National (N)
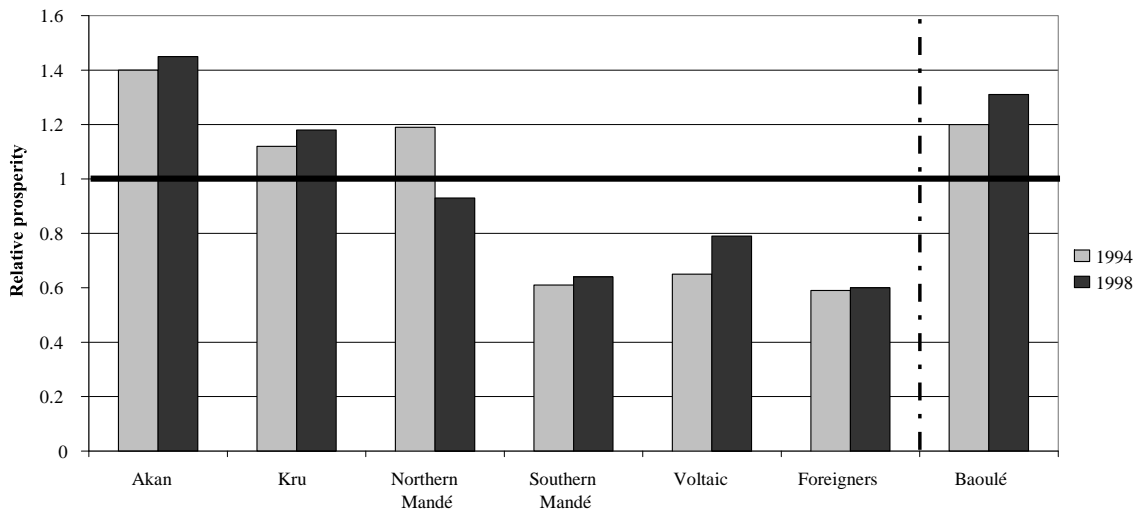
Source: Arnim Langer (2004: 20)

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Figure 2: Socio-Economic Prosperity Index of Cote d'Ivore, 1994 and 1998, Urban (U)

In Kenya, where "ethnic groups are to a large extent associated with particular regions, regional inequality necessarily implies ethnic inequality ... These regional and ethnic inequalities represent a most serious manifestation of HIs that has the potential for triggering violent conflict. The likelihood of such conflict is magnified by the fact that political mobilization has increasingly been along ethnic and regional lines." (Kimenyi, 2013: 153).

As will be apparent, there are socio-economic HIs in Uganda as well. And although these economic HIs are quite difficult to pin down to one cause, one of the major contributing factors are political inequalities which themselves have their roots in the political history of the country (see chapters 3 and 4). It will be argued that political inequalities have played a major role in entrenching socio-economic inequalities in Uganda because of the political hegemony of some ethnic groups.

2.1.5.2 The social dimensions of HIs

The social dimensions of HIs include inequalities in accessing a range of services such as education, health care and housing, and human outcome indicators such as education and health status. Generally taken together, these are all elements that are of paramount importance for the well-being of society. As noted above, the social dimensions of HIs are often discussed together with the economic dimensions due to the fact that such social services as education, health care and housing are also good economic welfare indicators.

The relevance and potential of social HIs to cause conflict do however differs from society to society. In South Africa, for instance, the levels and mode of education for the majority black population was important for their empowerment and emancipation in the face of Apartheid. The 1976 Soweto uprising, during which hundreds of black school children were shot dead while marching to protest the inferior quality of their education and demand the right to be taught in their own language, would set the pace and tone of black rebellion until the transfer of power in 1993.

While the element of housing is of critical importance in more developed economies, such as during the Northern Ireland conflicts, it is less important in many African countries, for instance, where people mainly construct their own houses (Stewart 2008). Instead, it is the issue of agricultural land, an economic dimension, which is of paramount importance. For instance, the controversial land reforms in Zimbabwe have largely contributed to the economic quagmire the country has been in for the best part of its three decades of independence. No one can argue though that they were, in the first place, an unnecessary gamble. There were gross inequalities as far as land ownership was concerned. At independence in 1980, 42% of the country's arable land, and two-thirds of

the best land, was owned by some 6,000 large-scale farmers, most of whom were white (Palmer, 1990; Meredith, 2011). The 1979 Lancaster House Conference had resolved to address the issue of land reform in a UK-sponsored "willing buyer, willing seller" exercise. When the UK government backed out at the end of the 1980s, the land resettlement program lost pace, and only a fraction of the peasant population had benefitted. Mugabe, meanwhile, bent on consolidating an authoritarian, one-party state, hijacked the program from the resettlement of landless black peasants for the use of his cronies, including police and army officers. Inequalities between the minority white land-owners and majority black peasants had now become inequalities between the latter and the new ruling elite emerging under Mugabe's auspices.

Land is also recognised as the most outstanding issue in the Israel – Palestinian conflict, with key issues being mutual recognition, borders, security, water rights, and the control of Jerusalem. In America, the world's biggest economy, it is the big gap between the rich and the poor that has caused the existence of deep social inequalities, especially as far as health care is concerned.

Both in my analysis of the state of Uganda today, in chapter 3, and in the grassroots narratives, chapter 4, socio-economic HIs in Uganda will be partly attributed to political inequalities resulting from the colonial and post-colonial exclusionary political systems. It must be argued, nevertheless, that socio-economic inequalities are rather tricky, and must be treated as such. There are, as Kimenyi has aptly argued, several other factors that may contribute to socio-economic inequalities, but "it is true that political inequalities do play a major role. This is because political influence concentrated among some ethnic groups is often used to direct resources to their specific communities" (Kimenyi, 2013:

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158). It can be argued, on the other hand, that political and cultural inequalities are clearer in their causes and attributes, and the claim to equity amidst these anomalies is more or less straightforward: respect peoples' cultures, create an inclusive political leadership, and ensure political stability.

2.1.5.3 The political dimensions of HIs

The political dimensions of His include inequalities in the distribution of political opportunities and power among groups, including control over the presidency, the cabinet, parliamentary assemblies, the bureaucracy, local and regional governments, the army and the police. They also encompass inequalities in peoples' capabilities to participate politically and to express their needs (Stewart 2009: 5). Section 2.2.3.2 on the African federal experience laments the tension between the desire and strife for political modernisation on one hand, and the so called "primordial solidarity groupings", namely kinship, clan, and tribe, on the other. They are cleavages which, by character, culturally, socially and politically have hindered the process of modernity in post-colonial Africa. They have been identified both as hindrances to the success of most of the post-colonial federal systems and as a cause of corruption and anarchy in many of the unitary republics that emerged upon the collapse of the original federations.

This corruption and anarchy can be seen as both the cause and the consequence of deep political HIs with almost all independent African states experiencing the domination of all levels of political power as well as the bureaucracy and the security apparatus by particular ethnic groups at the expense of others. Extreme cases of heavy-handed dominance and exclusion of some groups by others have often caused deep resentment and many violent struggles. The Sudanese civil war and subsequent cessation of the

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South, the Darfur conflict, the Ethiopia-Eritrea war, are all cases in point. In Uganda, too, political HIs have been almost routine since the abrogation of the federal constitution in 1966, which has resulted in a systematic entrenchment of the hegemony of one ethnic or political cleavage after the other. This is a trend that continues under the current constitutional republic, and its ethnic connection and tendency to increase the salience of identity differences and conflicts will be discussed at length in the subsequent chapters.

2.1.5.4 The cultural dimensions of HIs

The cultural dimensions of HIs include the extent to which a society recognizes or fails to recognize a group's cultural practices including dress, food, music, crafts and architecture, laws, customs and institutions, religious practices and language use. A case is cited in section 2.2.4.3 of post-independence Sudan, for example, where the powerful, predominantly Arab and Moslem Khartoum Government wanted to impose their religion and culture on the Christian and animist south. The issue of religion and culture was of paramount importance in the struggle for dominance, on the part of the Arab north, and for equality, on the part of the black African south, all the way to the referendum and subsequent independence in 2011. Language, on the other hand, was a key issue in Ethiopia in the years leading to the break-up of the first federation. Emperor Selassie forcefully replaced Eritrea's two main languages, Arabic and Tigrinya, with Amharic, subjecting the latter to a very divisive and demeaning horizontal inequality (Meredith, 2005).

In Uganda, Idi Amin's brutal regime is also remembered for dividing the country on religious lines with the prevalence of Moslems and the marginalization of Christians. Idi Amin, a self-professed Moslem, was keen to bolster the identity of his religious

community and marginalize the other denominations. This was probably because, as Nugent notes, "he felt insecure from the start because he had come to power through his ethnic clansmen, which is fellow Kakwa who numbered only some 60,000" (Nugent, 2010: 232).[15]

Going by the opening quote from de Tocqueville, it is not always the rich and powerful enslaving the poor and weak. As I write this, the powerful African nation of Nigeria is being terrorised by a previously unknown Islamic extremist group called Boko Haram. They have for many years now been on the rampage, denying whole communities a right to education, a choice of dress, and a choice of worship. Through a brutal campaign of terror, they have marginalized literally the whole country, including the government, as they attempt to bolster the identity of their own religious extremism. They are bent on imposing a whole new culture designed on their own beliefs.

In the case of Uganda, too much power has been consolidated at the centre of each and every government since Obote's imposition of the 1967 unitary constitution, but with the worst possible performance records as far as democracy, human security, individual rights and social equity is concerned. Successive post-independence regimes have premised their survival on handing out state resources to their political hangers-on. These have been mainly tribal and/or party loyalists. They have been 'paid', as it were, to team

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[15] Amin took the elevation of Islam further by identifying more with the Arabs and jettisoning the Israelis who had actually helped him to power. He even claimed later that he actually hailed from the Nubians who, as Nugent observes, consisted of "remnants of Sudanese troops from the nineteenth century who had come to be associated with Islam and petty trade" (2010:233).

up with leaders bent on consolidating power at the centre. The result has been the personalisation of the state, its collapse into mini-bureaucracies, and the neglect of the people at the grassroots of society. This has resulted further in gross HIs manifesting themselves in the various dimensions as described above and as summarised in table 3 below.

Table 3. HIs dimensions and features.

DIMENSION	COMMON AREAS OF INEQUALITY
1. Political dimension	1. Participation in government Participation in army and police
2. Economic dimension	2. Land Private capital Government infrastructure Natural resources Aid Private & government employment
3. Social dimension	3. Education Health services Safe water Housing
4. Cultural dimension	4. National holidays Cultural sites Cultural behaviour

Source: Adapted from Stewart (2008).

To challenge the hegemony of the centrist parties and their often tribal tendencies, a return to a federal constitution is often touted. Would Uganda be in better shape if political power was shared mutually between the central government and tribal and regional bases? Would this serve better to address the populace's major problems,

especially gross economic decadence, inequality and the biting poverty? Would the urge to develop their own local bases prompt politicians to develop a deep and resilient commitment to their roles as the people's representatives and to the consolidation of democracy? But what is federalism in its conceptual framework, and how does it contribute to the peaceful co-existence of diverse groups?

2.2 Understanding Federalism

2.2.1 Meaning and utility

Broadly speaking, "federalism" means a separation and allocation of the governing power between a nation and its constituent parts. It is "an arrangement in which two or more self-governing communities share the same political space" (Karmis and Norman, 2005: 3). It is, in terms of nation-states, "a principle of self-determination for regional federated units" (Turton, 2006: 1).

The origins of these federal units may differ from federation to federation. In some cases like the United States and Australia, aggregations of self-governing, former British colonies (of mainly European migrants) were created regardless of ethno-cultural identities. Other federations like Belgium, Ethiopia, and Canada, however, originate from ethno-cultural groups, distinguishing themselves from other groups either by language, dialect, religion, ethnicity or race. In such cases, federalism is often debated in relation to ethnic diversity, HIs, citizenship, justice, and stability. It is even sometimes seen as an alternative to interethnic violence, civil wars, and secession (Turton, 2006). The current study on ethnicity and the possibility of federalism in Uganda may be viewed in this light. The possibility and practicality of using a federal framework to ensure a more peaceful co-existence of Uganda's diverse ethnic groups is being examined. Just like Nigeria,

Africa's largest and longest experiment in the use of federal institutions to manage cultural-territorial pluralism and conflict, the Ugandan federation would be "disaggregative" in that it would be "formed by the devolution of the existing unitary polity rather than by the coming together of sovereign units" (Suberu, 2006: 65). Hypothetically, but also as evidenced by the majority grassroots perception, ethnic power-sharing, along the lines of Lijphart's consociational design,[16] would, through inclusive governance, promote political stability and ensure sustainable socio-economic development.

'Federation' derives from the Latin *foedus*, which means a league between states; a contract, covenant, or agreement.[17] All in all, federal political partnerships are mainly formed by the *aggregation* of formally distinct political units. This has been the case for the United States and Switzerland, two of the successful examples outlined in the next section. There are cases though when federations are formed by *devolution* within previously unitary systems in order to form new partners. The Belgian and Nigerian federations are a case in point. There are federations however that have been born out of both processes. The Canadian federation of 1867, as Karmis and Norman (2005) observe, involved not only the bringing together of colonies but also the division of the single

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[16] In this model, the centrifugal tendencies inherent in a plural society are encountered by the cooperative attitudes and behavior of the leaders of different segments of the population" (Lijphart 1977, 1). Arend Lijphart's model was arguably inspired by Arthur Lewis' earlier "pluralist democracy" model, a combination of three distinctive institutional arrangements: proportional representation, coalition government, and federalism or provincial devolution (Mine, 2006: 347-348).

[17] Cassel's Latin dictionary, under FOEDUS.

province established by the 1840 Act of Union into two new provinces, Quebec and Ontario.

Theoretically, therefore, there are several ways to apply federal principles. Definitions and meanings of the concept may also differ, but the principle is the same: federalism is a set of ideas about how power should be shared and divided in society. To use a biological analogy, this broad idea maybe called the genus of political organization of which there are many species (Elazar, 1987: 6-7; McHenry, 1997: 4). It is this genus that we shall adopt for the purposes of this study.

Elazar (1987) is one scholar who contends in succinct terms that federalism is a very ambiguous term "concerned simultaneously with the *diffusion* of political power in the name of liberty, and its *concentration* on behalf of unity or energetic government" (1987: 33). Elazar actually identifies six ambiguities in connection with federalism as a theoretical and operational concept: that there are several varieties of political arrangements to which the term "federal" has properly been applied; that federalism is directed to the achievement and maintenance of both unity and diversity; that federalism involves both the structure and the process of government; that federalism is both a political and social-cultural phenomenon; that federalism concerns both means and ends; and that federalism is pursued for both limited and comprehensive purposes. Besides these conceptual ambiguities, federations face the practical challenges of both time and change as they try to either establish or make their political systems relevant. They are born into history, and thus face the effects of the passage of time as well as the dynamics of changing historical events.

Elazar provides a useful description of a viable federal framework, especially with his idea of a "nation state" in the German model that gives political identity to previously existing nations. Buganda and other tribal states, especially the other four kingdoms of Ankole, Bunyoro, Busoga and Toro, saw themselves as "nations" before the British created them into a single, artificial political entity they called Uganda. The new nation, created from a highly diverse assortment of ethnic groups, was administered by its colonial masters as a modified federal structure that recognised the five kingdoms as semi-autonomous entities and administered the remaining areas through administrative districts. What the British did in Uganda, and together with other European powers, in most other African countries, was to use what Elazar calls the principle of "fostering a sense of common citizenship within a polity" (Elazar, 1987: 39).

It can be argued that the central premise of this study is in accord with what Elazar also calls the main claim of the modern state, which is also reflected in modern federalism, "in its effort to deal with the problem of creating and maintaining unity in polities where diversity has to be accommodated and, at the same time, is an expression of the interest and effort to try to prevent the simple concentration of power in the centre ..." (Elazar, 1987: 39).

In Uganda, the centralised, autocratic post-independence regimes of Obote and Amin were hardly any improvement from the British colonial government whose strategic divide and rule policies left the country ethnically stratified, with some communities more politically peripheral and others more urbanised and consolidated in national affairs. This colonial instrumentalism, after all, had just consolidated diverse pre-existing cleavages "with no common history, culture, language or religion" (Meredith, 2005: 1). Colonial

policy only exacerbated such divides, and a "theme of ethnic rivalry" (Mazrui, 1975: 449) has continued to bedevil Uganda through independence to the current republic. Elazar's analysis thus lays a good background for our current inquiry. How does a multi-ethnic polity that is Uganda effectively unite for an energetic central government while remaining separate to preserve the integrities of the respective ethnic units?

It has been demonstrated that a Power Dispersing (PD) design of political institutions, which is typically decentralising and power-sharing, is more suited for Africa's horizontal cleavages which are characterized by ethnic, cultural, religious and geographical divides (Lijphart, 1977; Mine et al., 2013). It can be argued, therefore, that national models, such as the Swiss one described in section 2.2.3 below, should be the most suitable model for multicultural African states, not the overly strong, winner-takes-all unitary system of government which has not worked well in Uganda and in most African countries for complex reasons. One is that in these multi-cultural societies, cultural values, beliefs and languages are not only heterogeneous but may lead to different political preferences that do not change. These are preferences and choices so embedded in the histories and cultures of individual ethnic groups that they are not always easy to accommodate in a unitary democratic setting.

The other reason is the above-mentioned consequences of the colonial policy and system of divide and rule. This system empowered some groups, ethnic or religious, over others. It also created heightened group awareness among the colonial subjects, which unfortunately was carried on into the struggle for independence. Most independent African states inherited a strongly centralized apparatus at the national level. In many countries, the argument at independence was that unitary governments were the only way

to keep culturally diverse nations together (Meredith, 2005; Mutiibwa, 1992; Thomson, 2010). Generally speaking though, the picture of unitary states in Africa over half a century of independence is grim. It has worked in fewer countries than it has failed. This point is discussed and exemplified in section 2.2.4.

The third reason is that a culture of patronage and clientelism has been created in countries like Uganda where, for instance, a lot of power is invested both in the executive and in the military and security forces, which, moreover, are often dominated by certain ethnic groups. It is a culture of bias and imbalance, and it necessitates a rethinking of the structure of the state. It necessitates a "consensus" model of democracy which disseminates cultural, fiscal, and political powers, even to the structural minorities, and which ensures that even they have a better chance of inclusion.

I note, however, that African models of federalism do not necessarily have to and cannot effectively replicate the European or North American models. This is because, as Michel Burgess suggests,

> The living legacies of federalism in Africa suggest that the federal experiments on this continent will continue in the foreseeable future to be institutional responses to the complexities of the colonial heritage, the resilience of the post-colonial nation state projects, the nature of political leadership in each case, the particular constellation of cleavage patterns in each state, and in some cases the degree to which the international community can promote them. Federalism in Africa is likely to remain locked in a culture, development and democracy dynamic that will work itself out in further federal or quasi- federal experiments in the future, but they will emerge increasingly as African

federal models rather than replicas of European or North American experiences (Burgess, 2012: 20).

Indeed questions might be asked about the legitimacy of looking at federalism as a general principle without specific variants according to which it is practiced. By the logic of this argument, the following section will discuss the cultural, fiscal and political variants of federalism, by which, as hinted above, power should be divided and shared among autonomous, ethnic / regional units.

2.2.2 *The three variants of federalism* vis-a-vis *the three dimensions of HIs*

In theory, federalism can be defined and practiced either in all, or separately, in any of its three variants: cultural federalism, fiscal federalism and political federalism. Practically speaking, however, federalism is often practiced and evaluated in terms of its shared and divided contribution to all the cultural, socio-economic and political welfare of two or more constitutionally defined orders of government. It should be noted, however, that the *cultural* variant is more significant in federations where the constituent parts are ethno-cultural groups distinguishing themselves from each other by language, dialect, religion, ethnicity or race. The *political* and *socio-economic* variants are on the other hand almost always implied in the many and complex political, sociological and legal definitions of federalism itself.

The significance of the consideration and evaluation of federalism in its three variants is that in theory, it can give solutions to the three corresponding status dimensions in which culturally defined salient groups experience HIs: the political status, the socio-economic status, and the cultural status. The question arising from the social

consideration of ethnicity and federalism will, therefore, be whether federalism gives solutions to HIs – the tendency of ethnic groups either to dominate others or be marginalised.

Federalism in Uganda, as mentioned elsewhere (see section 2.2.1 above), will thus be debated, first and foremost, in view of the varying experiences of a people belonging to multiple tribes, in view of the intractable challenge of HIs, and in view of justice and stability.

2.2.2.1 Cultural federalism

In the American context, 'cultural federalism' has taken on a special meaning referring to issues like abortion and same-sex marriages where a "leave-it-to-the-states" approach is considered the best way to accommodate these cultural debates while maintaining the harmony of the union (Sager, 2006). In multi-ethnic societies like Uganda, however, cultural federalism is not just about social issues: it is also about a people identifying themselves by the symbols that define the epitome of their peoplehood. They are the physical and cultural-spiritual factors determining the identity of an ethnic group: "language or dialect, kinship, religion, physical proximity, nationality or physical features of the people" (Schermerhorn, 1970: 12). These symbols and values should be part of the motivation and the goal of negotiating autonomy in multicultural societies like Uganda.

At independence, national self-government was regarded as "the inevitable and necessary product of Africa's political evolution … In evolutionary social science, tribes were out of time, and out of place, in independent Africa" (Peterson, 2012: 15). This meant, however, that much of what had been disrupted by colonialism was not restored.

In cultural terms, for example, there is the "highly complex patchwork quilt of cultural communities not all of which are engaged in the formal secular political authority of the state" (Burgess, 2012: 6). They emanate from the tribal model, which, "with its essential unity, clear body of customary law, and unambiguous legitimacies, is better suited to the task of maintaining public tranquillity" (Kopytoff, 1989: 5). Among the Baganda and other Bantu groups of Uganda, for example, these unwritten customary laws and legitimacies, which form their very social being,[18] can best be protected if they have a stake in the central institutional decision making process. It is for this particular reason that the Kingdom of Buganda has been embroiled in a love-hate relationship with President Museveni and the National Resistance Movement (NRM) since they assumed power in 1986. There has particularly been a fundamental clash of interests as the kingdom strives to keep its territory of cultural influence, while Mr. Museveni is bent on strengthening his grip on power by dividing up traditional ethnic territories into minute districts for easy control.

In September 2009, for example, Ronald Mutebi, the Kabaka (king) of Buganda, was blocked from visiting one of his kingdom's counties in Kayunga-Bugerere, which sparked riots among his subjects. These resulted in deaths, detentions and destruction of property. The official figure of the dead as a result of the riots was put at 27, although other media accounts say that many more people died. Moreover, even though kingdoms and other cultural institutions were officially restored in 1993 and even legalised in the 1995 constitution, since then a stand-off has continued to grow in Ankole between those

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[18] The Bantu, in their related languages, refer to this social existence and its purpose as *Ubuntu*, in Zulu, and *Obuntu* in Luganda and other related languages.

who want the king, and President Museveni who argues that the support of the people of Ankole must be sought first and that district councils have to pass resolutions supporting such. Why is Ankole exceptional? Those who agitate for its restoration argue that they want the monarchy back to promote and sustain Ankole culture. The President and others against it argue that it was repressive. "Monarchists under their association of Ankole Cultural Trust (ACT) have said President Museveni is the only reason Ankole Kingdom has not been restored." As mentioned elsewhere (see sections 4.1.1.2 and 4.3), some observers believe that President Museveni, a Muhima situated outside the aristocracy, blocked the restoration of the Obugabe for patronage reasons.

Similarly, what is mainly at stake for the Karimajong, Iteso and other Nilotic tribes in the north and northeast of Uganda, to give another example, will be herding livestock, which is of tremendous social and cultural importance for them. Their customs revolve around it, and it will be at stake in the quest for cultural federalism. These, and other ethnic groups and their cultural identities, therefore, ultimately dictate their own socio-economic and political aspirations. Problems arise when the issue of cultural autonomy faces any discrepancies with regard to the law of the land. Some observers have claimed, in the case of Buganda, that the government started supporting smaller ethnic groups and leaders to weaken Buganda's traditional power. It was reported in the media, for example, that the President himself had stopped the *Kabaka*'s visit to Kayunga, which is a part of his kingdom, saying that the *Kabaka* should first hold negotiations with Captain Baker

Kimeze, the cultural leader of the Banyala minority sub-ethnic group seeking autonomy from Buganda.[19] The Banyala reside in Bugerere, Kayunga District.

Cultural autonomy, therefore, is very much part of the national debate in the face of Uganda's ethnic diversity and in view of justice and stability. Cultural groups deprived of their autonomy may be subjected to cultural HIs. The role of federalism in abetting these inequalities should be an important part of the current discussion. How much it features in the grassroots perceptions of ethnicity and federalism in Uganda will be of significance importance to the main question of this research. Grassroots perceptions in this study seem to suggest that the cultural value of traditional institutions is best protected by an ethnically-based devolution of power (see narratives in chapter 4).

2.2.2.2 Fiscal federalism

Fiscal federalism is concerned with understanding which economic functions and instruments are best centralized, and which are best placed in the sphere of decentralised levels of government.[20] The major goals of any fiscal policy are to achieve or maintain a high rate of sustainable economic growth, and to achieve or maintain full employment. In addition, and in a special way, fiscal federalism, or any other form of economic decentralisation for that matter, aims at achieving the highest levels of fiscal autonomy and fiscal responsibility (Bosch and Duran, 2008).

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[19] *The Observer*, September 21, 2009; *New African*, November, 2009.

[20] See *Fiscal federalism." Definitions.net.* STANDS4 LLC, 2016. Accessed 9 August 2016, from <http://www.definitions.net/definition/Fiscal federalism>.

In multi-ethnic Uganda, from the days of colonialism through independence to the current republic, employment opportunities and other economic benefits have largely been premised on state-sponsored patronage. Economic power lies in the hands of a few centrally-appointed political leaders, and the imbalance of power among tribes, including intermittent periods of domination by some over others, has always resulted in gross horizontal economic inequalities. The 1986 revolution that brought the incumbent President Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Movement to power initially promised a lot regarding not only security and individual freedoms, but also equality and sustainable economic development across the ethnic divide. Museveni is a good student of Uganda's history of ethnically-based political divisions and patronage-driven economic inequalities. He thus set out to consolidate his own power by pretending to transcend these divisions. However, as the guerrilla-movement-turned political party stayed on longer and longer, it became entrenched into electoral politics. The desire to win elections thus triggered off a massive patronage machine and a unilateral exercise of political and economic authority to service it. All the efforts at decentralisation and bringing socio-economic services closer to the people have thus been frustrated by inward-looking clientelistic networks. As a result, the majority of people, being outside these networks, experience gross economic insecurities (Ssali, 2016). And the more this state of affairs persists, the more the pressure builds for more genuinely decentralised economic management.

Fiscal federalism is also, therefore, an integral part of the federal debate in Uganda. The inability to deliver services is seen as leading to growing public disenchantment that could ultimately lead to the undoing of Uganda's attempt both to ensure equitable and

sustainable economic development and to achieve democracy through the current system of decentralisation (World Bank Report, 1998; Tangri, 2000; Mwenda, 2007; Manyaka and Katono, 2010; Tripp, 2010). One may speculate that with the ethnic federal solution, government subsidies to the local ethnic federal units will not only be used more responsibly for the local cause by local leaders, but it will also be immensely augmented by locally raised revenues. Indeed, as Olum argues,

> Under federalism, tax collection and expenditure should reside in the federal states. The argument is that under federalism, the states will have economic autonomy to determine their tax rates to raise sufficient revenue to balance their budgets (recurrent and capital). Revenue generation would typically come from land; ground rates; stamp duties on documents; estate duties and inheritance taxes from assets, such as buildings; occupational permits; commercial transaction levies for various services; borrowing from banks; and grants from the central government, especially equalization grants for depressed states that have inadequate taxable resources (Olum, 2013: 57).

It can be argued that people are likely to be more cooperative in paying taxes and all types of revenues to their tribal bases than to central government-appointed leaders or to LCs which are increasingly seen as "organs of the people, the state, and the NRM – all in the same instance" (Tripp, 2010: 116). A recent example is the *"Taffali"*[21], a widely popular fundraising drive by the Prime Minister of Buganda for the renovation and upkeep of various kingdom properties.

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[21] "*Taffali*" is Luganda for "brick", and is being used to refer to the fundraising drive by the *Katikkiro* (prime minister) to enable the Baganda to engage in reconstructing the ancient kingdom's facilities, including the Kings' tombs at Kasubi.

It must also be noted that fiscal federalism, its function, and the factors for or against it are closely linked with political federalism; the division of power (a political perspective) is closely linked to the distribution of resources and services (an economic perspective). A genuine devolution of both finances and the power of decision making is indispensable if true federal democracy and national unity is to be achieved. It has been argued, for example, that even though in Uganda's decentralisation drive a large amount of finance (30 % of government expenditure) is being devolved, the centre has retained too much power. As a result, "there are grievances among groups excluded from the central government ... which could give rise to violent conflict at some point" (Stewart et al., 2013: 265). Decentralisation in Uganda, in both its political and fiscal frameworks, was meant to "set Uganda's subnational governments as the responsible agents for implementing national policies and delivering many crucial services at the local level" (Jean et al., 2010: 3). It was also seen as the most effective way of implementing the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) which was aimed at transforming Uganda into a middle-income country.[22] Indeed, there is a legal framework which clearly provides for the decentralisation process both in the national constitution [23] and in an Act of Parliament.[24] There is also a well-defined funding mechanism and set of responsibilities of the actors at all levels of government. The funding mechanisms are three-fold:

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[22] As a Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development national planning framework, the PEAP was drafted and launched in 1997, revised in 2000, 2004 and 2008, and replaced in 2010 by the National Development Plan (NDP). The latter has become a series of five-year plans relaunched in 2015 as NDP II.

[23] The whole of chapter 11 of the National Constitution (articles 176-207) is dedicated to Uganda's decentralisation policy.

[24] The Local Government Act 1997. Enacted in March 1997, it amends, consolidates and streamlines the existing law on local governments in line with the Constitution to give effect to the decentralisation and devolution of functions, powers and services (Uganda Legal Information Institute); see http://www.ulii.org/ug/legislation/consolidated-act/243

unconditional grants, which finance decentralised services and operations; conditional grants, which include disbursements to fund programmes[25] and projects agreed upon between the central government and the local governments; and equalization grants, given to some local governments lagging behind national average standards and development targets.[26]

There are concerns, however, about how this fiscal decentralisation has been implemented, especially due to the above-mentioned high levels of recentralisation, and the central government retaining too much power to maintain and run a patronage system under the guise of decentralisation (Sasaoka and Nyang'oro, 2013; Mwenda, 2007, 2009). Uganda is, nevertheless, experimenting with fiscal decentralisation, albeit with many challenges. It can be argued, therefore, that as a growing amount of literature suggests, the issue in Uganda, and in many other countries, is not "whether" but "how best" to fiscally decentralise. Grassroots perceptions in this study seem to suggest a preference for an ethnically-based decentralisation of government bureaucracy and service delivery (see narratives in chapter 4).

2.2.2.3 Political federalism

While fiscal federalism is linked to the more material aspects of governance, especially economic efficiency, political federalism is linked more to the essence of democracy. The

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[25] Unconditional grants account for about 10% of the central government's transfers to local governments, while conditional grants comprise approximately 90% (Government of Uganda, Fiscal Decentralisation in Uganda: Strategy Draft Paper (2002).

[26] See Commonwealth Local Government Fund, Local governments in East Africa – Uganda (http://www.clgf.org.uk/regions/clgf-east-africa/

main argument for local political autonomy, therefore, is that "it is claimed to give more freedom to the citizens" (Molander, 2004: 3). Other arguments presented by Molander and closely related to this in putting the individual citizen first are:

> (1) That the autonomous unit can offer individual citizens the basis of a community of a different kind than the national state can offer them.
>
> (2) That local autonomy provides citizens with more closeness and participation than the national state does. Geographical proximity to decision makers, in other words, translates into a deeper form of political nearness.
>
> (3) That local autonomy guarantees more efficiency, especially in the sense that public service production reflects citizen preferences better if decisions are made at the local level.
>
> (4) That local autonomy permits more experimentation due to adaptability resulting from close participation and efficiency.
>
> (5) That local decision makers know the local conditions better and can ensure needs-related production (Molander, 2004: 3-5).

It is evident from the above arguments that the political will to establish autonomous federal institutions serves to respond to both the socio-cultural and the economic wishes of the citizens. Providing the basis for community, closeness, and participation, for instance, serves to satisfy the inner person of individuals in their ethnic identity and its defining entities: language or dialect, kinship, religion, physical proximity, nationality or physical features of the people (Schermerhorn, 1970: 12). The federal

provision of efficiency, a spirit of experimentation and needs-related production, on the other hand, is a response to the economic wishes of the people.

In Uganda today, the government system is undoubtedly decentralised, but still it concentrates too much power in the president. For example, Articles 98, 99 and 113ff of the constitution give the president both immunity from prosecution while holding office, and almost unlimited powers to appoint people to key offices including the cabinet, judiciary, and security organs. Indeed, even at district level, the core unit of the current decentralising drive, the government maintains control of key governance mechanisms. As Tripp has succinctly noted,

> The president directly appoints the RDC, who represents the government and the president in the district and advises the district chairperson. The chief administrative officers (CAO) are appointed by and report to the LC 5; however the central government can influence these appointments (and has done so), because it controls the funding of district administration. Such political appointments ensure political control is maintained. These are generally not people with experience in administration; their main qualification is their allegiance to the NRM (Tripp, 2010: 117).[27]

But Uganda's heterogeneous societies have different political preferences which are embedded in their unique histories and cultures. They may, therefore, benefit more from some kind of autonomous powers of provincial (read ethnic-regional)

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[27] The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is technically the administrative head of a district. The CAO's responsibilities include spearheading public service in the district and the administration of the District Council. The Residential District Commissioner (RDC) is on the other hand regarded as the President's representative in the district and reports directly to the President. He is appointed by the central government on top of a popularly elected Local Council V (LCV), its chairman, and the council-appointed CAO.

administration and legislation as well as guaranteed representation in the central institutional decision-making process. The main objective of designing political institutions is to make them responsive to the wishes of the citizens and the public good (Muller, 2004). In principle, the socio-cultural reality and experiences of the people in a multi-ethnic society like Uganda could map out an almost natural setting for them to nurture their cultural aspirations and social initiatives towards working for the larger good instead of being overly concerned about their personal advancement.

Of the three variants of federalism, therefore, cultural federalism can be seen as an intrinsically essential part of multi-ethnic societies. Political and fiscal federalism can, on the other hand, be negotiated depending on the need and the best means of discerning and providing "the bundles of goods and services that citizens want" (Muller, 2004: 131). In other words, there is no intrinsic connection between federalism or any other political structure and solving a country's political and fiscal problems. The historical tragedy in Uganda is that all cultural institutions in the country were at one time abolished with all their centuries-long traditions and cultures. Worse still, the overly strong centrist government has failed over the decades to build strong and reliable political and economic institutions.

There is no causal relationship either between the national self-government path most African politicians chose at independence and the fortunes or misfortunes that have befallen the continent. It can be argued, nevertheless, that ethnically polarized societies are more likely to agree on the provisions of both political and fiscal power if they function as an autonomous unit in a shared arrangement. I will now look at a brief description of

some of the world's successful contemporary 'federations', some of which are in multicultural settings, before looking at 'federalism' in the African and Ugandan contexts.

2.2.3 Functioning western models

Some of the existing and functioning 'federations', such as the USA, Canada, Australia and Switzerland are among the most successful and wealthy nations in the world. In them we see the modern perception of a 'federation', by definition and identity "a type of polity operating a constitution which works on two levels of government: as a nation and as a collection of related but self-standing units" (Hicks, 1978: 4). The objective of a federation according to Hicks is a form of government for the people and by the people, which makes it inherently democratic, at least in the Western sense. Central to Hicks' definition of a federation is the fact that it seeks "on one hand to create and maintain a nation, on the other hand to preserve the integrity of the units, their identity, culture and tradition" (1978: 4). Hicks observes further that although in a rapidly changing world the relation between the centre and the units can never be static, a polity requires 3 essential government organs in order to qualify for the designation 'federation':

1.   A sizeable, freely elected Assembly; this, representative of all the units, standing for a fixed term of years, and with relative state membership conveniently related to population by some formal, but adjustable rules.

2.   An elected upper house (called the Senate in the American model) with equal representation of all the states as a means to ensure the smaller and weaker states can feel they can make a positive contribution to national policy decisions.

3.   A central government of quite a small number, capable of taking quick decisions, probably preparing the first draft of the national budget, and probably playing an important role in introducing new legislation or suggesting constitutional amendments (Hicks, 1987: 7).

Hicks notes further that a central government may take one of 3 forms, going by the experiences of successful federations:

(i)   An elected executive president who chooses the members of cabinet (government), as in the US model.

(ii)   Government by a committee of members elected by the assembly, as in the Swiss model, the chairman being the president of the republic, but with no (sole) executive powers of outstanding importance.

(iii)   The British model of cabinet government, adopted by Australia, where the parliamentary majority takes its leader as the prime minister and the cabinet is chosen by him. Ministers are members of parliament and responsible to it. This is different from the American system where the cabinet is appointed by the president and is responsible to him (Hicks, 1987: 7).

Hicks also underlines the important function of the Supreme Court as "a major safeguard in a federation for preserving democratic liberties and state rights" (1978: 8). It is an essential watchdog of the federal constitution and the rights and limitations of both the nation and the constituent parts; for as Hicks puts it, "it is not for nothing that the first thing a would be dictator wishes to do is to curtail the powers of the supreme

court, on the ground that it is essential for parliament to exercise unfettered powers" (1978: 8).

It can be assumed from Hicks' definition and description of a federation that serious considerations of the same for Uganda would require a committed reversal of the tendency of political patronage. Politicians in this model value devoting more effort to their own regional or local areas for the benefit of the whole federation. Grassroots views on this subject will be sought in this light, and will be discussed later with proper consideration of all possible obstacles due to Uganda's (still) very low standards of administration as well as high levels of corruption. All the selected Western models, which we briefly outline below, have not been without problems either. However the relevance of federalism to them as individual nations has been tested by time, and the success of their federalist enterprises can be an inspiration for nations like Uganda currently debating the federal strategy.

Kermit Hall refers to federalism as "a system of government under which there exists simultaneously a federal or central government and several state governments" (1987, ix). Hall's definition, which contrasts a federal system with a unitary government, is in light of the US model and the mind of the federalist delegates to the 1787 Philadelphia convention.[28] He notes that the delegates wanted a way of accommodating existing state governments while enhancing the authority of the new central government, and that what emerged was a hitherto unknown plan for "a perfect confederation of independent states".

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[28] A constitutional convention was called in 1787 in Philadelphia to modify the foundation document ratified earlier in 1781 by the original 13 states. Congress wanted the convention of delegates to devise such further provisions as would appear to them necessary to render the constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies of the young union.

Powers were enumerated both for the federal government and for the state governments. The former could for example levy taxes, raise armies, and regulate commerce among the states and with foreign nations, while the latter retained the power to provide for the morals, health, safety and welfare of their citizens. The original framework also placed certain prohibitions on the states, for fear of what Hall calls "democratic despotism". Hall notes however that there have also been several amendments over the centuries, shifting many powers from the states to the federal government through congress, but with a balancing act through the powers of the Supreme Court.

Martin Diamond calls the invention of federal government the most important contribution made by the American founders to the art of government, and regards the system they devised as "the very paradigm of what we call 'federal government'" (1987: 227). From the 13 original British colonies, the US today has grown into 50 states and one federal district. The American federal solution was born out of the need to foster a sense of common citizenship among the independent states, while diffusing political power and accommodating diversity through overlapping jurisdictions. In so doing, two achievements were realized, and with them developed what we know now as modern federalism: a strong overreaching central government was created, but at the same time its governmental authority was limited and sovereignty was invested in the people. It is thus possible for them "to delegate powers to the general and constituent governments without normally running into the problem of which possesses sovereignty except in matters of international relations or the like" (Elazar, 1987: 41).

Canada, which was founded on three original colonies of British North America, has grown into 10 provinces and three territories. Like in the case of the US, new

territories were admitted and annexed after the founding colonies had been established. Both models can thus be said to have been established by the aggregation of formally distinct political units. The Canadian federal system is based on the British model with the prime minister from its parliamentary majority. It is also based on a multi-cultural society, and has faced dangers of secession in the French province of Quebec.

Switzerland is arguably the longest standing confederation dating from as far back as the thirteenth century. Twenty-six cantons with different historical backgrounds and cultures confederated into what is recognized today as the first modern federation built on indigenous ethnic and linguistic differences. These differences, as Daniel Elazar notes, "were considered permanent and worth accommodating" (Elazar, 1987: 42). They were therefore initially accommodated in separate sovereign states called cantons. The cantons joined and drafted a set of common objectives, especially defence, foreign policy and public works, which were coordinated by a representative central Diet. Said to have started with the federal charter of 1291 from three original cantons, it had expanded to eight by the end of the fifteenth century. The modern federal state, whose legal foundation dates back from 1848, consists of three levels of government: the Federation, 26 cantons, and 2, 324 communes (Linder and Steffen, 2006: 222).

About 65% of the population speak German, 20% French, 6% Italian, less than 1% Romansch (a minor language mainly descended from Latin and spoken in a few Alpine regions in southeast Switzerland), and 8.5% are immigrants who speak other languages (Linder and Steffen, 2006). Although the four linguistic groups are not clearly divided by the sub-national units, most of the Swiss cantons represent an overwhelming majority of

one linguistic group. Hence, there are 15 mainly German cantons, six mostly French cantons, one mainly Italian-speaking canton, and four multilingual cantons.

Constitutionally, the Swiss federation has remained highly decentralised since its foundation in 1848, with the cantons retaining their autonomy, their statehood, their constitutions and their political and economic powers. Today the central (federal) government controls only 30% of the overall public budget, making the Swiss system a typical example of what is called a consociation or power-sharing model of democracy.[29] In this model, minorities are integrated through proportional representation with a vertical division of power which ensures total autonomy and political participation for the smaller units (Linder, 2012).

Other functioning world models, distinguished by "democratic mobilization and genuine political pluralism" (Turton, 2006: 15), include India and Australia. They, like the US, Switzerland and Canada, are genuinely 'federal' in that they are federal 'in operation' and not just 'in form'. They are as much about freedom, diversity and non-centralization, as about the concentration of power for the sake of unity. They are however not about hierarchy. Surviving and functioning models of federalism do not succumb to the temptation of diluting the autonomy promised to the constituent units. They also take care to avoid the danger of taking the route to single party domination. This was the route taken by the doomed Soviet Union. Its successor, the Russian Federation, is arguably taking the same route.

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[29] See note 15.

By way of conclusion, it can be argued in light of these and other functioning models that while the definitions and/or meanings of the concept may differ, the principle, as stated above, is the same. I have deliberately avoided possible disputes over definitions because they are beyond the scope and purpose of the present study. As for its utility in Uganda, and Africa as a whole, federalism can be cited as an effective solution to the structural deficiencies of the generally corrupt and broken post-independence order. In chapter 1, I underline the rationale for endeavouring to inquire into the benefits of diversity to disparate functional or cultural groups. I also cite some of the leading English Political Pluralism theorists who challenge the theory of unlimited, centralised, sovereign state power (see section 1.2). This was a legitimate consideration for independent African nations. Indeed federalism was envisaged at independence as a viable goal for Uganda (Apter, 1967: 44, 294, 434, 467, 470), and for many other independent African countries. Looking back, one may ask: what are the most commonly identified cases of federalism in post-independence Africa? How have they taken up the challenge of the opposing principles of centralization and decentralisation, and how many have survived the tension? I will now turn to this question.

2.2.4 The African experience

2.2.4.1 Pre-colonial antecedents

Pre-colonial Africa has been described earlier in the introduction as "a mosaic of lineage groups, clans, villages, chiefdoms and empires" (Meredith 2005: 154). Each of these complex entities also had a model of customary authority which, as Mahmood Mamdani has put it, was monarchical, patriarchal, and authoritarian. "It presumed a king at the centre of every polity, a chief on every piece of administrative ground, and a patriarch in

every homestead or kraal" (1996: 39). Authority at all these levels, Mamdani argues, was considered an attribute of personal despotism, and "out of this process, this statecraft, was forged the 'decentralised despotism' that came to be the hallmark of the colonial state in Africa" (Mamdani, 1996: 39).

When Uganda became a British protectorate in 1894, it got its name from the ancient kingdom of Buganda which had stood out by the mid-eighteenth century for having the most organised system of government in the Interlacustrine Region. At the very top of the nation was the *Kabaka* (king) who wielded a lot of power, but below whom were a range of agents – some hereditary, others appointed – who derived their power from the *Kabaka*. The most powerful of the hereditary chiefs were the traditionally influential clan leaders (*Bataka*) who presided over the 52 clans of Buganda. The non-hereditary chiefs (*Bakungu*) included the county (*Saza*) chiefs who were responsible not only for checking the powers of the traditionally influential *Bataka*, but also for supervising the cultural and socio-economic welfare of the king's subjects in all 18 counties. They were appointed by the *Kabaka*, and they were directly responsible to him. They also, however, wielded tremendous power in their counties and in the supervision of the work of four other lower unit chiefs in collecting taxes and spearheading community development activities traditionally known as *Bulungi bwansi*. [30]

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[30] *Bulungi bwansi* in Buganda and *burungibwensi* in Ankole. Literally translated as 'for the good of the country / nation', this is a centuries-old form of community work, when everyone in the village volunteers in activities, such as maintaining community roads.

No one can argue that the many large and tiny states and state forms in pre-colonial Africa were practicing a form of federalism as we understand it today. One can argue, however, as the example of Buganda shows, that authority in these states was vested in the representatives of their so-called 'segments' – families, clans, age groups, religious cults – usually senior men (Parker and Rathbone, 2007: 28). Furthermore, this kind of delegated authority was a historical antecedent for how Uganda as a colony would be governed. It also explains the quest for federal power, particularly among the people of Buganda. This quest "has been persistent and central to Uganda's governance since the colonial period and has pervaded all post-independence regimes, albeit with most intensity in recent times under the National Resistance Movement (NRM) regime" (Mwami, A., and Godfrey Muriuki, 2012: vii).

2.2.4.2 Colonial experiments

In colonial Africa there were repeated attempts at establishing federations in the erstwhile British Empire. The minority white communities in both East and Central Africa fronted them vigorously under the banners of "partnership" (with the local populations), the economic benefits of such a partnership, and the easing of communication between parts of the expanding Empire. Suspicious Africans however resented them for fear of the Europeans entrenching white rule. The British government on her part supported the idea as for them the federation seemed a progressive step forward with its plans for developing multiracial societies: "a bold experiment in racial partnership" (Meredith, 2005: 89). In Central Africa, the Federation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland[31]

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[31] Southern Rhodesia was the name of the self-governing British colony north of the Limpopo River and the Union of South Africa, currently the independent republic of Zimbabwe. Northern Rhodesia was a protectorate in south central Africa, formed in 1911 by the amalgamation of the two earlier protectorates of North-Western Rhodesia and North-

was successfully formed in 1953. It would however last for just over 10 years as it faced mounting African opposition right from its conception. Indeed two of the leading African opposition voices, Hastings Banda and Kenneth Kaunda, would become the respective founding presidents of independent Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia.

In East Africa, an unsuccessful attempt was made to form a federation comprising of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, but it was upset by the Kikuyu rebellion against colonial rule in Kenya. The rebellion, which came later to be called Mau Mau, "grew out of anger and resentment at the mass expulsion in post-war years of Kikuyu peasants from the White Highlands, an area of 12,000 square miles of the best agricultural land in the country, set aside for the exclusive use of white farmers" (Meredith 2005: 79). The revolt, and its nationalist leader, Jomo Kennyata, became the most notorious opposition to British rule in Africa. This, coupled with the explosion of violence in Nyasaland, rendered British long-term plans for African federations obsolete, and Kenya would be granted Independence in 1963, with the former 'despot' and prisoner Kennyata at the helm. Tanganyika and Uganda had already been set up as independent states in 1961 and 1962 respectively.

2.2.4.3 Federalism in post-colonial Africa

By and large, most independent African states inherited a strongly centralised apparatus at territorial level. Pro-independence nationalists rejected both the imperial master's

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Eastern Rhodesia, currently the republic of Zambia. Nyasaland was the name given to this former central African protectorate in 1907, originally established as British Central Africa Protectorate in 1890. It is currently the Republic of Malawi.

proposals to aggregate nations into regional federations and the temptation to devolve them for the effective management of ethnic diversity. As Fessha aptly observes,

> The option of centralised versus decentralised states dominated the political discourse of African states beginning from the early days of independence. At the centre of this debate was the tension between the management of ethnic diversity and the promotion of national unity. Political leaders considered a strong centralised state essential for the purpose of forging national unity. This was considered by many African governments to be their most pressing task, to effectively govern the newly born states (Fessha, 2012: 267).

Countries that defied the post-independence unitary trend did so for various reasons. Some had regional or ethnic minorities that felt marginalised by dominant, ascendant parties. They were anxious about their political status in post-colonial Africa, and they desired, to quote Fessha again, "a system that provides them with some space to manage their own affairs without being vetoed by the dominant group … they demanded a system that devolves power and allows communities to exercise control over their own affairs without interference from the dominant group" (Fessha, 2012: 265). Other countries simply had regions and institutions with distinctive interests which they wanted to preserve as autonomous entities. The kingdom of Buganda in Uganda is a case in point. The Baganda, as has been stated elsewhere, had always enjoyed a special recognition and status. They also had an extraordinary devotion to the king and his hierarchical authority, and they would accept only the federal way to proceed along constitutional lines. Some acknowledgement of special standing was similarly extended to four other kingdoms: Ankole, Bunyoro, Busoga and Toro.

All in all, federalism at independence was the demand of Africans for either of the two stated reasons. Earlier agitations for federations, as stated in the previous section, had been by the colonial authorities for either administrative reasons or for pure hegemony. History has in any case proved, as table 4 below shows, that Federalism in most post-independence African countries was an ill-fated experiment. Very few federations have survived the half-century of independence.

I will now briefly outline the individual African experiments. Why did the federal idea fail to thrive in most countries, and is it still constitutionally relevant in countries like Uganda where it was once tried and failed?

Table 4. Life spans of Post-Independence Federal Systems in Africa.

Country	Span of Federal System
Cameroon	1962 – 1972
DRC Congo	1960 – 1965
Ethiopia	1952 – 1962; 1991 – present
Kenya	1963 – 1965
Nigeria	1960 – present
South Africa	1997 – present
Sudan	1972 – 1983
Tanzania	1964 – present
Uganda	1962 – 1966

(Source: Dean E. McHenry, Jr. "Federalism in Africa: Is it a Solution to, or a cause of Ethnic problems?" (1997: 1).

(i) Nigeria

Nigeria is recognised as the longest-enduring post-colonial federation in Africa. The Nigerian federation is also "Africa's largest and longest experiment in the use of federal institutions to manage cultural-territorial pluralism and conflict" (Suberu, 2006:65). The major institutional characteristics of Nigeria's federal constitution are its three orders of government: a strong federal government, 36 constituent state governments and the federal capital territory of Abuja.

At independence in 1960, the mainly Muslim, Hausa-Fulani north already had a largely separate ethnic administration and political party. In the south, each of the two other main ethnic groups, the Christian Igbo in the south-east, and the religiously bi-communal Yoruba in the south-west, also had their own political parties and ambitions. Besides, there were some 250 other minority groups scattered among the big three, all of which had ambitions to obtain their own states and escape dominance, neglect and discrimination. Later a fourth region, the Mid-Western Region, was added but still this was too little a number of regions to satisfy the constituent needs of the ethnic minorities swallowed up in each of the four ethnic majority-dominated regions. This fluidity led to the fall of the first independence government to a military coup, and to the 1967 ethno-military (Biafra) civil war. Further diffusion of the regions into 12 states helped the defeat of this Igbo-dominated secession war and strengthened the federation through two military (1966-1979 and 1984-1999) and two democratic (1979-1983 and 1999-present) republics.

The Nigerian federal system has undergone many changes and lapses in democracy corresponding with periods of military rule. Its 'federalness' has nevertheless

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persisted since 1960, and it has managed "not only to hold together and avoid the protracted large-scale internal conflicts that have convulsed or pulverised several other African states, but also to achieve a reasonably effective compromise of ethnic interests" (Suberu, 2006: 65). One of the factors that have accounted for the persistence of the Nigerian federal system is that "despite its over-centralization by 'soldiers and oil', Nigeria's multi-state federalism affords some measure of political and policy autonomy for territorial communities at the sub-federal level" (Panter-Brick, 1978). More importantly, the federal character concept has been informally but extensively and quite creatively reinvented as a general principle of power-sharing known as 'zoning' or 'rotation'. By this system, the presidency, vice-presidency, senate presidency, deputy senate presidency, and speaker and vice speaker of the House of Representatives are shared among six geographical zones.

The recent threat to the republic has been Boko Haram, a militant Islamist group that promotes a version of Islam which makes it "haram", or forbidden, for Muslims to take part in any political or social activity associated with Western society. This includes voting in elections, wearing shirts and trousers or receiving a secular education (BBC, 2015). The group attacks and kills Christians as well as moderate Muslims they suspect of helping the army defend the population. However, this is an extremism not directly connected with federalism. The real challenge to the system, which is also an epitome of post-independence Nigerian history, is aptly summed up by Suberu as the near absolute dependence of all governments in the federation on centrally collected oil revenues:

> This fiscal centralism has stimulated several interrelated pathologies and deficits in Nigeria's federal governance. These include the tendency toward authoritarian political

centralism and the collapse of democratic pluralism; the seemingly intractable disputes over revenue allocation; the proliferation of inefficient and corrupt federal subunits; the retardation of the national economic prosperity necessary to soften and manage inter-group competition and conflict; and persistent, although often exaggerated, scepticism and cynicism over the viability and legitimacy of Nigerian unity (Suberu, 2006: 77).

Other serious sources of weakness "remain in the form of pervasive corruption, a patchy human rights record, social injustice, excessive centralisation in the polity, electoral manipulation, continuing military influence, inadequate modernisation, and the fragility of its democratic political culture" (Burgess, 2012: 16).

The Nigerian federation has experienced both the 1966 killing of the Igbo people in the dominant Hausa / Fulani northern region and the resulting secession attempts of the Biafra war which resulted in a significant loss of human life. In spite of this, and in spite of the above mentioned weaknesses, Nigeria's multi-state federalism has largely held the country together and helped it to achieve a reasonably effective compromise of ethnic interests. The Nigerian federal experience, with periods of decline coinciding with military dictatorships, shows that federalism can either mitigate or exacerbate ethnic conflict.

(ii) Tanzania

Officially known as the United Republic of Tanzania, Tanzania has some kind of asymmetrical federal arrangement which was formed in March 1964 out of the union of two sovereign states, namely Tanganyika and Zanzibar. It is asymmetrical in the sense that Zanzibar retained its own government while that of Tanganyika was merged into the union government of Tanzania. Tanganyika became a sovereign state on December 9,

1961, and a Republic the following year. Zanzibar on the other hand had received its independence from the United Kingdom on December 19, 1963, as a constitutional monarchy under the *Sultan*.[32] On January 12, 1964, the African majority revolted against the ruling Arab elite, forcing the sultan to flee. The new government under Abeid Karume, as President of Zanzibar and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, reached an agreement with Tanganyika in April 1964 to form a union in which the Zanzibar Government retained considerable local autonomy. A power-sharing arrangement was also formed so that if the President of Tanzania were to be elected from the mainland, the Vice President would come from Zanzibar, and vice versa. Zanzibar was also given a disproportionate number of seats in the general assembly.

The uprising in Zanzibar became the precursor of the union, and it arose out of HIs and resentment by the poor African majority against the rich Asian and Arab minority (Sasaoka and Nyang'oro, 2013). The federal arrangement in Tanzania was never premised on ethnic problems as such, but rather on economic inequalities. Mainland politics has for a long time been detribalised, especially with the adoption of Swahili as the main common language. Politics in Zanzibar is largely seen as a microcosm of mainland politics, and both the ruling and opposition (respectively Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) and Civic United Front (CUF)) parties have taken root there in equal measures. Therefore, the question of Zanzibar's autonomy in the federal arrangement "is not simply a question

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[32] Originally from the Aramaic word *shultana* for "power", *Sultan* is an Arabic word for "ruler", especially of a Muslim country. Many Persians and Arabs settled on Zanzibar from the seventh century onwards, and the island had a minority but powerful Arab-Moslem and Asian elite.

of defining borders and ensuring minority rights, but also has something to do with the national identity of the republic of Tanzania" (Sasaoka and Nyang'oro, 2013: 131-133).

(iii) Ethiopia

Ethiopia is another of the few functioning federations in Africa, and it has undergone two arrangements during two distinct periods: the period of formal federation between Eritrea and Ethiopia (1952-1962) and the current federal experiment in 'ethnic federalism' since the adoption of the 1991 charter.

The opportunity came in the 1950s for Emperor Haile Selassie to expand the Ethiopian empire when the future of Eritrea came up for discussion at the United Nations. Eritrea had been an Italian colony for 50 years but had gained some degree of self-identity under the British caretakers after the defeat of the Italians in 1941. The Moslem half of the population supported the idea of an independent Eritrean state proposed by Arab countries, while the Christian half tended to support unification with Ethiopia. The emperor intervened on the claim that Eritrea had after all historically been part of the empire. The UN also chose the option of forming a federation linking Ethiopia and Eritrea, "under which the Ethiopian government was given control of foreign affairs, defence, finance, commerce and ports, while Eritrea was allowed its own elected government and assembly to deal with local affairs" (Meredith 2011: 209).

Emperor Selassie, however, always saw the federation as only a step towards unification, and his government was aided by Christian Tigran politicians to consolidate control. By 1959 the Eritrean flag had been discarded and Ethiopian law imposed. Eritrea's two main languages, Arabic and Tigrinya, were replaced by Amharic, and finally,

as Meredith documents, "in 1962 the Eritrean assembly was persuaded to vote for the dissolution of the federation and its own existence in favour of annexation by Ethiopia" (Meredith, 2011: 209). The formal federation had lasted only 10 years. The annexation would, nevertheless, from then on face a great deal of resistance and revolts in the name of the Eritrean insurgency. Well-equipped militarily and ideologically, the insurgency gained prominence for declaiming against what it regarded as the imperialist oppression of Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie. It also played a role in inspiring and supporting other liberation movements such as the Oromo uprising.[33]

Neither the formation of the formal federation nor its abolition had solved the Eritrean problem. Emperor Selassie and his government became increasingly repressive, inevitably fuelling the flames of Eritrean nationalism. In 1974 Emperor Selassie was overthrown by a radical military group known as the Derg. Under Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, the revolutionary government that followed the fall of the emperor fuelled even more nationalism and rebellion, in Eritrea, by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), in the south, by the Somali supported Oromo Liberation Front, and in the capital Addis Ababa itself, by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and numerous other Ethiopian armed liberation movements "which wanted civilian control of the revolution" (Meredith, 2011: 245).

By 1985, even as Ethiopian and world-wide relief operations were still struggling to cope with the worst famine the world has ever known, Colonel Mengistu's efforts, boosted by state-of-the-art Soviet weaponry, were all directed on bombing and defeating

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[33] Organised Oromo movements for self-determination were started in early 1963 as a reaction against the modern Ethiopian state's annexation of traditional Oromo land.

the Tigray rebels. He also embarked on turning Ethiopia into a socialist state, but his opponents did not give in. The result was a protracted civil war. It lasted until 1991 after Mengistu had lost Soviet backing due to the end of the cold war, and the rebel Ethiopian and Eritrean coalition forces eventually claimed victory. Eritrea was immediately granted independence, Mengistu's socialist policies were abandoned, and a process began under former EPRDF rebel leader Meles Zenawi to transform the political structure of Ethiopia. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was eventually officially proclaimed in 1995, the nation's second take on federalism.

Federalism in this second republic of Ethiopia has, in the words of David Turton, been both "radical" and "pioneering" (Turton, 2006: 1). It has been radical, Turton argues, because as a system of *'ethnic federalism'* it has introduced the principle of self-determination for Ethiopia's six ethnic provinces and three multi-ethnic ones in a formerly highly centralised and unitary state. Turton argues that it has also been pioneering because Ethiopia has gone further than any other African state and even further than almost any state worldwide. While noting its importance in assuaging the concerns of Ethiopia's federated regional units by reconstituting them on ethno-nationalistic lines but without a single dominant one, scholars also agree that as an organising principle, ethnic federalism in Ethiopia faces some challenges, and is at best a "risky" and "fragile" experiment (Turton, 2006; Kymlicka, 2006; Young, 2012). They argue first of all that, thanks to the Afro-Marxist Mengistu legacy, it is borrowed from the Soviet nationality model, which collapsed anyway. They also argue that while a similar model of multination federalism has resulted in a genuinely federal system in Switzerland, Canada, Belgium and Spain, it was introduced there by peaceful and

democratic means; the institutionalization of ethno-national identities and boundaries there was, as Kymlicka notes, "done in a peaceful and democratic way, consistent with human rights and liberal freedoms" (Kymlicka, 2006: 58). In Ethiopia and Africa at large, Kymlicka notes further, there are no such conditions, and ethnically-based regional autonomy is more likely to emerge there from force rather than from peaceful and democratic reforms.

Ethiopia's second attempt on federalism thus aroused genuine interest in that it was pioneering in form, it recognized the reality of minority nationalism through some form of territorial autonomy, and it could have been a good formula for solving HIs and other ethnic problems in Africa. On the other hand, as a process of institutionalization it "has not always been the outcome of peaceful democratic mobilization, but rather has been imposed from above / or captured by local elites who do not represent the interests of the wider group" (Kymlicka, 2006: 58). This therefore underlines the relevance of the current inquiry into grassroots perceptions on the road Uganda should take moving forward.

As I write this, Ethiopia is in a state of emergency, the government's high-handed response to public protests against its development-obsessed, but authoritarian, undemocratic and anti-federal character of leadership (Ficquet, 2016).[34] Is the current state of the federal state because of, or in spite of ethnic federalism? The answer, according to Ficquet, lies both in the big and complicated volume of Ethiopia's history, as

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[34] Notes from a lecture, "Authoritarianism in Post-modernity: The deaf state vs buzzing social media in Ethiopia," delivered by Eloi Ficquet, at the Graduate School of Global Studies, Doshisha University, on November 1, 2016.

well as in the lack of commitment on the part of government to the implementation of the post-1995 ethnic federalism agenda.

(iv) South Africa

The South African model of federalism, as embedded in the new post-apartheid constitution, gives the Rainbow nation's nine provinces considerable powers. This was vital to ensure the acceptance of a section of minority Afrikaner opposition and Inkatha.

For our purposes, it is important to note the fact that South Africa's constitution is the result of remarkably detailed and inclusive negotiations that were carried out with an acute awareness of the injustices of the country's non-democratic past. In view of the dark past of apartheid, those who drafted the constitution were faced with the question of whether to have a unitary or federal system. An interim constitution was first drafted in 1993 as the country made its transition from apartheid to democracy. It was, as stated above, an urgent and necessary compromise among mainly the mainstream ANC, the Inkatha Freedom Party, seeking more autonomy for KwaZulu-Natal province, and some minority Afrikaner groups seeking an Afrikaans homeland of sorts. Boundaries were explicitly negotiated to assure the white National Party (NP) and black Inkatha political minorities control over public resources and policies in at least one province each (Inman and Rubinfeld, 2009).

The interim constitution of 1993 was, therefore, "the result of the imperative of finding consensus among these political forces in order to pave the way for free elections ..." (Simeon, 1998: 2). The constitution states, in its 'Constitutional Principles', that Government shall be structured at national and provincial levels (XVII); that

constitutional amendments require the approval of the provinces, or their representatives in a provincially-constituted second house of parliament (XVIII); and that each level shall have 'exclusive and concurrent powers' (XIX).[35] Then, after the April 1994 elections, a new constitution was written in consultation with the public as well as elected public representatives. This was approved by the Constitutional Court on December 4, 1996, signed by President Mandela on December 6, 1996, and took effect on February 4, 1997.

The permanent constitution, like its 1993 precursor, continues to envisage federal, provincial (and local) spheres of government, each elected separately by proportional representation. Operating at both national and provincial levels are advisory bodies drawn from South Africa's traditional leaders. It is a stated intention in the Constitution that the country is run on a system of co-operative governance. It continues to embrace the imperative of finding party agreement as did the 1993 interim constitution. It is thus, although not explicitly defined as such, by and large a federal constitution.

The system has succeeded in managing deep ethno-cultural cleavages and autonomist movements in a previously deeply divided country. Some observers argue though that having thus institutionalised and enhanced the political powers of certain ethnically based political groups, the post-Apartheid South African constitution might also have set the stage for the emergence of new, powerful territorial based groups, and hence give rise to ethnic problems in the future (Robinson, 1995; McHenry, 1997). On another pessimistic note, Simeon and Murray (2001) contend that although the South African model of cooperative, collaborative governance has become fairly well established

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[35] Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, chapter 9, schedule 4.

in a short time, its long-term success in promoting the values of democratization, effective governance, and conflict management remains uncertain. This is because, Simeon and Murray contend, the governing ANC party strongly favours a relatively centralized polity, and because provinces and local governments have weak political, administrative, and fiscal capacities.

These are some of the challenges South Africa faces with the transition from an elite-run autocracy to a majority-run democracy. The resilience of the system will be tested more and more as this young democracy strives to avoid the fate of other failed African federations to which we shall now turn.

(v) Sudan

In the Sudan, the south had from the onset of British rule in 1898 been "insulated from the Arab speaking north" (Young 2012: 116), and "romanticized as a primordial purely African way of life" (Heleta 2007: 3-4). This would become the precursor of multiple southern insurrections that haunted post-colonial Sudan until it finally broke up in 2011. The south had remained isolated by the British, as a matter of policy, well until the 1940s. As a result the region lagged behind in terms of development, particularly education. Thus, when the British decided to reintegrate the country along unitary lines, most administrative jobs, both countrywide and in south Sudan itself, were done by the more educated northern Sudanese. Matters were not helped by the fact that the northerners, predominantly Arab and Moslem, wanted to impose their religion and culture on the southerners.

With only three secondary schools and a mere sixty students at Khartoum University by 1960, this so called "Southern Policy" had virtually reduced southern Sudan to "a colonial backwater, with minimal economic development" (Young, 2012: 241). Southerners were therefore apprehensive when Sudan was (rather swiftly) granted independence in 1956. Their leaders had in vain demanded a federal independence constitution. They were marginalized further with only a handful of southern names included on the list of hundreds of post-independence senior government officials. Moreover, by 1957 the new independent government, dominated by northerners, was set on establishing and consolidating a unitary and Islamic state with Arabic as the national language. In 1958, to erase any possibility of northern politicians giving in to southern demands for federalism, the military took power and resolved to stick further to the unitary formula.

By 1960 all Christian missionaries had been expelled, and most schools closed. The army's rank and file, mainly southerners, started to rebel against the mainly northern officers, and they were strengthened by guerrilla plans orchestrated by the southern political elite many of whom were now living in exile in neighbouring countries. The army's moves to crash the guerrilla forces locally known as "Anyanya" only created more misery with the flight of tens of thousands of refugees into neighbouring states.

The military regime was removed in 1964 for its mishandling of the southern guerrilla crisis. The new and second civilian government tried its hand at reconciliation, but eventually could not swallow what Nugent calls the "complexity of southern politics" which revealed itself in demands ranging from regional autonomy to full independence (Nugent, 2012: 85). The army moved again in 1969, and with counter accusations of the

civilian government for failing to find a solution to the southern problem. The new military leader, Colonel Nimeiri, committed his regime to national reconciliation and introduced a new southern policy of which Markakis, writes:

It recognised the objective reality of historical and cultural differences between North and South, acknowledged the right of the people in the South to regional autonomy, established a Ministry of Southern Affairs, and pledged to promote economic and social development in that region within the framework of a socialist society (Markakis, 1990: 164).

An accord was thus signed in Addis Ababa in 1972, and a kind of federalism was introduced. Peace returned to the war-ravaged south, which in addition gained full autonomy and a right to fashion its own cultural policy. On its part, the Khartoum government could guarantee the preservation of a single nation. Peace would, however, last for only a decade until 1983 when President Nimeiri helped destroy the autonomy he himself had created. Under his watch, the promised autonomy was diluted, and divisions in the south were allowed. He also took drastic decisions dealing with the oil that had been discovered in the south, and civil war broke out again orchestrated by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and its military wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Army. Its radical leader John Garang, a high ranking southern officer in the Sudanese army, had defected with one aim, "to create a new Sudan shorn of Islamism and Arabism as state ideologies" (Young, 2012: 270).

Federalism had only briefly managed to diminish the north-south ethnic problem. Worse still, new ethnic conflicts were born within the southern rebel ranks, especially between Garang's ethnic Dinka and his deputy Riech Machar's ethnic Nuer. The southern mutiny became a protracted war of contradictions and alliances of convenience.

Eventually it became clear that neither Khartoum nor her divided enemy could win the war and make the best use of the oil reserves. The international community was also compelled to intervene on humanitarian grounds. A peace settlement was reached in 2005 for a united Sudan, and a referendum held in 2011 with southerners voting overwhelmingly for independence.

Sudan had gone through 55 years of independence from a unitary state, a federal system, to two independent nations. At the time of writing, however, independence for the black south does not seem to have been enough. Disagreements between the Dinka President and his Nuer Vice President have re-surfaced and aroused mistrust between the two tribes, sparking a civil war after just two years of independence.

(vi) Cameroon

Like many other colonial territories in Africa, Cameroon was created without regard for tribal boundaries. Throughout the colonial period, the country was divided between two European powers, Britain and France. Self-government was granted in the French-controlled south in 1958, following local revolts, and it was quickly followed by independence on January 1, 1960. The former French Trusteeship of Cameroon had thus become the newly independent Republic of Cameroon. In October 1961, Cameroon became a federation to ease the integration of the remaining part of the British-mandated north-western area and the Francophone Independent Republic after part of the former had voted in an UN-sponsored referendum to join Nigeria. The federation was formed out of what became known as West and East Cameroon, and it was almost "as asymmetrical as that between Ethiopia and Eritrea" (Nugent, 2010: 77).

A federation had been formed out of two territories with different colonial legacies, one, French and the other British. A marriage of convenience, the Cameroon federation was more shadow than a reality (Stark, 1976). There was no equal partnership from the onset, as the vantage point of the former French-mandated area made this a highly centralized federalism. It was thus difficult to provide for the preservation of the cultural heritage of the two parties.

In 1972 the federal structure of the two Cameroons was abolished. It was a unilateral decision by President Ahidjou who wanted "to establish a closer union of a unitary kind" (Dent, 1989: 172). Federalism had turned out to be merely a transitory phase to the total integration of the Anglophone region into a strongly centralized, unitary state. This would gradually create Anglophone consciousness: the feeling of being marginalized by the Francophone-dominated state. Indeed many pressure groups arose in the wake of political liberalization in the 1990s that initially demanded for self-determination, autonomy, and a return to the federal state. Cameroon's repressive governments, from Ahidjou (1961 – 82) to his hand-picked successor, Paul Biya (1982–), clamped down hard on calls for multi-party democracy, let alone the return to federalism. Over the long years of the Biya presidency, the political agenda in Cameroon "has become increasingly dominated by what is known as the 'Anglophone problem', which poses a major challenge to the efforts of the post-colonial state to forge national unity and integration, and has led to the reintroduction of forceful arguments and actions in favour of federalism or even secession" (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997: 207).

As I write, the English-speaking northwest of the country is embroiled in protests with lawyers and teachers claiming their rights were being neglected by Cameroon's

French-speaking majority. Schools in English-speaking areas have been closed since teachers went on strike on November 21, 2016, mainly over what they and allied lawyers consider the overbearing use of French in Cameroon (Clottey, 2017).

(vii) DRC Congo (formerly Belgian Congo / Zaire)

Soon after wresting control from the Belgian colonisers in 1960 under charismatic revolutionary Patrice Lumumba, Congo found itself in a serious struggle between those who wanted a federal system and those who were opposed to it. Local parties and authorities advocated for, or opposed, regional autonomy depending on what stake they had in it or not. It was all mainly about the vast natural riches. This was all reminiscent of the manner in which the Belgians had quit the colonial game in the Congo, with no really trained personnel to take care of national and regional issues. It was a well calculated gamble by the Belgians, as Meredith (2005) puts it, in that "it would provide Congolese politicians with the trappings of power while purchasing enough goodwill to enable them to continue running the country much as before" (Meredith, 2005: 101). The result was, as Meredith reiterates, that:

> The Congo, six months after independence, was divided into four regimes, each with its own army and each with its foreign sponsors. Mobutu and Kasavubu in Leopoldville were supported by Western governments; Gizenga in Stanleyville received help from the Soviet block and from radical leaders such as Nasser in Cairo; Tshombe in Katanga, though still not formally recognized, relied on Belgian assistance; and in South Kasai, the ramshackle 'Diamond State' led by Albert Kalonji also received help from Belgian interests (Meredith, 2005: 110).

The mineral-rich provinces of Katanga and South Kasai actually wanted more than federalism: they wanted independence. As stated above, they had backing too. Conflict thus continued on a wide scale until the 1965 coup that brought Mobutu to power. He came in heavy-handedly, and had by 1967 reassumed control of most of the country he renamed Zaire. He also embarked on a program known as "authenticity", "which was aimed at developing a sense of nationalism among its many disparate peoples" (Lesh, Stamm and Williams, 1976: XIV). Federalism had lasted for only five years, although its replacement, Mobutu's so-called campaign of 'Africanization', was not only unitary, but also dictatorial to a level of kleptocracy. Federalism had been sought after both as a solution to the internal pluralism of Zaire and as a purely economic means of clinging to the control of the country's vast riches. Fortunately, "when Mobutu seized power in 1965 and ended the early federal experiment, an intensification of ethnic problems did not come as an immediate consequence" (McHenry, 1997: 2). Conniving, nepotism and massive corruption, however, did. That they became the defining features of the 31-year period of state mismanagement under Mobutu is actually an understatement.

The early 1990s brought a sea of political change across the world, and Mobutu faced tremendous demands both from home-grown opposition and from the international community to open up political space. To undermine such opposition, Mobutu decided to play the ethnic game by inciting tribal violence in the provinces. But when he and his local chiefs backed the Hutu perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, he enraged Zairian Tutsis. Locally known as the Banyamulenge, Rwandan Tutsi refugees in Zaire had increased over the century in particular because of the influx, especially into South Kivu province, following the anti-Tutsi persecutions of 1959, 1964 and 1973 in

Rwanda. By now increasingly aware of themselves as a political force, and feeling vulnerable to the political manoeuvres of Mobutu in the face of the Hutu militias that had fled to Zaire following the Rwandan genocide, they sought help from the new Tutsi-dominated Kigali government. President Kagame, weary of the cross-border chaos that was unfolding with the antagonism between Zairian Tutsis and the Mobutu-backed Hutu *genocidaires* who were mixing freely with hundreds of thousands of genuine refugees, acted swiftly. He was backed up by President Museveni of Uganda who, like Kagame, "resented the way in which lawless parts of Eastern Zaire were used by anti-government Uganda militias as a base from which to attack his regime … He also saw an opportunity, in the wake of Kagame's victory in Rwanda, to extend his regional prowess" (Meredith 2005: 531).

In May 1997, the Banyamulenge, backed by Rwandan and Ugandan troops, marched on Kinshasha. Mobutu fled – he died three months later of cancer in Morocco – and was replaced by Laurent Kabira, a former rebel leader from the sixties, who was now being backed by Kagame and Museveni to save the Banyamulenge. He had been propelled to power mainly by foreign forces only on account of his leadership of a Banyarwanda-dominated Allied Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo / Zaire (AFDL) which had been formed out of four distinct rebel groups, including his own. An ethnic Baluba from northern Katanga, Kabira now found himself torn between two loyalties: his Rwandan / Ugandan backers, and the horde of politicians in Kinshasha. The latter saw the many Banyamulenge who featured prominently in Kabila's new government as 'foreigners' "who had no right dabbling in the politics of the country" (Nugent 2010:478). On top of that, he was, even by Zairean standards, a petty tyrant who surrounded himself

with friends and family members. He renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), hopefully with no pun intended. Bowing to political pressure, he began to side-line his Tutsi officers and eventually in 1998 he dismissed all his Rwandan troops and ordered them out of the country. They retreated to the Eastern Congo where they operated under a new group called *Ressemblement Congolais Pour la Democratie* (RCD), and were now fighting against the leader they had helped to bring to power. The RCD, backed by Rwanda and Uganda, was bent now on marching on Kinshasha to overthrow Kabila. Kabila on his part called on Angolan, Namibian, Zimbabwean and Chadian troops to help him repulse the attack. The so-called "Africa's World War", and the DRC's second, had started. It pitted several pro- and anti-government groups and nations against each other, sometimes with no single Congolese on either side. "Each was settling its own scores on Congolese soil, chasing down long troublesome rebels who had been hiding out in the Congo, or intervening simply to cart off Congo's riches or back up an ally" (Gettleman, 2009).

The war culminated with Laurent Kabila's assassination in January 2001 by one of his own child soldiers. He was succeeded by his youthful son, Joseph Kabila (then 30 years old), who tried immediately to reach a political compromise by signing an agreement in 2003 with all the main rebel groups to bring them into an interim government. Peace still eluded DR Congo because smaller rival ethnic militias continued to fight each other, especially in the Ituri district north of Kivu. They were driven both by tribal impulses and by their foreign backers. The country became so divided with different groups fighting either the government or each other. It was estimated that up to three million people had died up to mid-2003. But the Eastern Congo remained volatile even

through the years after the 2003 agreement despite the efforts of the United Nations peace keepers. The current estimate of deaths is five to six million, making DR Congo the bloodiest conflict since World War II. A complex dynamic between two deeply ethnically-divided countries has been the driving force behind this disaster. "Everything conspired to turn Congo into a kill zone: a dying dictator; the end of the cold war; Western guilt; and tough, suspicious, post-genocide, Israel-like Rwanda, whose national ethos, simply stated, was 'Never Again'" (Gettleman, 2009).

Armed factions continue to operate in the eastern Congo, and smuggling rackets continue to plunder the resources there. The Congolese army lacks both the resources and the discipline to contain the situation, and the UN peace-keeping forces are often overwhelmed by the events on the ground. DR Congo is still far away from restoring effective governance in the affected areas. Is Federalism the way forward for DRC? Could those who wanted federalism in the early years of Congo (Kinshasha) have been right after all? There have been calls recently for federalism as the ideal form of government for this vast African country. One argument is that like many other African countries, DRC inherited a modern state without the same historical reality as the original western world's Nation-State. As such, government has wielded too much over-centralized power which has made true development impossible. It has instead been an incubator for dictatorship (Kankindi, 2013). Those who advocated for federalism (or even secession) at independence might have been driven by greed, yes, but matters have not been helped by the unitary government's decades of mismanagement. It has instead fuelled violence, and more greed and grievance both in DR Congo and in the wider Great Lakes region.

(viii) Kenya

As Stephen Ndeswa writes of Kenya, "the socially enacted relationship between ethnic identity, authority, and legitimacy competes with the legally sanctioned membership, authority and legitimacy of the nation-state" (Ndeswa, 1997: 602). This competition has indeed blighted Kenyan politics since the decolonisation days. Although national politics since 1963 has been dominated by the nationalist politics of Kenya African National Union (KANU), Kenya actually came to independence with a federal constitution. It represented that alternative vision to nationalism, '*Majimboism*', and it was promoted by KANU's rival party the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). *Majimbo* is Swahili for region, and m*ajimboism*, for regionalism. KADU proposed *majimbolism* as a federal scheme under which autonomous, self-governing regions would have equal status. In the heated politics of the early 1960s, however, as David Anderson (2006) notes, the *Majimboist* cause was obscured by KANU's nationalist politics, and the *majimboists* were derided by KANU as tribalists. It did not help matters also that those who supported *majimboism* were minorities, both African and European, fearing economic domination because of the underdevelopment of their regions, or political exclusion in a nation state dominated by more populous ethnic groups.

Majimboism was in any case a big part of the party platform for KADU during the campaigns for pre-independence elections against Jomo Kenyatta's nationalist KANU party. The party delegates in the Lancaster house constitutional conference also clearly articulated the substance of KADU's plans for a *majimbo* constitution. As Anderson recounts,

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They wished to create six regions, alongside the federal territory of Nairobi. A bicameral legislature would comprise an upper house representing the regions, to which each region would elect seven representatives from their own regional assembly, and a lower house elected by universal adult suffrage in 71 constituencies. The two tiers would have equal powers of legislation, but the upper house would approve key appointments to the courts and armed forces ... Each region would have its own Assembly with legislative powers, and an executive headed by a president, who would be elected from among members of the assembly. Each region would have its own civil service and its own police – who would implement federal laws as well as regional legislation (Anderson, 2005: 556).

Despite KANU's nationalistic opposition, KADU managed to negotiate the adoption of a federal system of governance with eight autonomous regions based on Kenya's provinces. Thus, although KADU lost the pre-independence elections to KANU, Kenya became independent in 1963 with a federalist *majimbo* constitution. Kenyatta, however, considered *majimboism* untenable, and federalism was not adopted with any conviction on the part of KANU that it would solve ethnic problems, but as "the only way to get independence and to prevent the secession of the Northern Frontier District (NFD) of Kenya" (Neuberger, cited in McHenry, 1997: 2). Oginga Odinga (1968) also confirms that Kenyatta never doubted that KANU would defeat KADU at the ballot box, and that KANU would use her power to make the constitutional changes necessary to do away with *majimboism.* This is exactly what happened. Kenyatta did what most post-independence African strong men have done, favouring the one-party system in order to exercise greater control of power. Within a year, he had already persuaded the opposition politicians from

KADU to cross the floor and take up prominent positions in his government. Thus, KADU, the supporter of *majimboism,* was essentially absorbed into KANU.

Kenya had by 1964 effectively become a one-party state. In a country where "residents are more aware of their tribal affiliation than of being 'Kenyan'" (Pitcher et al., 2007: 681), Kenyatta and the national-looking KANU ran the one-party state with an iron hand. He was excessively biased in favour of his Kikuyu tribe, and was reputed to be paranoid about dissent.[36] Kenya under Kenyatta (1963-1978) nevertheless became one of Africa's most prosperous countries despite the endemic corruption that was inherited by his successor, Daniel Arap Moi, a Kalenjin and KADU convert. Following in the one-party line, Moi also presided over a government and nation riddled with political and socio-economic HIs, nepotism, massive corruption and persecution of dissidents until he was pressured into holding multi-party elections in 1992.

Kenya was crumbling under a huge foreign debt and blanket suspension of foreign aid. Although Moi 'won' the election, many malpractices were reported by observers and up to 2,000 people were killed during ethnic clashes leading up to the poll, widely believed

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[36] Ironically, the allusions to ethnicity that had (hypocritically) winded up KADU became the stuff of internal politicking within KANU itself. The Kenyatta regime, as Nugent (2010) notes, "was heavily Kikuyu in complexion" (p. 166). Citing Throup (1987), Nugent notes further that around 30% of Cabinet positions were held by Kikuyus, while the inner circle, known as 'the family', consisted of Mbiyu Koinange (his brother-in-law), Njonjo, Kiano, Kibaki, Njoroge, Mungai and James Gichuru – all of whom were Kikuyu.

to have been triggered by KANU agitation.[37] Matters were not helped by the deft work of an opposition deeply divided on ideological and, mainly, ethnic lines. Even when Moi finally stepped down in 2002 – he had 'won' another term in 1997 – the interplay between ethnic royalties and pure party politics dragged Kenya into a series of new party alliances and splits.

There was complete disarray both in KANU and in the opposition ranks. When Kibaki won the 2002 election, he was no longer with KANU. He was with The National Alliance Rainbow Coalition (NARC), which brought him and other dissidents from KANU together with the former ethnically-based opposition parties. Kibaki's bid for a second term in 2007 led to further re-alignment that pitted him against Raila Odinga,[38] on which occasion, "the political brinkmanship that had characterised Kenyan elections went severely awry ..." (Nugent, 2010: 422). Kibaki's purported victory sparked a wave of ethnic violence as Odinga's mainly Luo sympathisers clashed with Kibaki's mainly Kikuyu supporters. Twelve hundred people died, and some 500,000 were displaced. A power-sharing deal was eventually reached and the violence ceased, but the events of 2007 had highlighted the uncomfortable fragility of Kenya's ethnically-driven national politics. It

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[37] KANU itself was deeply divided by the way Moi (formerly of KADU) had nurtured a Kalenjin bourgeoisie at the expense of Kikuyus who are from the original KANU heartlands of the Central Province. Political and socio-economic HIs led to increased political tensions.

[38] The son of Kenya's first Vice-President, Oginga Odinga, Raila Odinga had emerged as head of the splinter KANU royalists Orange Democratic Movement, the main challenger to Kibaki's National Rainbow Coalition.

had also resurrected the issue of *majimboism,* or federalism, that the country toyed with briefly after independence from the United Kingdom in 1963.

Kenya now has a new constitution, approved in a referendum by 67% of the population and promulgated on August 27, 2010. It stipulates a devolution system with two levels of government and various checks and balances which considerably trim the powers of the executive while empowering regional or county governments.

Was Kenya ever a federation anyway, even for that first year of independence? Some scholars have dismissed *majimboism* as just "a brief and trivial distraction that did nothing to disrupt the unity of the nationalist cause" (Ogot, 1995, cited in Anderson, 2005: 548). "For Ogot", Anderson reiterates, "the differences between KANU and KADU were minimal and so quickly disappeared once the influence of the colonialists had been removed, hence the rapidity with which Kenya became a one-party state in 1964, only 11 months after independence." Be that as it may, it can be argued that the general lack of national cohesion, which was only hidden under the strong hand of Kenya's one-party state, was reason enough for that recent constitutional reform that has devolved power to the regions. Fronted as 'devolution' rather than 'federalism', it means that in Kenya, as in many other African states, the debate on *majimboism* continues, and the challenge is on the political elite to redirect its meaning and relevance away from inter-party wrangles to the salient political, social and economic issues affecting the nation.

Conclusion: an overview of the African experience

Generally speaking, the picture of federalism in Africa over half a century of independence is grim. It has failed in more countries than it has worked. In some countries it collapsed

almost as soon as it had been conceived. In some other countries it carries negative political baggage, and it is not mentioned even though its techniques are being practiced. The South African constitution, as mentioned earlier, is a case in point. That said, I would like to acknowledge that, as Rufus Davis argues, there is no causal relationship between federalism and anything else:

> The truth of the matter is –and experience has been the teacher – that some 'federal' systems fail, some do not; some are able to resist aggression, some are not; some inhibit economic growth, some do not; some frustrate some kinds of economic planning, some frustrate other kinds; some develop a great diversity of public services, some do not; some promote a great measure of civil liberty, some do not; some are highly adaptive, some are not; some are highly efficient in servicing the needs of a modern state, some are not; some gratify values that others do not … Whatever their condition at any one time, it is rarely clear that it is so because of their federalness, or the particular character of their federal institutions, or the special way they practice federalism, or in spite of their federalness (Davis, 1978: 211-212).

Indeed the crisis of the state in post-independence Africa, the mire of corruption, economic collapse, cultural, socio-economic and political HIs, violence, and civil wars, cannot be attributed to one single causative principle. It has taken many well- and ill-intentioned personalities, entanglement between rival world power blocks, bogged plans, and outright selfish moves and conspiracies for Africa to crumble into the myriad problems that have left only a few states unscathed. As for federalism, it could as well have failed so extensively because of what Franck (cited in Rufus Davis, 1978) calls "the absence of a sufficient political-ideological commitment to the primary concept or value

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of federation itself." The experience of Ethiopia's second experiment with federalism, described above, is a case in point.

There has also been a tension that has characterised and indeed restricted the power-creating capacity and stability in post-independence African states. It is the tension between the desire and strife for political modernisation on one hand, and what Kilson (1975: x) has called "primordial solidarity groupings", namely kinship, clan, and tribe, on the other. They are cleavages which, by character, culturally, socially and politically hinder the process of modernity. They have been identified as hindrances to the success of most of the African federal systems described above. They have equally hindered compromise and bred corruption, biting socio-economic HIs and anarchy in many of the unitary republics that emerged upon the collapse of the original federations.

Going forward, the question is worth-asking of under what conditions federalism in Africa would work. In view of the African experiences just described here, my sense is that a good quality of leadership is the most indispensable prerequisite for federalism to work. This hypothesis will indeed be tested in the case of Uganda if and when she decides to adopt a federal system of government. Uganda has had its own share of the trials and tribulations. It has also experimented with the federal system, popularly referred to locally as *federo*. The last 30 years of Museveni and the NRM rule have been particularly exciting for the *federo* debate, and it's appropriate that we pause now to look at the nation's bigger historical context and the place of *federo* in it, if any.

Chapter 3

The Case of Uganda

3.1 Early Migrations and Ethnicity – A Historical Perspective

Africa as we know it today is a vast continent of 55 countries, including Uganda. In its pre-colonial era, however, Africa possessed perhaps as many as 10,000 different states and all sorts of political organisation and rule. These included small family groups of hunter-gatherers such as the San people of southern Africa; larger, more structured groups such as the families, clans and tribal groupings and kingdoms of the Bantu-speaking people of central and southern Africa, many of which existed like actual states; heavily structured clan groups in the Horn of Africa; the large Sahelian kingdoms, and autonomous city-states and kingdoms such as those of the Akan, Yoruba and Igbo people in West Africa, as well as the famous city state of Timbuktu in the Malian empire. The Bantu and other larger tribal groupings and kingdoms in Eastern Africa eventually ended up as the components of colonial states like Uganda.

There was therefore in Uganda and in Africa a collective ethnic identity and consciousness predating colonial rule. From their early migration patterns, the peoples of Uganda can be classified into three broad linguistic groups: the Bantu-speaking majority, who live in the central, southern and western parts of the country; and the Nilotic and Central Sudanic speakers who occupy the eastern, northern and north-western parts of Uganda.

3.1.1 The Bantu speakers

These include the large and historically highly centralized kingdom of Buganda, the smaller western Ugandan kingdoms of Bunyoro, Nkore, and Toro, and the Busoga and Bugisu states to the east of Buganda. Although there are many theories as to when and why the mass migration of iron-using agriculturalists known as the "Bantu expansion" began, historians seem to agree on one thing that Bantu speakers originally lived in West Africa, in the area that is today Nigeria and Cameroon. They are said to have moved in two different directions: eastward, breaking through the great equatorial forest and settling into the east African lacustrine region, and southwards, along the Congo basin to as far as southern Africa. But the net result "was that Bantu speakers colonised swathes of sub-Saharan Africa and can in many ways be considered the true pioneers of this vast region, opening it up to settled agriculture" (Reid, 2012: 14).

Bantu speakers make up almost two thirds of the population of Uganda, and their languages are classified as Eastern Lacustrine and Western Lacustrine Bantu depending on their location in the populous region surrounding East Africa's Great Lakes (Victoria, Kyoga, Edward, and Albert in Uganda; Kivu and Tanganyika to the south). Eastern Lacustrine peoples thus include the Baganda, the Basoga, the Bagisu, and many smaller societies in Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. The Western Lacustrine Bantu includes the Banyoro, Batoro, Banyankole and Bakiga of western Uganda.

At almost 17% of the population, the Baganda are the single largest ethnic group in Uganda. *Uganda*, the Swahili name for Buganda, was adopted by the British from the name of the kingdom which became the native base for the imperial government's administration of the whole protectorate of Uganda (see section 3.2). Among the Western

Lacustrine Bantu, the Banyoro (2.7%) and the Batoro (3.2%) speak closely related languages, Lunyoro and Lutoro, and share many other cultural traits. Similarly, the Banyankole (9.5%) share a lot in culture and language with the Bakiga (6.9%), especially those from Rujumbura and Rubabo in Rukungiri District.

3.1.2 Nilotic-language speakers

These entered the area from the north, probably from the Nile River area of Southern Sudan, where the majority of them still live in addition to areas of Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. They were the first cattle-herding people in the area, but they also practiced subsistence farming to supplement livestock herding. The Nilotics can be divided into two language groups. The larger of the two in present-day Uganda are the Iteso and Karamojong cluster of ethnic groups, speaking Eastern Nilotic languages. The Iteso people are an acculturated branch of the Eastern Nilotic peoples, and at 6.4% of Uganda's population the biggest group among the Nilotics. The smaller cluster includes speakers of Western Nilotic languages, and main among them are the Acholi, Langi, and Alur. The Acholi and the Langi are the two larger groups of the cluster, and like the Banyoro and the Batoro they speak almost identical languages. History and the instrumental dynamics of colonial and post-colonial politics have at one time or another, nevertheless, pitted even such groups against each other.

3.1.3 The Central Sudanic language-group

This includes mainly the Lugbara and the Madi, plus a few smaller groups in the greater West Nile region, the north-western corner of the country. While the Lugbara live in the highlands that form the watershed between River Congo and Rive Nile, the Madi live in

the lowlands to the east. Their languages don't only belong to the same Central Sudanic cluster, but they are also very similar. The two tribes can also be found in both Uganda and South Sudan. This is another good example of the arbitrary nature of our national boarders discussed earlier (See sections 1.1 and 2.1.4.1).

In pre-colonial times, each of these communities had their own legal system based on their customs and practices. These customs were enforced by elders, clan leaders (and in some areas kings) who performed both civic and spiritual duties. The community determined the powers exercised by the kings, tribal chiefs or clan elders. These powers included keeping peace, settling disputes (involving marriage, divorce, the marital status of women, the rights of children, inheritance, election of customary heirs and land), performance of rituals, protection of gods and shrines and guarding against drought, famine and other disasters. Writing about The Acholi people of Northern Uganda, for instance, Atkinson describes a people who were part of a late seventeenth century new socio-political order established following the introduction of chiefly institutions and ideology into north-central Uganda by Luo-speaking people. This was an order characterised by:

(1) a set of notions about political leadership in which chiefs shared power and decision making with the heads of the constituent lineages of the chiefdoms; (2) a system of redistributive tribute within each polity, with the chief at the centre; and (3) royal, often rainmaking, drums as symbols of sovereignty and authority (Atkinson, 1999: 31).

The Buganda kingdom of central Uganda is also known to have had hierarchical authority and a very sophisticated social order since its establishment as early as the fourteenth century. The kingdom reached its zenith in the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries and entered into the phase of "a modernising autocracy," ... whose "authority emanates from the position of a king whose role was based upon the ideas and practices of power itself" (Apter 1967: 21). It was a kingdom admired for the discipline and the bureaucracy which flourished under a monarchical system of government where the great territorial chiefs owed allegiance to the king as their overload.

The Western Lacustrine Bantu tribes of Bunyoro, Toro, and Ankole in western Uganda were also highly sophisticated. Like Buganda, they lived in highly centralised pre-colonial kingdoms, all three of which are believed to be the product of acculturation between two different ethnic groups, the pastoral Hima and the more agricultural Iru.

Table 5 Major ethnic groups of Uganda

GROUP	PERCENTAGE	GROUP	PERCENTAGE
Baganda	16.9	Bagisu	4.6
Banyankole	9.5	Lugbara	4.2
Basoga	8.4	Batoro	3.2
Bakiga	6.9	Banyoro	2.7
Iteso	6.4	Karamajong	2.0
Langi	6.1	Others	24.4
Acholi	4.7		

Source: author.

Fig. 3 Tribal areas of Uganda

Source: Google maps (2016).

3.2 Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity in the Ugandan Perspective

3.2.1 Ethnic groups and their unique identities

Definitions of ethnicity, ethnic identity and ethnic groups as outlined in chapter 2 also suit the common identity criteria of local Ugandan tribes. Common descent is, for example, an important defining feature of the identity of Ugandan tribes as outlined in the preceding sub-section. The Baganda of Buganda, for instance, one of the African kingdoms early travellers and explorers found to have more power and influence than others, and whose position in the political history of Uganda puts it at the centre of the current study, attribute their ethnic identity to the semi-mythical progenitor Kintu, the

first *Kabaka* (king) of the present line. Thus, all Baganda refer to themselves variously as the "Sons of Kintu", the "Grandsons of Kintu" and the "Descendants of Kintu".

The Banyankore, another Bantu group, also recognise a common ancestry from Ruhanga (the creator) who according to legend had three sons Kairu, Kahima, and Kakama. He decreed that Kakama would rule over his two brothers after passing a test, and his lineage (Bakama) was therefore given power as kings over his two brothers and their off springs the Bairu and Bahima. It is this legend that was used to justify the social stratification in Ankole society where the Bakama ruled over the Bairu as cultivators and Bahima as cattle keepers (Tumusiime, 1993). The attitudes of some Banyankore and their leaders towards the kingdom and federalism in general will be seen in the discussion of research findings (chapter 4) as possibly emanating from this background.

Besides their semi-mythical progenitors, various ethnic groups in Uganda and in other parts of Africa are also identified by their geographical origins and migration trends. Both factors are not forgotten and abandoned in the wilderness of history. They rather contribute to each of these peoples' sense of autonomy, and define their cultural and political destiny. They are, indeed, a big factor in the relevance of the arguments for cultural and political federalism.

Consider Uganda's central-most tribe again. A Muganda is a Muganda, ethnically, precisely because he is culturally, independently such. He does not only speak Luganda as his indigenous, and not learned language, but he is also born and raised in all manners that befit and are unique to the Baganda. Indeed many ethnically non-Baganda have learned the language and adopted several Ganda cultural rites and practices because of their interactions with the majority Baganda, especially in the greater Kampala area, but

they remain Banyoro, Batooro or Acholi because their ethnicity is precisely defined by their language of birth. In terms of such cultural content, there are no boundaries between these people and the ethnic Baganda. Nevertheless they remain non-Baganda because they have another language and other unique subcultural traits which ultimately define their ethnic identities. It is these customs and habits that are the reason people in Uganda often say "you behave like or you do things like a non-Muganda, or a non-Munyoro …" as the case maybe. Members of the ethnic group who impeccably depict these elements confirm their identity, while those who don't jeopardise it. It can thus be argued that cultural elements like language, religion and customs both define the collective ethnic identity and strictly mark the boundaries between the "us" and "them" categories.

3.2.2 *Ethnic groups: evolution and perceptions*

The above account underlines the primordial aspect of ethnic identities among multi-ethnic African societies, and the fact that they are a cultural and historical given. Ethnic groups in Uganda and other African societies have, as discussed in chapter 2 (sub-section 2.1.4), always defined their unique identity with or without any internal or outside influence. From history, for instance, we know that before Uganda the Baganda, the Banyoro, the Batoro and many other tribes existed, different from and independent of others. We also know that their kings and chiefs began at one point or another to dream of utilitarian hegemony and became belligerent. The wars between the Baganda and the Banyoro are, for example, well documented.

On the other hand, it has been argued in the discussion of the social theory of ethnicity that instrumentalism has also played a huge role in the evolution of ethnic groups and their identity (see sub-section 2.1.4). Many of my generation in post-independence

Uganda have known, for example, that ethnic (read tribal) and regional consciousness is a defining feature of our national politics. When I grew up in the 1970s the government was, in my distorted understanding (but this was common sense!), full of "Kakwas" (a small ethnic group of north western Uganda to which Idi Amin belonged), and for some reason, "Nubians", which was a myth because the Nubians, an ethnic group originally from northern Sudan, and southern Egypt, are not even Ugandans. But that was the point. Amin was hated by most tribes outside his home province of West Nile, and some people took pains to depict him as a foreigner (a Nubian). The post-Amin era and the subsequent NRM and Yoweri Museveni's take-over saw the rise of the dreaded "Anyanyas", a derogatory term southerners used to describe the fallen, purportedly "all-northern" army of the Amin, Obote and Okello junta eras. None of these labels are entirely true. Nor is it true that the current army and government is full of "Rwandans" as many people in Buganda and other areas like to describe these institutions because they are dominated by people from western Uganda (Tripp, 2010).

Moreover, Uganda also offers a clear example of constructivism, which has been depicted in this study as building upon both primordialism and instrumentalism. Uganda's local administration, as Crawford Young argues, produced various forms of native authorities – and they still exist to date – whose own standing was tied to the cultural categories through which domination was mediated:

> Although Buganda and Bunyoro were large precolonial states whose political identity readily translated into ethnic ideology, most of the districts that served as the basis for

British rule fell clearly in the categories of "imagined communities."[39] Acholi, Madi, Bugisu, Kiga, Teso: all were novel ethnic entities whose district elites acquired a proprietary interest in the nurture and promotion of these identities (Young, 1994: 234).

All the three dynamics of our ethnic settings, as discussed in chapter two, can therefore be traced in Uganda's pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial experiences. So also are the theories and experiences of inequalities upon which the grassroots perceptions of ethnicity and federalism might be predicated.

3.3   Colonial Policies and the Roots of Disparity

Many historians and analysts now agree that the seeds of instrumentalism in Africa were sown by the colonial masters. Andy Lancaster (2012), for instance, stresses the fact that British rule in Uganda sharpened ethnic loyalties, and that colonial policy made the task of national integration more difficult. He argues that the British held the view that tribal governments were the proper arena for local politics, and therefore made little effort to provide representative political institutions. Worse still, while they recognised some broad ethnic affinities, in the majority of cases the British attempted to segregate Uganda's different ethnic communities. This viewpoint is supported by the case of Buganda which received preferential treatment from the Protectorate Government, and through which, and by whose people the British had developed the country (Dinwiddy, 1981). There was a tactical and conscious ethnic separation of powers by the British. Ali Mazrui (1975) blames this instrumental direction of colonial policy for the

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[39] Young adopts this term, as do many other social scientists, from the influential "constructivist" reading of nationalism by Benedict Anderson's *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread nationalism (London: Verso, 1983).*

disproportionate presence of the Bantu (especially Baganda) in administration and in the economy, as well as the equally disproportionate Nilotic and Sudanic presence within the armed forces:

> Buganda itself remained the most privileged part of the Bantu areas. It was indeed a city writ large. The Nilotic and Sudanic areas were virtually the most peripheral in the new national entity. The soldiers were coming from a part of the country which was rural in location, function and status. The stage was set for the beginnings of a military agrarian complex (Mazrui, 1975: 431-432).

It can be argued that this complex, artificial division of the country into social identity groups along cultural-ethnic lines was the seeds of horizontal inequalities (HIs).

Milton Obote, the pre- and post-independent political tactician and Uganda's first prime minister, was to skilfully exploit this Ganda status, entering several unlikely alliances with Buganda-leaning politicians. He even supported the appointment of the Baganda King, the Kabaka, Sir Edward Mutesa, as head of state in 1963. He was later to subjugate him and his kingdom in a move that was soon to tear Uganda apart. Some historians have given Obote the benefit of the doubt and interpreted his actions as a sincere if rather ambitious attempt to accommodate the disparate ethnic groups on which Uganda was built and heal the divisions between the Bantu groups to the south, especially the Baganda, and the Nilotic and Sudanic groups of the north, such as the Acholi and Langi, to which Obote belonged (Meredith, 2011). My sense is that he had intentionally used the Kabaka and Buganda for the temporary necessity of a peaceful transition to independence, and was now isolating and eclipsing them. He was in no way developing ethnicity, but was instrumentally exploiting the tribally divided state of the nation for his

political ambitions, and to advance group interests. At the end of the day, Obote's actions had merely replaced Bugandan hegemony by hegemony with the ethnic groups from the north of Uganda (Lancaster, 2012). Subsequent sub-sections in this chapter shed more light on the social forces emanating from ethnicity, colonial manipulation and political hegemony. The most dominant of such forces, still visibly endemic in Uganda's political and social fabric to date, is the combination of cultural, socio-economic and political horizontal inequalities.

3.3.1 The position of Buganda in Uganda

As mentioned above, when the British arrived they particularly admired Buganda as a knightly and feudal nation whose institutions "appeared in sharp contrast to those of other African nations" (Apter, 1967: 63). Thus, while The British devised a modified federal structure that recognised five kingdoms (Ankole, Buganda, Bunyoro, Busoga, and Toro) as well as several other districts for the remaining areas, they favoured Buganda to fill administrative positions within the colonial government. A well organised political kingdom, Buganda had been carefully nurtured by the British since the signing of the 1900 agreement. The agreement, signed between Sir Harry Johnson and the *Kabaka* (king) of Buganda, was "so fundamental to the relationship of the Buganda and the protectorate governments that it has taken on the proportions of a constitutional instrument" (Apter, 1967: 83). As stated above, the agreement gave Buganda considerable political autonomy and elevated the kingdom to some sort of native base for the imperial government's administration of the whole protectorate of Uganda. The Great *Lukiko* (Parliament of Buganda) was recognised as an extremely important advisory body to the *Kabaka* on matters concerning the native administration of the kingdom of

Buganda, and remotely, the whole province of Uganda. Indeed, a look at the agreement shows that it is ambiguously called "The Uganda Agreement" even though the terms and conditions were in principle applicable only to Buganda. Article 6 states in constitutional terms, for instance, that:

> Her Majesty's Government agrees to recognise the *Kabaka* of Uganda as the native ruler of the province of Uganda under Her Majesty's protection and over-rule. The king of Uganda shall henceforth be styled His Highness the *Kabaka* of Uganda … The *Kabaka* shall exercise direct rule over the natives of Uganda, to whom he shall administer justice through the *Lukiiko*, or native council, and through others of his officers in the manner approved by Her Majesty's Government.[40]

A further illustration of this early special relationship between Buganda and Her Majesty's government is provided by article 5 of the same agreement:

> The law made for the general governance of the Uganda Protectorate by Her Majesty's Government will be equally applicable to the kingdom of Buganda, except in so far as they may in any particular way conflict with the terms of this Agreement, in which case the terms of this Agreement will constitute a special exception in regard to the kingdom of Buganda.[41]

The 1900 Agreement thus attained great importance in the relationship with colonial Uganda in general, and Buganda kingdom in particular.

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[40] The Uganda agreement of 1900, article 6.

[41] The Uganda agreement of 1900, article 5.

3.3.2 Buganda the colonial agent

Buganda was indeed the centrepiece from where, henceforth, both political and religious adventurers spread their influence to the whole of the country now called Uganda. The Baganda were used as agents in the annexing and colonization of the rest of Uganda. Baganda chiefs were even sent to administer other parts of the Uganda Protectorate, establishing special relationships with the locals depending on what they did besides conquering new territories for the Imperial colony. They, in effect, became the precursors of indirect rule in the other regions, preparing the tribally organized local authorities for what Mamdani has called "decentralised despotism" (1996: 37-61). Of such, Semei Kakungulu is outstanding. He is even now still well-known in the eastern provinces, especially Bugisu, where he settled, and "he not only engaged in successful military campaigns, but also acted as the leading Muganda [42] agent, organising the Baganda system of administration in these areas" (Apter, 1967: 118n). His role has been a subject of extensive scholarly study. More than a century later, the Bagisu still remember his name and influence from such small but lasting legacies as the millions of Mvule trees that he ordered to be planted during his time and still stand along the roadsides. Many remember him as a man of vision who used political power and clout, looked far ahead of his times, and promoted the cause of the environment. However, his approach of imposing Buganda style of administration and appointing Baganda chiefs bearing the same titles as those used in Buganda itself was a cause of bitter resentment among other people of eastern and north-eastern Uganda (Nyeko, 1995). "Far from bringing about interethnic cooperation, therefore," Nyeko argues, "colonialism – and in this case this

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[42] (Plural = Baganda) A member of the Baganda people of the kingdom of Buganda, now forming part of Uganda.

particular brand of sub-imperialism by the Baganda acted more as a divisive influence than a unifying factor" (Nyeko, 1995: xvii). The inevitable consequence was bitter feelings among the eastern tribes and other tribes towards a perceived Ganda hegemony.

The missionaries themselves had admired Buganda's well-defined political hierarchy of chiefs and followers. This led to intimacy for, and collaboration with the Baganda, and it would lead to later colonial administrative policies. In any case, the predominant colonial policy employed by Lord Lugard[43] since Uganda became a British protectorate in 1894 was that of indirect rule. Indirect rule was inevitable if the British were to solve two real problems: the lack of personnel that every colonial power faced and the extreme difficulty in communicating over long distances. Indirect rule also meant some autonomy for the kingdoms and other administrative districts (Mamdani, 1996).

3.3.3 The politics of divide and rule and the origins of HIs

While the British used the Baganda as their sub-imperial arm, they also devised a means to keep them under control. They favoured other groups, particularly the Acholi in northern Uganda, to provide military power. These included the original contingent of Nubian mercenaries from Southern Sudan whom the British had used to pacify the

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[43] Frederick John Dealtry Lugard (1858 – 1945), a British administrator who played a major part in Britain's colonial history between 1888 and 1945. Lugard joined the British East Africa Company in 1889. In 1890, Lugard was sent by the company to Uganda, where he established Protectorates over Buganda in 1894 and Ankole, Bunyoro and Toro two years later.

rebelling southern areas of the new colony. They were directly related to Idi Amin's Kakwa tribe from West Nile, which was also fairly represented in the army. Amin himself had been recruited in 1946 to serve in the King's African Rifles (KAR). Although virtually illiterate and of limited intelligence, he had nevertheless been promoted by the British through the ranks to one of only two commissioned African officers. His rise to power would later change the course of Uganda's history as described in section 3.4.3.

The north-south division of the country, as Kumar Rupesinghe observes, was further entrenched by the way economic life was organised in the colony. He argues that the British administrators made some unnecessary demarcations in Uganda based on natural factors and the ability of the people:

> The colonial economy was based on the division of labour between the 'productive south' and the 'unproductive north'. Subsequently, development, both of infrastructure and work force concentrated in the 'productive south'. The labour of the north became a reservoir for the south. This is how northerners came to be viewed by southerners even after independence: labourers and worriers (Rupesinghe, 1989: 21).

Mamdani echoes Rupesinghe:

> Building upon pre-colonial differences, Britain turned the southern part (Buganda, Busoga and Ankole) into cash-crop growing areas. But cash-crop production was officially discouraged in northern areas (West Nile, Acholi and Lango), and in Kigezi in the west which were developed as labour reserves, from whence were recruited not only soldiers and policemen, but also workers for factories and plantations in the south...In the commercial sector, Britain encouraged the entry of thousands of migrants from India. Legally barred from owning land, they were purposely channelled into commerce (Mamdani, 1983: 10).

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The Southern agriculturalists did not only grow food for their consumption, but they were also obliged to grow something for export to Western monopolies. They thus shared a bit in the Indian-dominated commercial sector. A modest but steady class of small proprietors was slowly taking shape among southern African natives. They could be found in production both as rich farmers in the countryside and as independent craftsmen in the urban areas. They could afford good education for their children, and they could be found in administration, as clerks, clergy, interpreters, teachers and technicians. These "petit bourgeoisie", as Mamdani (1983: 10) calls them, were almost entirely from the south. This colonial policy of divide and rule can be seen, therefore, as the origins of HIs in Uganda. Specific inequities were created across cultural groups, resulting not only in exclusionary political and military participation, but also in inequalities in ownership and control of land and other assets, inequalities in employment opportunities and income levels, and ultimately, inequalities in socio-cultural status.

At the peak of colonial rule, therefore, while most of the emergent educated elite were southerners, especially Baganda, the Ugandan military consisted disproportionately of Nilotic and Sudanic tribesmen. "It became a colonial truism," to echo Mamdani again, "that a soldier must be a northerner, a civil servant a southerner, and a merchant an Asian" (1983: 10). This created an imbalance which "Influenced the process of institution building with regional groups taking advantage of whatever political resources available to them" (Mudoola, 1993: 15).

Both the way colonial rule was imposed on Uganda and the way in which the British conducted it would make Ugandans at different stages before and after independence put emphasis on their separate identities. It would create a heightened

ethnic awareness among Ugandans, which unfortunately was carried on into the struggle for independence, and which has complicated the problem of nation building over the years. But "nation building" is exactly what the independence fathers chose over federalism. Milton Obote and Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC), the dominant party at independence, set out "to build the republic of Uganda as one country with one people, one parliament, and one government" (Obote, 1968: 2). This was indeed a noble cause, but it was slightly contrary to the people's two major historical experiences:

1. The people's sense of belonging was rooted in a multitude of historical, regional, ethnic and linguistic cleavages. Although the British had forged them into one entity, they had also spent a good deal of almost 70 years dealing with the tension between their efforts to build a modern, liberal administration and the locals' (especially Buganda's) insistence on provincialism as a means of preserving local autonomy (Apter, 1967: 264).

2. It is ironic, but true, that the "colonial administrators at the same time wanted recognizable units they could control" (Meredith, 2005: 154). Therefore, as I have noted above, their "divide and rule" policy heightened ethnic awareness among Ugandans as it engraved deep marks of social, economic, political and cultural horizontal inequalities (HIs).

Thus, even towards independence, as Sir Andrew Cohen[44] noted in 1957, nationalism was "still a less powerful force in Uganda than tribal loyalties" (1957: 119). In 1962, the year of independence, Uganda was still afflicted by an extreme form of uneven

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[44] Sir Andrew Cohen was the third last colonial Governor of Uganda from 1952 to 1957. He is reputed to have produced a blueprint for transferring power to the colonial subjects.

development, created in particular by Buganda's dramatic historical head start (Saul, 1976).

3.4   Independence and the Failed Federal Experiment

At the time of independence, Uganda had fifteen ethnicities, including kingdoms, which were represented at the Lancaster Constitutional Conference in 1961-62.[45] The position of Buganda and its monarchical institutions, *vis-a-vis* the central government and other regions of the country, had been a major factor in the convening of the constitutional conference. Buganda predictably demanded that she should be allowed to maintain a considerable amount of autonomy. In fact, according to the memorandum to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth 11 submitted by members of the kingdom's *Lukiko* in 1960, the kingdom wanted no less than full independence. They stated categorically that Buganda was determined to be "a separate autonomous state and consequent upon that Buganda will not be represented in the future Legislative Council …" (Apter, 1967: 479). London compromised, but in typical imperial style: Buganda won most of her demands, and the kingdom was granted full federal status. The other kingdoms of Ankole, Bunyoro, Busoga, and Toro were however only granted semi-federal status, while the rest of the country with no traditional kingships was divided into administrative districts that were incorporated into independent Uganda on a unitary basis. This creation of unequal power bases, particularly Buganda which was virtually a state within a state, weakened and threatened the central government; for "they represented poles of political and

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[45] The 1961 Constitutional Conference in London, which preceded the 1962 independence constitution.

administrative power and authority that were in rivalry with the central government"
(Mutiibwa, 1992: 29).

3.4.1 Problems inherited at independence

Indeed, prior to independence, there were broad divisions between the Bantu groups in
the south, such as Baganda, and the Nilotic and Sudanic groups in the north, such as the
Acholi and Langi. Moreover, there was as much rivalry among southerners or among
northerners as between the north and the south. Milton Obote's Uganda People's
Congress, the dominant party leading to independence, was inevitably locking horns with
the kingdom of Buganda. Obote, the political tactician and Uganda's first Prime minister,
was to skilfully exploit Buganda's status, entering several unlikely alliances with Buganda-
leaning politicians. He even supported the appointment of the Baganda King, the *Kabaka*,
Sir Edward Mutesa, as head of state in 1963. He was later to subjugate him and his
kingdom in a move that was soon to tear Uganda apart.

It can be argued that just like the KANU nationalists in Kenya (2.2.4.3 {viii}),
Obote had seen these pacts, and federalism itself, as a means to get independence and to
prevent the secession of Buganda. In other words, Obote and other key players at
independence were juggling with both the issue of national independence and the so-
called "Buganda question" (see note 4). Moreover, Obote and some other northern
politicians in the mid-1960s found a political advantage in the northern-dominated
military "to define the Doctrine of ethno-functionalism which justified their monopoly of
force" (Mudoola 1993: 15). But this also set up an arena for a power struggle as various

interest groups, ethnic, religious and political, sought to gain maximum benefits from the constitutional arrangements of the time.

The Baganda and Catholic-dominated Democratic Party (DP) are, for instance, known to have vehemently opposed Obote and UPC's alliances with the Protestant-dominated Mengo (seat of Buganda Kingdom) establishment. They were even considered to be 'traitors' among traditionalist Baganda for opposing the king's wishes and political choices. Obote in any case eventually fell out with the king and head of state himself who was now under pressure from his own kingdom's Parliament, the Lukiiko. Such a situation further fuelled the move for Obote to enforce the single-party rule and become increasingly dependent on the army. Obote firmly believed that Buganda would constitute the primary threat to national unity, and so set out to diminish her powers, abrogate her special position, and abolish the monarchy altogether.

Finally, it should be noted that at the time of independence, Uganda was deeply economically divided, and a quest for balance was one of the factors behind the political machinations of political parties and other interest groups. Obote's wars with his one-time allies in Mengo (the seat of the kingdom of Buganda), who are famously reputed to have demanded that he take his government off Buganda's soil, were driven by the desire for both political and economic hegemony of the hitherto marginalized north.

3.4.2 The 1966-1967 constitutional crisis

The year 1966 would prove to be of pivotal importance in the history of Uganda as the show-down between the *Kabaka*, Buganda as a whole, and Obote culminated in a constitutional crisis that "changed the course of Ugandan history" (Mutiibwa 1992: 40).

Obote abrogated the independence constitution and suspended the National Assembly. He dismissed the *Kabaka* as President (as well as his Vice President Sir William Wilberforce Nadiope the paramount chief of Busoga). He also dismissed the army commander Brigadier Opolot, a Teso who was a perceived Buganda sympathizer (Nugent, 2012: 211). Obote replaced him with Idi Amin even though Amin and the President himself were under investigation for allegedly receiving illegal gold and ivory from Congolese rebels. He published a new constitution famously known as the pigeon-hole constitution [46], and declared himself executive President with immense powers. He ordered Amin to attack the *Kabaka*'s palace. The *Kabaka* was thus forced into exile in London where he died a pauper in 1969, of alcohol poisoning. Any legal opposition to Obote's actions was silenced with prison and secretive death sentences. He declared martial law over Buganda, many Baganda were detained without trial, and eventually the kingdom of Buganda (with all other kingdoms and cultural institutions) was abolished altogether.[47] Legget aptly summarises the implications of the 1966 constitutional crisis thus:

> The new constitution finished all of Buganda's federally derived powers,
> ending its financial and political autonomy at one stroke. In a vain attempt
> to exercise its authority, the Buganda Parliament issued an ultimatum,
> threatening to evict the central government from Buganda's soil within ten

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[46] On April 15 1966, when Obote formally abrogated the 1962 independence constitution during a parliamentary session, it was adopted by MPs who had not even seen it beforehand let alone debated its contents. This constitution later came to be known as the 'pigeon-hole' constitution as it is famously alleged that that morning the MPs found copies of it in their pigeon holes.

[47] The monarchies were restored, but only as cultural institutions with no political powers, by an Act of Parliament in 1993, and formally institutionalized in the new constitution of 1995, 10 years after the end of Obote's second hold on power (1981-1985), and 28 years after he had abolished them. Uganda remained a unitary state in which Kings and chiefs "would exercise only 'cultural rights'" (Nugent, 2012: 426).

days. It was a forlorn attempt to play the 'independence for Buganda' card.
The *Kabaka* had no means of implementing the ultimatum, but it gave
Obote his chance. The *Kabaka*'s place was stormed at the 'Battle of Mengo'
and the *Kabaka* went into exile in Britain. The kingdom of Buganda was
curved up into four districts, and its parliament building was, tellingly,
turned into the headquarters of the Ministry of Defence (2001: 19).

Uganda had entered a new phase. Persuasion for 'national unity' had turned into a forceful implementation of what ultimately could have been Obote's real intention: to redistribute power away from Buganda and "to place it into the hands of politicians from the north of the country … Obote had succeeded in his defeat of Buganda, and thus the ethnic group he deemed to be an obstacle to national integration had been reduced to a position of virtual irrelevance" (Lancster, 2012: 8).

The bigger problem, however, is that besides Buganda, the rest of the country was also being turned away from a centuries-old system of existence as cultural entities that shared unique socio-economic and political ambitions. The whole move was in any case a contradiction in terms, as the ethnic, linguistic and regional cleavages maybe deprived of real existing fiscal and political autonomy, but they cannot really be stripped of their cultural, social and political ambitions. It was also a contradiction in terms because what Obote actually did was, as historians observe, to replace the imperial hegemony and Buganda hegemony with the hegemony of northern tribes (Meredith, 2005; Lancaster, 2012). Ultimately, whatever powers the kingdoms and districts had in their relationships with the quasi-federal government that emerged from the 1962 independence constitution were now placed into the hands of one man Obote, his party the UPC, and an army and security forces dominated by people from northern tribes especially the

President's native Langi. Obote's regime became increasingly dependent on coercion imposed by the army and a secret police organisation known as the General Service Unit (GSU) which was mainly comprised of members from his own Langi tribe.

3.4.3 The rise and fall of Idi Amin

As Obote was trying to build up support among large contingents of Langi and Acholi troops within the army, his army commander Amin, invariably shrewd and cunning, was also building support among Kakwa, Madi and Lugbara tribesmen from his home district in West Nile. Amin and Obote became heavily suspicious of each other as the latter accused the former openly of murdering his Acholi deputy army commander, and of embezzling army funds. Amin was cunning enough to anticipate Obote's actions and out-stage him. The struggle for legitimacy and power throughout the sixties, which many Bantu-speaking groups came to perceive as a conflict between the Bantu south and the non-Bantu (Nilotic) north, was thus compounded by the conflict between Obote and his army commander Idi Amin (Mwakikagile, 2012: 393).

Idi Amin's coup in January 1971 was executed with ease, and it was widely welcomed with joy both in Uganda, especially Buganda for obvious reasons, and even in the international community. Amin started as a reconciliatory president, lifted emergency laws, freed political prisoners and promised the military would only stay temporarily and give way to free elections. He above all returned the Baganda king's body for a traditional burial. His 18 points delivered on the morning after the coup, as Mamdani points out, "promised the people almost everything: security, the rule of law, elections, economic progress, and lower prices and taxes. Large sections of the people received the new regime favourably because they were disenchanted with the previous one, and

expected a change for the better" (Mamdani, 1983: 37). Amin sought to appease the various ethnic, political and religious forces that obviously would not have been happy with the drift of national power into the barracks. He tactically sought a coalition between the guns of his military and the brains of the intelligentsia (Mazrui, 1975). His first cabinet consisted of highly qualified civilians from the civil service, the legal profession and Makerere University. His first days brought hope and optimism.

The coalition between the guns and the brains would however soon break apart, and so would the unity of the army. Amin, fearing a counter-attack by imagined and real Obote supporters in the army, soon started organising death squads to hunt down and kill army and police officers he suspected of opposing him. Human security was at stake as tens of thousands of suspected traitors both in the security agencies and in civil society were rounded up and slaughtered. Spies and informers recruited in the State Research Bureau (SRB) and the Public Safety Unit (PSU) penetrated every aspect of the country's life "to detect any opposition in action or speech" (Mamdani 1983: 43). SRB headquarters at Nakasero, in central Kampala, became the scene of torture and executions over the next several years. Human rights abuses, political repression, sectarian violence, and ethnic persecution all combined to jeopardise human security in Uganda during the long eight years of Amin's regime. The killings and terror that were first perpetrated in Buganda in 1966 were now extended to other parts of the country. When Amin's tyrannical regime fell to the combined force of Ugandan exiles and the Tanzanian army, Uganda was left ravaged, lawless and bankrupt. Probably the death toll during the regime will never be accurately known, with most estimates putting it between 250,000 and 500,000.

Amin, like Obote, had thus also tactically and instrumentally exploited the tribally divided state of the nation for his political ambitions, and for the sake of advancing group interests. Amin's economic war, which peaked with the expulsion of Asians in 1972, resulted in gross economic HIs as the property of expropriated Indians was distributed to supporters in his tribal and military circles. It was, as Mamdani argues, the fascist regime's way of rewarding its supporters and expanding its ranks:

> The property expropriated from Asian capitalists and small proprietors was distributed to big business and military circles. Committees formed to distribute the loot were headed by military officers and opportunists ...Thirty officers from the Uganda army and air force were to work with the committees in checking and distributing to Ugandans businesses which were left by the British Asians. Thus was born a new social group, the *mafutamingi,[48] a* class of persons for whom fascist terror provided a framework for quick enrichment (Mamdani, 1985: 39).

Socio-economic inequalities were, in that sense, state-sponsored during Amin's fascist regime.

The post-Amin era has also been characterised by both political and socio-economic HIs. Politicians during later regimes would continue to exploit both ethnic and political cleavages to further their own selfish ends. They would rely as much on primordial loyalties as on party loyalties. These therefore have formed the core of the tribal groups

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[48] *Mafutamingi* is a Swahili tag for a special group in Uganda in the 1970s, for whom Idi Amin's fascist regime provided a framework for quick enrichment, particularly those to whom Amin distributed businesses which were left by the expelled British Asians (Mamdani, 1983: 39). Their enrichment is not entirely a case of economic HIs as they could be found among supporters, and sometimes non-supporters, across ethnic groups. The core of this class was, however, from Amin's support base among the Kakwa, Madi and Lugbara from the greater West Nile region.

that have monopolised access to political power, and thus to resources. Buganda's hegemony has, in the long run, been replaced by the hegemony of other tribal groups. The post-Amin era (1979-2016) has thus also seen many political divisions and violent conflicts. Most have been ethnically based, as certain ethnicities have tended to exploit others, with the exploited feeling a constant sense of cultural, socio-economic and political insecurity.

3.4.4 Ethnic/military intrigue and insecurity after Amin

The brief period between the overthrow of Idi Amin in April 1979 and the December 1980 disputed elections that brought Milton Obote to a second term was, for example, supposed to be a period of celebration and reconstruction. It is however remembered in Uganda by many as probably one of the most undocumented periods of insecurity in the country's history. Uganda had three governments and effectively two coups in 20 months. This brought untold insecurity to Kampala and the country as a whole as key players involved in the overthrow of Idi Amin began to recruit thousands of militias into what were rapidly becoming their private armies, and which they used to harass, arrest and eliminate political opponents.

There were probably too many contending groups in the struggle to replace Idi Amin. Ugandan civilian and military groups gathered in Tanzania shortly before Amin's overthrow in April 1979 had picked a former Makerere University Principal Professor Yusuf Lule as the Interim President. It was instrumentalism at play again. Lule was an academic, and the politicians at the Moshi conference did not regard him as a threat to their tribal, religious and political interests. Sure enough he was replaced after only three months when he was accused of being too conservative, autocratic and bent on listening

more to fellow Baganda in the movement. With factionalism at play, former UPC forces prevailed and Lule was replaced with Godfrey Lukongwa Binaisa, who had worked closely with Obote as the first African Attorney General after independence, but had resigned in 1968 protesting at the latter's autocratic tendencies. Holman (2010) has rightly called Binaisa the **"President who ruled in the shadow of tyrants."**[49] He had to juggle with old and divisive loyalties in the National Consultative Council (NCC), the de-facto post-war cabinet, which was dominated by Obote supporters. He could not reign in the self-interested operating styles of many of the returning political factions. He could not control the burgeoning new military factions recruited by some of the more astute players in the liberation movement. Key among them were Yoweri Museveni, an anti-Obote UPC lieutenant; Paul Muwanga, a Muganda like Binaisa but staunch UPC and Obote supporter; and Oyite Ojok, a key liberation General and from Obote's Langi tribe.

Binaisa was overthrown in a military coup on May 10, 1980, and he was replaced by a Military Commission headed by Paulo Muwanga. The Military Commission, composed of Yoweri Museveni and Oyite Ojok, among others, effectively governed Uganda during the six months leading up to the national elections of December 1980. UPC machinations had triumphed, but the key players were divided by disagreements on the role of former President Milton Obote. Muwanga, Obote's right man, and Oyite Ojok, a fellow Langi, soon ensured his return. Obote immediately began rallying his former supporters for the December elections. Museveni, on the other hand parted, ways and formed the Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM) which was widely seen locally as "UPC without Obote." Although Museveni's UPM was among several other contesting parties,

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[49] Michael Holman in an October 9, 2010 Financial Times obituary to the former Ugandan President.

it was no match for the two main rivals, Obote's UPC and Paul Ssemogerere's Democratic Party (DP). Although DP had the overwhelming support of most of Uganda's Roman Catholics, along with many others whose main concern was to prevent the return of another Obote regime, the party and other contenders faced formidable obstacles. This was because the Military Commission, as the acting government, was dominated by Obote supporters (notably chairman Paulo Muwanga).

The December 1980 election was almost certainly rigged, and Obote returned to power after nine years. The country was plunged once again into an anarchic civil war. Obote was to spend most of his second term (1981-85) fighting his rival Yoweri Museveni and other guerrilla groups who had launched an armed opposition to what they saw as Obote's fraudulent regime. Human insecurity became rampant by the year especially in the areas where the guerrillas operated, but even in the confines of Kampala and other districts. Obote, who was obsessed with defeating Museveni, let his mainly northern army loose. They arrested, tortured and often killed suspected guerrillas and collaborators within the security forces, among politicians and the general public. This was by all means an ethnic war as Museveni and other minor groups fighting Obote campaigned and recruited in rural areas hostile to Obote's government, especially Buganda and the western regions of Ankole, Kigezi, Toro, and Bunyoro. Estimates again put the overall death toll anywhere between 300,000 and 500,000.

3.5 Uganda Today: Independent and Divided

It can be argued from the foregone account that the independence drive was one of nationalism. *Bugandaism* or any other *provincialism* was seen as tribalism, and an obstacle to nation-building. Obote initially had good reasons to be seen as trying to accommodate the disparate ethnic groups on which the country was built. The problem was that he was at the same time bent on establishing a one-party state and consolidating power "for the sake of national unity". In order to do this effectively, he increasingly relied on an ethnically unrepresentative army, which inevitably bred and deepened deep divisions between the north and the south during and between his two terms as president.

3.5.1 From liberation to inequalities and insurgency

The 1986 revolution that brought the incumbent Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Movement to power had promised so much in terms of security, individual freedoms, equality and sustainable development across the ethnic and political divide. However, as the guerrilla movement-turned political party stayed on longer and longer and became entrenched in electoral politics, the configuration of executive, judiciary and military power merely shifted from northern to southern domination. "What had initially been a broad-based, anti-sectarian government encompassing a wide spectrum of political interests and ethnic backgrounds became narrower and more exclusive in composition" (Tripp, 2010: 3). The initial NRM government's five-tier LC[50] system had

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[50] Formerly Resistance Councils (RCs), Local Councils (LCs) were initially established in rebel-held areas during the 1981-85 guerrilla war. They were support structures funnelling food supplies to NRA fighters. After Museveni and the NRA took power, they were implemented in every district. The lowest (LC1) is at a village level, or neighbourhood in the case of towns and cities. The area covered by local council 11, 111 and 1v incorporates several of the next lower levels, and LC V is responsible for the whole district. RCs became LCs with the enactment of the Local Government Act in 1997.

been seen as a transparent, honest and participatory, decentralised system of government (Francis and James, 2003; Mwenda, 2007; Ottaway, 1999; Tripp, 2010).   In the long run, however, the focus moved away from the socio-political empowerment of the grassroots to the LCs as the primary vehicles for popular participation in the ruling Movement's politics.

Also, for a big part of this period, areas of Northern Uganda were subjected to unprecedented human insecurity and untold suffering. Rebel movements in the region, notably Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), wrote havoc on the population of Acholi land in its campaign of murder and abduction between 1986 and 2008. Ironically the rebellion had started as a reaction to the perceived oppression of the North of Uganda by the Museveni Government. Previous post-independence governments, notably both Obote's and Amin's in-between, had survived on ethnic loyalties. Throughout their regimes both Obote and Amin entrenched regional-ethnic loyalties by ethnicizing both the security forces and civil services (Meredith, 2005; Mwakikagile, 2012; Nugent, 2012), although in the former case they were simply continuing with a British colonial policy of favouring Nilotic peoples of the north for recruitment. Other ethnicities, mainly from the south and south-west of the country, felt largely alienated.

The chasm between northerners and southerners, as Mwakikagile aptly notes of Obote's second regime, represented a real "political fault-line" (Mwakikagile, 2012: 153). Likewise, the current President Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement guerrilla welfare and subsequent handling of conflicts in northern and north-eastern

Uganda have been seen by some as ethnic marginalization and revenge against people in the north and northeast (Legget, 2001; Tripp, 2010; Mwakikagile, 2012). As Legget lamented, even at the peak of the Lord's Resistance Army's northern conflict, there was "remarkably little national concern about the atrocities that are being perpetrated against the people of the north, and an apparent lack of understanding among southern Ugandans about the sheer scale of the humanitarian and economic crisis that has evolved" (Legget, 2001: 27). Mari Tripp was to echo similar sentiments 10 years later, noting that nowhere had the Museveni government failed its own people as much during the north and northeast conflicts which began as soon as he took power in 1986. "The lack of serious effort to resolve the crisis in the north despite ample opportunities – not to mention the active sabotage of some of the peace talks – left the northerners feeling that they were being punished for the actions of previous governments, armies and armed groups" (Tripp, 2010: 159).

Despite Museveni's best efforts from the early years at economic and political reform, therefore, it was no accident that the greatest levels of dissatisfaction were apparent in the north, where the Museveni regime had defeated Alice Lakwena's rebels in 1987 but was unable to crush the Lord's Resistance Army.[51] The LRA abducted thousands of children both as rebel wives and child soldiers, destroyed villages and displaced millions of people who came to be known as Internally Displaced People (IDPs) across Northern Uganda. While "many questions remain regarding the reasons behind the strategy the government has adopted with respect to northern Uganda" (Tripp, 2010:

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[51] Alice Lakwena was Joseph Kony's cousin, and her Holy Spirit Movement was the forerunner to the Lord's Resistance Movement (LRA).

169), the most unfortunate consequence was that many people in the north came to see the conflict, like many other conflicts before, as one between the Bantu south and the non-Bantu north. From the behaviour of Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) in the months after her victory in January 1986, [52] to the alleged unwillingness of the government to pursue a negotiated settlement, many observers have concluded it was a deliberate decision by the south-dominated government to let the war drag on and to leave the Acholi region to languish for more than two decades with so little attention given to developing it (Legget, 2001; Tripp, 2010; Mwakikagile, 2012; Epstein, 2014). As Aili Mari Tripp states in *Museveni's Uganda: Paradoxes of Power in a Hybrid regime,*

> Peace advocates, church leaders, NGOs, human rights activists, women's rights activists, and others in the north argued all along that more efforts should go into peace talks with the rebels and into addressing the problems underlying the conflict rather than into military strategy, which generally ended up killing more innocent people than rebels and resulted in greater retribution on the part of the LRA. In fact, it was only when the international community began to seriously press the Ugandan government to go to the negotiating table that Museveni relented and initiated the Juba talks (Tripp, 2010: 171).

From 2006 to 2008 the Government of Uganda and the LRA took part in negotiations and reached a peace accord in Juba, South Sudan. LRA leader, Joseph Kony, nevertheless, refused many times to sign. Instead, the LRA went further into hiding and during 2008 they increased attacks and abductions both in neighbouring Democratic

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[52] It has been alleged that the Uganda Army also tortured, killed and kidnapped civilians (Omara Otunnu, 1992; Epstein, 2014).

Republic of Congo and in Central African Republic. In late 2008, regional leaders agreed to undertake new military operations against the LRA. Since then, the Ugandan military has continued to pursue LRA groups across the region, in coordination with the other militaries and with US advice and intelligence.

Since the departure of the LRA northern Uganda has undergone a tremendous positive transformation. It can be argued, nevertheless, that public sentiments about the war in the north are the same sentiments about the cultural, socio-economic and political HIs across the country. These inequalities will be highlighted both in the grassroots respondents' narratives and in the discussion of the research results. They are, at best, possible pointers to a culture of clientelism and patronage; a culture of privileges that come with the unbalanced distribution of power, resources and (even the most basic of) services among regions and ethnicities.

3.5.2 Decentralisation, patronage and more inequalities

3.5.2.1 A policy gone wrong

The current NRM government has over the years made efforts at decentralisation by increasing the number of districts from a mere 33 in 1986 to 116 to date,[53] with six more to be born on July 1, 2017. Six and seven more will become effective on July 1, 2018 and 2019 respectively. Thus by July 1, 2019, Uganda will have 135 districts.[54] The rationale was to empower the people and bring services closer to them. However, just like the LC System, the initial NRM administrative model which had originally "won the admiration

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[53] In effect, there are 115 districts plus the Kampala Capital City Authority.

[54] Parliament of the Republic of Uganda (http://www.parliament.go.ug)

of a large section of the population, especially in the rural areas where the poorest and most exploited live" (Mutiibwa, 1992: 181), the decentralisation model has been overtaken by politics. In this model, power vaguely lies in the hands of politically appointed administrative personnel who are accountable only to the appointing authority.

The creation of an unprecedented number of districts and the subsequent increase in electoral constituencies has been criticised by political observers as just a tool for consolidating political support for the ruling party prior to an election (JICA, 2008; Muhumuza, 2008). Critics see this as a distinct strand of neopatrimonialism based on a culture of rewarding and mobilizing for political support (World Bank, 1998; Tangri and Mwenda, 2001, 2003, 2006; Mwenda, 2007; Manyaka and Katono, 2910). They also see it as far from being capable of ensuring sustainable integrity for the local units – their identities, cultures and traditions. "The result is that local government's capacity to deliver services effectively is being seriously compromised. This inability to deliver services is leading to growing public disenchantment that could ultimately lead to the undoing of Uganda's attempt to achieve democracy through decentralisation" (Manyaka and Katono, 2010: 17).

Moreover, the new districts, and subsequently big numbers of National Assembly representatives, are not only an added financial cost and supervision burden (Manyak and Katono, 2010), but they also fall short of the desired sizeable, freely elected and population related criterion. On the outset, there is no denying the theoretically positive reasons for creating new districts, main among them being making social services more accessible to millions of rural people who feel marginalised. However, such a progressive increase, as an editorial in a local newspaper lamented, "has had no meaningful impact

on the lives of the local population because they have always been created as a result of presidential pledges prior to or during elections."[55]

Critics argue that the current NRM Government has survived the three decades of her regime by rewarding political loyalists and entrenching economic inequalities. They would argue that both the oversized body of elected representatives and the extremely big size of government are detrimental to national development and transparent governance. For the five-year term beginning 2016, President Museveni appointed 31 full Cabinet Ministers and 49 Ministers of State. Given the big body of local administrators mentioned above in the government's drive towards decentralisation, this looks like a big contradiction in terms and practice. One would think that such a big number of local representatives would require only a small cabinet to enable quick decision making at the central level, and subsequent quick implementation of policies and services at the ground.

In his early years (the late 1980's and early 1990's), President Museveni was well aware of this. The NRM government then actually gave up control of most economic activities and drastically reduced the size of cabinet. However, when Museveni joined electoral politics in 1996, he adopted the strategy of political patronage by rewarding areas and individuals in exchange for support. And as Mwenda observes, "Museveni's success at consolidating his power and stifling democracy flows from his knack for integrating large chunks of the political class into his vast patronage empire ... patronage, typically in the form of government contracts, tenders, and jobs, is his preferred tool and the one that he used to render parliament ineffective" (Mwenda, 2007: 29). "Political

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[55] *The Acholi Times*, July 16, 2012.

considerations often dominate decision making, primarily because new districts can be a key tool for consolidating political support prior to an election" (Manyak and Katono, 2010: 6). Critics of decentralisation have long noted that this is the exact reason why in many countries across the world, especially in Africa, and in this particular case Uganda, have created many new local administrative units (Mwenda, 2007; Green, 2008; Manyaka and Katono, 2010; Sasaoka and Nyangoro, 2013; Mbabazi, 2015). There is particularly strong evidence, it has been argued, that President Museveni has indeed used the creation of new districts to create "a raft of new jobs, each one a patronage opportunity" (Mwenda, 2007: 31).

Critics will also argue that the unprecedented multiplication of districts out of the existing ethnicities is intended to weaken the historically existing political structures of these ethnic units in order to bring them closer to the grip of political power from the central government. It will be recalled that one of the major political reforms of the Museveni era was the creation of a new constitution which allowed, among other things, the restoration of Uganda's traditional kingdoms and chiefdoms as cultural institutions. These were strictly restricted from any political activities, and they are largely no threat to centralised state power. Another major reform, as explained above, was the introduction of the LC system of local government[56] by which the central government "had both created a system of regular and direct elections at the local level and reassigned local government power from centrally-appointed technocrats to locally elected politicians" (Green, 2008). One can assume that these people-chosen local leaders, unlike the restored cultural chiefs and kings, eventually became a threat to the centralised power

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[56] See note 49.

of government. This could be the possible reason for the diminishing powers of the LCs and their being usurped by government-appointed RDCs and CAOs. The constitutional highlight of reassigning local government power to locally elected politicians could have been intended for improving political HIs, but that policy has been slowly but surely reversed. Now the most powerful persons in the district are answerable to the most powerful man in the country, not to the people.

It can be argued that such political patronage affects government institutions, and the values of the people at local and national levels. The net institutional effect is that the state institutions have become "personalised" or "privatised": power and authority are situated in the person, not in the office" (Titeca, 2006: 43). There are also cases where the creation of districts in Uganda has in some cases split one ethnic group into four or more districts for the first time,[57] "with the consequence of psychological separation of people and in some cases conflict, such as the undecided location of the headquarters of Tororo, Terego and Maracha districts in the Bugisu region. In both cases the creation of districts re-shapes the local people's perceptions of socio-cultural values and loyalty. The districts also become more dependent on the central government, and the client-patron relationship is created and re-enforced (Green, 2008).

3.5.2.2 Entrenching HIs

It has been argued elsewhere that in a plural society, such as Uganda, it is indispensable that equity among the various cultural groups is guaranteed for people to have a grip on

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[57] Traditionally bigger ethnic populations have, on the other hand, been used to the split since the 1967 abolition of the status of the four kingdoms and the division of Buganda into four administrative districts.

their destiny, and for the country to avoid the danger of violent conflict. Nevertheless, neither the overly strong central government nor the patronage-driven decentralization policy described above can guarantee such equity. Cultural autonomy for the different ethnic groups has been assaulted over the years; political HIs are being entrenched with certain groups being overrepresented in government and military service compared to their share of the total population; above all, these current policies have the effect of increasing socio-economic HIs.

Aili Mari Tripp has argued, for instance, that "to understand the balance of power in Uganda past and present, it is necessary to look at the configuration of all the security services ... Most of Museveni's closest associates since 2005 have been top military leaders, all from the west – including his son, Major Muhoozi Kainerugaba, who was promoted in 2008 to the rank of lieutenant colonel and commander in charge of Special Forces ..." (Tripp, 2010: 52-53). Muhoozi has since been promoted to the rank of Major General and appointed Special Presidential Advisor on Operations. Indeed, according to the 2016 cabinet list, "western Uganda got the most ministerial jobs, 27 in total. The west has 14 cabinet ministers and 13 ministers of state picked from Ankole, Rwenzori, Kigezi, Tooro and Bunyoro sub-regions. Central region follows with 20 ministerial slots; eight cabinet ministers and 12 ministers of state. Eastern also got 20 cabinet slots with six cabinet ministers and 14 ministers of state. And northern got only three cabinet ministers and 10 ministers of state."[58]

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[58] The Observer, June 20, 2016.

There is, in other words, a concentration of political power in the Southern part of Uganda, which has also laid the foundations for economic and political exclusion, especially of the Acholi minority in Northern Uganda, which has further cemented the grievances that define North-South and which arguably fuelled the creation of the Lord's Resistance Army rebel group (Butale, 2015). In the absence of empirical evidence, it is hard to make a clear link between the dominance of particular ethnicities in the senior echelons of the Uganda government and socio-economic inequalities. Nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to conclude, even from anecdotal evidence, that there are inter- and intra-ethnic tensions and debates on whether political HIs in Uganda today do lead to policy outcomes that advance the interests of the ethnicities with a dominant share in government. It is not unreasonable to conclude either that these debates are due to perceptions of social inequality as operationalized by the United Nations into six explicit categories: (1) inequalities in the distribution of income, (2) inequalities in the distribution of assets, (3) inequalities in the distribution of employment, (4) inequalities in access to knowledge, (5) political inequalities, and (6) inequalities in access to medical services, social security, and safety.[59]

A recent Oxfam report noted that income inequality in Uganda has increased significantly since the 1990s. "Uganda has seen 'growth with exclusion', where relatively few have benefitted from economic gains. The richest 10 per cent of the population enjoy 35.7 per cent of national income; while the poorest 10 per cent claim a meagre 2.5 per cent, and the poorest 20 per cent have only 5.8 per cent. Those at the bottom are on a

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[59] International Forum for Human Development. (2006). Social Justice in an Open World: The Role of the United Nations. United Nations: New York, NY, USA.

downward poverty spiral while those at the top are on an upward trend."[60] Regional inequalities are most evident between central and western Uganda, where most development has taken place, and northern and eastern Uganda where poverty levels remain highest. A 2009 regional forecast, which, on comparing a range of welfare indicators across the four regions of Uganda (see table 6 below), had also highlighted that the Northern region had the lowest actual and potential poverty decline compared to the substantial progress made in the Western and Central parts of Uganda.[61] Of course in 2009 the Northern region was still grappling with the effects of the deadly ethnic conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Uganda Government's Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) (see section 3.5.1 above). But even today, almost 10 years after the end of the conflict, there is a persistently high rate of poverty in the Northern region which poses a challenge to reducing regional inequality.[62]

Table 6: 2009 Welfare Indicators by Region

	Poverty 2005/06 (%)	Annual average population growth (1991-2006) (%)	Fertility (births per woman, 2000) (%)	Dwelling type – hut (2005/06) (%)	Ownership of mobile phone (2005/06) (%)
Central	16.4	2.6	5.7	3	23
East	35.9	3.5	7.4	31	11
North	60.7	4.2	7.9	68	5
West	31.1	3.2	-	22	17

Source: Overseas Development Institute Policy Brief No. 2 ("Regional Inequality and Primary Education in Northern Uganda"). Prepared by Kate Higgins for the World development Report 2009.

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[60] Oxfam 2016.

[61] The forecast was based on the Uganda Bureau of Statistics Population and Housing Census (1991 – 2002), National Household Survey (2005/06) and the Uganda Demographic Household Survey (2002).

[62] The World Bank – Uganda Overview, April 2016.

Matters are not helped by the fact that these areas also lie behind in education, a vital pillar of social development. Historical inequalities in school enrolment, and in the distribution of schools in general, has always meant that school enrolment in the Northern region, and in some other regions, lies far below that of the Central region where Buganda has historically had more exposure to education since colonial days. Table 7 below shows, for example, that by the 2009 census the northern region had a far lower share of enrolment in secondary schools, at 12.0%, compared to the Central region's 35.9%.

Table 7:

Secondary Schools Enrolment in All Schools and Government Aided Schools by Region.

	All Schools				Government Schools			
Region	Male	Female	Total	% Share	Male	Female	Total	% Share
Central	211,455	216,891	428,346	35.9%	78,333	70,334	148,667	27.0%
Eastern	169,717	126,427	296,144	24.8%	86,087	58,517	144,604	26.3%
N. Eastern	9,290	7,797	17,087	1.4%	5,827	4,942	10,769	2.0%
Northern	93,061	50,528	143,589	12.0%	51,670	26,951	78,621	14.3%
S. Western	59,573	47,447	107,020	9.0%	31,051	22,987	54,038	9.8%
Western	104,918	97,350	202,268	16.9%	58,968	54,964	113,932	20.7%
National	648,014	546,440	1,194,454	100.0%	311,936	238,695	550,631	100.0%

(Source: Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda Education Statistical Abstract 2009)

Latest economic outlook reports in Uganda paint a rosy picture of an economy that continued to improve in 2015, and a real GDP growth that was projected to reach 5.1% in 2016, and 5.8% in 2017, driven by industry, services and public infrastructure investment. On the other hand, the same reports indicate that poverty fell in all regions except the

Eastern region, where it increased between 2009/10 and 2012/13. They also indicate that although the Northern region has witnessed a significant reduction in poverty – from 60.7% in 2005/06 to 43.7% in 2012/13 – this still remains more than twice the national average.[63]

3.6 What is the Way Forward?

From the foregone qualitative analysis of the current state of the nation, it can be argued that there has been a systematic fading of the hopes and ambitions of the post-independence era, and that re-thinking the state is *a sine qua non*. Contemporary flaws in governance, as well as the intermittent violent conflicts in the country, maybe attributed, directly or indirectly, to what Mukikagile has described as "the profound crisis of legitimacy of the state, its institutions and their political incumbents" (Mukikagile, 2012: 391).

None of the foregone arguments could dispute the fact that 'nation building', the foremost objective of post-independence 'nationalism', would have been more easily achievable in a centralized system of government. The problem with the nationalist trend in Uganda, and in all but a few countries elsewhere in Africa, is that soon it turned into centralized dictatorships, and it is now outdated. In particular, the making of Uganda between independence and the current NRM regime has been characterised by governments concentrating too much power to the centre. In the process, the real identities and diversities that characterize Uganda as a nation have been neglected and sometimes aggressively trampled underfoot as was the case during the 1966 crisis. The

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[63] African Development Bank, Uganda Economic outlook, 2015.

lines of identity have been drawn and redrawn. Traditional nationalities have been fragmented and natural diversities defeated.

The events and stages in the life of independent Uganda, which I have outlined in this chapter, account for no more than an "institutionless arena in which groups with political resources captured power and dictated their own terms which, in turn, provoked violent reactions" (Mudoola, 1993: 105). With them, all the social arrangements for independent Uganda came under strain and eventually fell apart. The natural ethnic bonds like the Ganda spirit of *Bulungi bwa nsi* (national common good) [64] have disappeared in the process, and accountability for the institutional structures that once defined the nation and its communal spirit is slowly fading. What successive generations after independence have witnessed, therefore, have been the persistent remnants of a fading institutional system, gross HIs over years and regimes, and intermittent periods of insecurity.

Proponents of a federation will argue for a return to the original, historical units of local and ethnic governments which are devoid of ambitious political manoeuvres and, which, as Nigerian historian Jade Ajayi points out, carry a direct connection between modern African states and the "authentic African past" (Ajayi, cited in Cooper, 2009: 15). Local people in such an arrangement will feel truly represented and not just subjected to politicking and electioneering. Horizontal inequalities, which are a potential cause of inter-ethnic conflicts, will also be overcome.

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[64] *Bulungi bwa nsi* in Buganda and *burungibwensi* in Ankole. Literally translated as 'for the good of the country / nation', this is a centuries-old form of community work, when everyone in the village volunteers in activities, such as maintaining community roads.

Whether federalism is perceived by the local populace in Uganda as the (or one of the) effective device(s) for managing diversity in equity and reconstructing the state, is the primary focus of this study. Qualitative evidence has been sought in a survey of grassroots perceptions from various cultural-ethnic areas of Uganda. Chapter 4 will outline the cultural, socio-economic, and political dimensions of the perceptions of the respondents in relation to their respective ethnic groups.

Chapter 4

Perspectives – The Survey

4.4   Areas and Findings

The qualitative interviews were conducted with eight people from each of 10 of the 15 administrative areas originally represented in the independence arrangements. They are the kingdoms of Ankole, Buganda, Bunyoro and Toro; the territory of Busoga; and the former administrative districts of Acholi, Bugisu, Kigezi, Teso and West Nile. A brief description of these areas and their peoples follows.

4.1.1 Areas of research at a glance

4.1.1.1 Acholi

The Acholi people, also spelled Acoli, belong to the Western Nilotic group of the Nilotic language speakers (see section 3.1.2). They are the descendants of a variety of Luo-speaking peoples who are believed to have migrated three or four centuries ago from adjacent areas of what is now South Sudan into what is now the Acholi district of Uganda. The Acholi District, commonly known as Acholiland, had a population of more than one million at the turn of the 21st century. It was then comprised of three districts, Gulu, Kitgum and Pader, but has since been divided further into four other districts under the NRM decentralisation policy. The Acholi now live in the districts of Agago, Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum, Lamwo, Nwoya and Pader, although some of them also live in the Magwe County of South Sudan.

The Acholi are famous in East African history for their spirituality and martial power. They have unfortunately recently been in the international news for the wrong reasons: over wars in Northern Uganda, and particularly the warfare activities of one of their own, Joseph Kony, leader of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army. The Acholi have also been repeatedly ethnically manipulated since colonial days. First, they were manipulated by the British, who admired their military prowess but also exploited it to limit them to service in the military, creating a sort of 'military ethnocracy' and denying the Acholi the economic and political development that flourished among the southern tribes. Secondly, they were manipulated by Obote II who used them as the leading commanders in the unpopular 'Luwero Triangle' war against the guerrilla forces of Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (Mutiibwa, 1992: 157, 161; Mwakikagile, 2012: 158; Kalinaki, 2014: 77). Moreover, even after top Acholi commanders had overthrown Obote II before he was defeated by Museveni, Museveni rejected any settlement where he could have shared political power with the Acholi.

Most recently the Acholi people have been used by two of their own: Alice Lakwena and Joseph Kony. The former, a young woman with no previous military experience, became the leader of the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM). The HSM was, as Leggett describes it, "a complex movement combining political and military opposition to the Museveni government with a mission to cleanse the Acholi themselves of the sins they had committed in earlier wars" (Leggett, 2001: 28). After Lakwena had been defeated, in about a year's time, a different movement arose under the leadership of Joseph Kony, also claiming like Lakwena to be possessed by religious powers. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) claimed to be resisting the NRM government on behalf of the Acholi, but it ended

up brutalising their own people. The killing and maiming of its victims and the rape and abduction of children became the LRA's specialty. The apparently well calculated reluctance by the highly organised and war-hardened NRM government troops either to defeat Kony or seek a negotiated peace left widespread feelings of hopelessness and despair among the Acholi. In 2008, having terrorised his own people for 20 solid years, Kony fled with what was left of his army to the jungles of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, southern Sudan and The Central African Republic. Until that time, the LRA had killed an estimated 100, 000 civilians, displaced over 1.5 million, and abducted over 20,000 children, forcing them to be sex slaves and child soldiers.

The politics of ethnic instrumentalism, it can be argued, has been the main reason for the long suffering of the Acholi people.

4.1.1.2 Ankole

Ankole Kingdom and Region, also referred to as Nkole, is one of the four traditional kingdoms in Uganda. The People of Ankole are called Banyankole (singular Munyankole), and they are a nomadic-pastoralist Bantu group inhabiting the current districts of Mbarara, Bushenyi, Ntungamo, Kiruhura, Ibanda and Isingiro in western Uganda. The Banyankole belong to the Western Lacustrine Bantu group which also includes the Banyoro, Batoro, Banyankole and Bakiga of western Uganda (see 3.1.1). Both the two major Banyankole clans, the Bahima and the Bairu, speak Runyankole, and there are approximately 2,330,000 native speakers making the Banyankole the second largest Bantu-speaking ethnic group in Uganda, after the Baganda (see Table 5).

Ankole kingdom was ruled by a monarch known as The *Mugabe* or *Omugabe* of Ankole, and historically he was a Muhima who ruled on top of a hierarchy followed by a royal Hima dynasty. The kingdom was formally abolished in 1967 by the government of President Milton Obote, and is still not officially restored. Historically the pastoralist Bahima were associated with the monarchy, though the Bahiru who were seen as agriculturalists (though they too owned cattle) form the majority of the population. Some observers believe that the current President Yoweri Museveni, a Muhima situated outside the aristocracy, blocked the restoration of Obugabe and "sought political alliances with the Bairu to broaden his political base" (Tripp, 2008: 61). How to deal with such underlying tensions between castes and clans in the same traditional areas of authority makes the current debate and inquiry potentially difficult.

4.1.1.3 Buganda

Buganda is reputed to have been the largest, most sophisticated and most prosperous of the kingdoms of central Africa by the middle of the nineteenth century (Apter, 1967: 63-64; Leggett, 2001: 15; Mwesigwa, 2013: 45; Roscoe, 1911: 98*)*. The Baganda tribe, also called the Ganda, is the biggest of the Bantu-speaking groups, and at almost 17% of the population the single largest ethnic group in Uganda (See Table 5). They occupy the central part of Uganda which presently covers the 24 districts of Buikwe, Bukomansimbi, Butambala, Buvuma, Gomba, Kalangala, Kalungu, Kampala, Kayunga Kiboga, Kyankwanzi, Luwero, Lwengo, Lyantonde, Masaka, Mityana, Mpigi, Mubende, Mukono, Nakaseke, Nakasongola, Rakai, Sembabule, and Wakiso.

The title Baganda or the Ganda (singular Muganda) is originally indigenous, and was applied by the people to themselves long before the Europeans came. Etymologically,

this name comes from the Luganda word "omuganda" which means "a bundle". It signifies unity, and it may account for the brotherhood the inhabitants of Buganda are well known for (Ssali, 2014).

The Baganda had long stood out for their meticulous approach to political and social life, and "there grew up among the British", as Apter notes, "a myth of Buganda as a knightly and feudal nation" (Apter, 1967: 63). Thus, when the protectorate of Uganda was established in 1894, the British built it around Buganda. As mentioned elsewhere in this work, from the beginning of British rule the Baganda had a special place in Uganda (see 3.2 above). The kingdom of Buganda was divided into administrative units known as *amasaza* (counties), which were further subdivided into sub-counties (*amagombolola*), parishes (*emiruka),* sub-parishes and village units (*ebyaalo).* Chiefs at all levels were appointed by the king, and they were directly responsible to him. The *sazas* (counties) were the single most important administrative units, and the name of the title for each *Saza* Chief was different. They are still called so in the current constitutional monarchy. However, like the *Kabaka* (king), and unlike their ancestors, they are just cultural leaders with no political and administrative powers.

Colonial administration and all forms of development began in Buganda, and with the help of Baganda agents spread outwards to other parts of the protectorate. Even the system of administration used around the protectorate was based on the one the British found in Buganda. This, plus the fact that it was mainly implemented by Baganda agents, caused a sense of resentment in some areas against the Baganda. However, it also left the Baganda feeling as if they were the first among equals, which, as Leggett (2001) notes, planted the seeds of discord that would be harvested when Uganda became independent.

The so called "Buganda question", outlined in 3.2 above, stemmed from the unequal treatment of Buganda vis-a-vis the other tribes. Buganda as a result wanted to preserve her status of "a state within a state", and her leaders felt betrayed by the Imperial British Government's insistence on handing over power to a central government based on a unitary system.

It can be argued that 54 years after Uganda became independent, and 48 years since the promulgation of the 1967 Republican Constitution, the question of the position of Buganda in Uganda is still as relevant as ever, and Buganda has come up as a point of reference throughout the grassroots interviews for this particular research.

4.1.1.4 Bugisu

Bugisu or Bugishu is the land of the Bagisu or Bagishu, also known as Gisu, Gishu, Masaba or Sokwia people of the Bantu family who live along the slopes of Mount Elgon (also called Mount Masaba) in what was once the Mbale District of eastern Uganda. It has since been divided up into several districts under the NRM decentralisation policy.

A person of the Bagisu tribe is called Mugisu (Mugishu), and everything associated with the Bagisu including their culture, tradition, values and property are also known as Kigisu. As such, one can talk of Kigisu music, Kigisu dance or Kigisu culture. Further, the generic term Gisu (Gishu) has been used by scholars like Victor Suzette Heald (1999) to refer to the Bagisu people, their region, language, or culture. As such, one can talk of the Gisu while referring to the Bagisu people or something that belongs to them.

The Bagisu speak Lugisu, sometimes called Lumasaba which belongs to Niger-Congo language family. Like other Bantu languages, Lugisu has multiple dialects. While

Ludadiri is a Lugisu dialect spoken by the Bagisu from the north, Lubuuya is the Lugisu dialect spoken in south Bugisu. Further, the Bagisu who live near the Babukusu of western Kenya have the influence of Lubukusu, the language of Babukusu. And yet, the Bagisu who live in Central Bugisu speak a Lugisu dialect influenced by the surrounding languages including Luganda, Lusoga, Lusamia and Lunyoli.

The Bagisu, like the Banyoro in the west, also tried to resist conquest by the British, but their defiance was repeatedly crushed in the 1910s. This was accomplished in Bugisu on behalf of the British by the prominent Muganda chief Semei Kakungulu. He not only engaged in successful military campaigns, but also acted as the leading Muganda agent, organising the Kiganda system of administration in the area (See 3.2 above). And he was dearly loved by the Bagisu.

4.1.1.5 Bunyoro

Bunyoro lies in the plateau of western Uganda, and is one of the Western Lacustrine Bantu tribes which also include the kingdoms of Ankole and Toro (See 3.1.1 above). The Banyoro (singular Munyoro) constitute about 3% of the population of Uganda, and they belong to the ancient kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara which initially was bigger than the present districts of Hoima, Masindi, Buliisa, Kyandongo and Kibale. Under the current Babiito dynasty and under their predecessors the Bachwezi whom the Babiito defeated and overthrew during the sixteenth century, Bunyoro-Kitara exercised a fair amount of influence in the Lacustrine Region until the coming of the British. For that reason they are known to have been historically antagonistic to the other powerful kingdom of Buganda, with whom they were however linked into the same colony.

As Uzoigwe (2002) notes, under their King (*Omukama*) Kabarega, the Banyoro formed the bulwark of resistance against British colonialism early in the twentieth century. They blamed the British for restoring the Toro kingdom, which Kabarega had reconquered; they blamed them for allowing Buganda and Ankole to expand at their expense; and they blamed them for forcing them to live under the rule of Baganda chiefs appointed by the colonial government.

The *Omukama* Kabarega of Bunyoro became the most famous resistor to British rule. He fought the British for nine years until he was eventually captured and exiled to the Indian Ocean islands of The Seychelles in 1899. Bunyoro was severely punished for resisting, and in the 1900 Buganda agreement the British allowed the Kingdom of Buganda to extend its pre-colonial territory into Bunyoro Kingdom. This was a matter of deep resentment in Bunyoro throughout the colonial period, and it would later culminate into the controversial "Lost Counties" debate of the 1960s. The resentment climaxed in the Nyangire Revolt of 1907, which was a rejection of Buganda's sub-imperialism but primarily was a passive revolt against British rule. The revolt was suppressed, and direct colonial rule was imposed on the Banyoro. The two traditional rival tribes thus ended up with different fortunes in the colonial arrangement. As Leggett puts it, "Buganda's importance was enhanced, while the status and influence of Bunyoro declined" (Leggett, 2001: 15).

4.1.1.6 Busoga

The Busoga Sub-region constitutes the traditional kingdom of Busoga. It was known as Busoga District and Busoga Province at independence and under the 1974 provincial administration, respectively, and is currently made of the districts of Bugiri, Buyende,

Iganga, Jinja, Kaliro, Kamuli, Luuka, Mayige, Namayingo and Namutumba. While the history of the Basoga is complex due to the intermingling of people in the region, it can be asserted that the earliest inhabitants of Busoga belonged to the same Bantu group comprising the Banyoro and the Baganda.

There are many legends about the origins of the Basoga, one of which asserts that they are descended from the Baganda. It is said that the first man in Busoga was Kintu, the first Muganda himself, who left his sons in Busoga on his way to Buganda from the Mountain Elgon (Masaba) region. As a matter of fact, the Basoga speak a language, Lusoga, which closely resembles Luganda, and there has been so much Buganda influence over Busoga that Luganda tends to be used as a lingua franca in Busoga more than Lusoga itself (Tumusiime, 2011).

Originally there was no paramount chief over the whole of Basoga, and "the Basoga were organised into principalities or chiefdoms under the sovereignty of Bunyoro and later of Buganda" (Tumusiime, 2011: 88). Buganda influence is said to have greatly increased over the southern Busoga principalities during the nineteenth century, while the northern principalities still had strong connections with Bunyoro. Busoga only became the entity it is now in 1906 when the British Protectorate amalgamated all these pre-colonial chiefdoms and created the Busoga *Lukiiko* (Parliament) with its President on top of the union. Later in 1919 the office of the *Isebantu Kyabazinga* (the de facto King of Busoga) was established. There was thus a strong network of chiefdoms that formed the backbone of the current Busoga kingdom and its new ethnic consciousness. The chiefdoms are now called s*aza*', just like in Buganda, "and the head of a chiefdom is called '*saza* chief', though every *saza* chief has his peculiar name of the title" (Nakabayashi,

2005: 3), just as is the case in Buganda. Busoga, therefore, like the other Lacustrine Kingdoms, does not only form a natural administrative part of Uganda, but is itself founded on several natural, pre-colonial administrative units.

4.4.1.6   *Kigezi*

Kigezi Sub-region is the region mainly occupied by the Bakiga of Southwestern Uganda, with two other major groups of inhabitants being the Bahororo and the Banyarwanda. Other ethnicities include the Batwa, the Bafumbira and others, and the inhabitants of the sub-region also collectively refer to themselves as Abanyakigezi (*Wikipeadia*). At Independence the sub-region was collectively called Kigezi District. The Kigezi region is currently constituted by the districts of Kabale, Kanungu, Kisoro and Rukungiri. People from some of the present counties in Rukungiri district share the same culture with the Banyankore. The language of the Bakiga, Rukiga, is closely related to the Runyankore language of the Banankore.

The actual origins of the Bakiga are explained differently in varying traditions. One tradition claims that the cradle of the Bakiga was in Buganza in Rwanda. They migrated from there in search of fertile land and to escape internal political conflicts. According to another tradition, the Bakiga are said to have migrated, like most Lacustrine Bantu, from the Congo region through what is now Eastern Zaire, Bunyoro, Karagwe (Tanzania) and Rwanda, to finally settle in Kigezi.[65]

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[65] See http://www.ugandatravelguide.com/bakiga-culture.html

The Bakiga never had a kingdom or united chiefdom, and they were organised into clans, each of which was composed of several lineages and each lineage had a head. They were, in other words, a segmentary society, and "political authority rested mainly in the hands of the lineage leaders" (Tumusiime, 2011: 69). This fact may explain the tendency among Bakiga respondents[66] to be sceptical of the possibility of a united, Kiga-based ethnic state. Their sub-region is also widely mixed-up with Bahororo, Banyarwanda, Batwa and Bafumbira as mentioned above. Moreover, due to overpopulation, the Bakiga have been migrating to other parts of Uganda especially to Kabarole, Rukungiri, Kasese, Hoima, Masindi and Mubende districts. They have also settled in Masaka and Rakai districts, and in the Rwampara, Ruhuma and Ibanda counties of Mbarara district. They are a physically strong people, and they tend to work as hired labourers in the areas they migrate to.

4.4.1.7   *Teso*

The Iteso people predominantly live in what was known at independence as Teso District. It was called Teso Province and further divided into North, Central and South Teso districts during the 1974 provincial administration. Presently the Teso people live in the seven districts of Amuria, Bukedea, Kaberamaido, Katakwi, Kumi, Serere and Soroti, and in parts of Paliisa and Tororo districts. At 6.4% of Uganda's population, the Teso are the largest of the Nilotic speaking group. They are also the larger of the two Eastern Nilotic language speakers, the other being the Karamojong (see 3.1.2 above).

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[66] Respondents in Kigezi expressed worries that there would be wrangles because they do not have one Paramount leader, and every sub-leader will want to be a leader.

Historically, the clan was the basic social and political unit of the Iteso, and it was administrative and judicial in character. The clan leader, known as *Apolon ka Ateker,* was therefore greatly respected and acted as an arbitrator in the event of disputes. During colonial administration, however, this segmentary leadership was reduced to that of a third grade chief and the whole of Teso sub-region turned into one administrative district. Teso today has metamorphosed into a kingship with a king referred to as *Emorimor* (Tumusiime, 2011: 140-141).

Teso respondents came out very positively in favour of ethnic federalism, mainly in anticipation of a local solution to the local, cultural problem of the disastrous cattle rustling by Karimajong worriors. Like their Karimajong ethnic cousins, the Iteso are traditionally cattle keepers even though they also practiced agriculture, growing crops like ground nuts and millet. Traditionally the two communities co-existed well enough as neighbours with minor conflicts of cattle rustling on both sides. The balance of power was fairly even and both sides understood and accepted the cattle rustling as culturally symbolic, and up to 1979 the Iteso took the raids as a bearable nuisance against which they would defend themselves. After the war that ousted Idi Amin, however, the Karimojong acquired large quantities of guns left abandoned in military barracks. The well-armed Karimojong warriors have since then attacked their neighbours with impunity, with disastrous consequences for both Teso land and cattle.[67] Government-initiated attempts to disarm the Karamajong stalled, and ethnic federalism maybe seen as a means of solving the problem.

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[67] See https://tipsoroti.wordpress.com/conflict-background/

4.4.1.8   Toro

The Toro sub-region is coterminous with the ancient kingdom of Toro in Western Uganda (Tumusiime, 2011: 44), and is one of the Western Lacustrine Bantu tribes together with Ankole and Bunyoro (See 3.1.1 above). The Batooro (singular, Mutooro) speak Lutooro which is closely related to the Lunyoro language of the Banyoro, and they comprise roughly 3.2% of Uganda's population. The Batooro inhabit the current districts of Bundibugyo, Kabarole, Kamwenge, Kasese, Kyegegwa, Kyenjojo and Ntoroko, although their area has been infiltrated by many migrants from other parts of Western Uganda, particularly the Bakiga.

There are conflicting legends about the origins of the Batooro. One legend asserts that the Batooro are indigenous to Toro, and that they originated from the Batembuzi and the Bagabu who are said to have been the pioneer inhabitants and rulers of the earth. Some other traditions assert that the Batooro are related to the Bachwezi and the Babito dynasty (Tumusiime, 2011:40). Indeed, Toro oral tradition itself asserts that the kingdom was part of the large empire of Bunyoro-Kitara under the Babito dynasty which dates back to the sixteenth century. It also asserts that Prince Olimi Kaboyo Kasunsunkwanzi, son of the King of Bunyoro-Kitara, Kyebambe Nyamutukura, annexed the southern province of his father's kingdom and declared himself king of this land, known as Toro. He was warmly received and accepted by the Batooro as *Omukama* Kaboyo Olimi I.

The new kingdom survived the early, tumultuous years of its infancy, and grew to enjoy well over a century of goodwill, peace and prosperity. Later, the powerful Bunyoro King Kabalega tried to retake Toro and re-establish the mighty, ancient kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara. He however failed, and Toro kingdom became more and more firmly

established, even making an agreement with the British, through Sir Gerald Portal, who continued to govern the country and the kingdom. In 1967 Toro suffered the same fate as those of Ankole, Buganda and Bunyoro. *Omukama* Olimi Kaboyo II was deposed, and the kingdom was banned. He was later reinstated in 1993, but without his former political and administrative powers. He, like his son Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru Rukidi IV later, was to reign just as the cultural head of the Batooro.

4.4.1.9   West Nile

The West Nile sub-region of Uganda lies in north-western Uganda, and gets its name from being located on the western side of the Albert Nile.[68] It was called West Nile District at independence, and later West Nile Province during the 1974 provincial administration. Currently it consists of as many as 8 districts under the NRM Government decentralisation policy: Adjumani, Arua, Koboko, Maracha, Moyo, Nebbi, Yumbe and Zombo districts.

West Nile is bordered by the Democratic Republic of Congo to the south and south west, South Sudan to the north, and The Albert Nile to the east. The West Nile sub-region became part of Uganda in 1915 with the Anglo- Belgian Agreement which took effect 21 years after Uganda was declared a British Protectorate on June 18, 1894. West Nile was the last but one district to be added to Uganda. Karamoja District followed in 1922. Right from its inception, West Nile was a multi- ethnic district consisting of four main ethnic groups - Lugbara, Alur, Madi and Kakwa, and a few other minor tribes like the Lendu,

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[68] The Albert Nile refers to the upper Nile River which issues from the north end of Lake Albert in northwestern Uganda and continues north into South Sudan.

Okebu amd Metu. They all belong to the Madi-Moru group of people who, besides those in Uganda, are also found in South Sudan, north-eastern DRC Congo, and the Central African Republic. The Lugbara are the largest ethnic group among them.

West Nile first came to prominence with the rise to power of the military leader and ex-President Idi Amin Dada. His rule and excesses however left a bitter division between the West Nile tribes and the Western Nilotic tribes, particularly the Acholi and the Langi, as well as the Southern Bantu. After the fall of Idi Amin, West Nile-based groups featured predominantly in fighting the subsequent regimes.

Traditionally, the political institutions of West Nile tribes were segmentary, organised in chiefdoms led by hereditary chiefs. There is a tendency therefore, like among the Bakiga, to be sceptical of the possibility of a united, West Nile ethnic state. The sub-region is heavily multi-ethnic, the political set up of individual ethnic groups is closely interwoven with their religious beliefs, and the segmentary organization left them with no central, unitary figures as is the case in other tribal kingdoms or paramount chiefdoms.

4.1.2 Respondents' answers: Overall findings

The main survey questions were:

1. Would you support the idea of an ethnically based federal arrangement for Uganda, and do you think it is likely to happen soon, or later?

2. Do you think this would be a better system for Uganda: culturally, socially and politically?

Yasin Olum has argued that one of the most contentious issues regarding the debate about federalism in Uganda is the diverse meanings attached to it by cross-sections of Ugandans. "Sometimes," he notes, "the term is not understood at all" (Olum, 2013: 37). Indeed, in his own 2013 cross-country inquiry into the people's understanding of federalism,[69] he found out that the respondents' understanding of what federalism implies depended much on whether they were from northern, western and eastern regions, or from the central region. He particularly noted that there is a tendency to fuse federalism with monarchism in areas like Buganda which have strong monarchical institutions, and which are actually advocating for federalism. Olum's overall findings, nevertheless, were that on the whole, most respondents grasped the conventional meaning as the division and sharing of power between the central government and the sub-regions. Their responses, he notes, "represent those of the key informants (i.e. technocrats, politicians, and representatives of civil society)" (ibid, 38).

In the present research, I did not set out to investigate the meaning people at the grassroots (and later some opinion leaders) attach to federalism, but rather to find out whether they think a federation with ethnically defined regions is the most suitable form of government for Uganda today or not. I was aware of the possible challenges to the legitimacy of not investigating the people's understanding of the concept of federalism before investigating their opinions about the relevance or irrelevance of *ethnic federalism*. I therefore took advantage of the in-depth, qualitative research design and used the open-ended conversations with my respondents to define and clarify what I was seeking their views about (i.e. ethnic federalism as designed on their respective tribal

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[69] Olum's findings are compiled into a book, *The Federal Question in Uganda, 2013*.

boundaries). My line of questions made it clear that views were being sought about a system that should enable citizens to realize three things: to freely determine the answers to their unique local political preferences; to manage their own local resources and monitor the delivery of services; and to have leaders who belong to the same culture, and who both grasp and have at heart all the physical and cultural-spiritual aspirations of their people. In Uganda, these groups are either ethnic monarchies, ethnic chieftainships or ethnically divided administrative districts, and so, understanding federalism in a cultural monarchical sense was more of an advantage than a disadvantage.

The interviews were recorded and the responses transcribed. I then qualitatively analysed and sorted those data into three categories: those in favour of a federation of tribes and hopeful that such a system was likely to happen; those in favour, but sceptical of the likelihood of such a federation; and those completely against federalism. The cultural, political and economic value perceptions of ethnic federalism were not specifically quantified, but they are traceable in the respondents' narratives.

All in all, a majority 80% of the respondents expressed support for the federation of tribes as a viable option for managing diversity in Uganda (see Table 8 and Figure 2 below).

Table 8 Attitudes towards federation of ethnic groups

	Supportive and hopeful	Supportive but sceptical	Completely against	Total
Numbers	30	34	16	80
Percentages	37.5%	42.5%	20.0%	100 %

Figure 4. Attitudes towards federation of ethnic groups
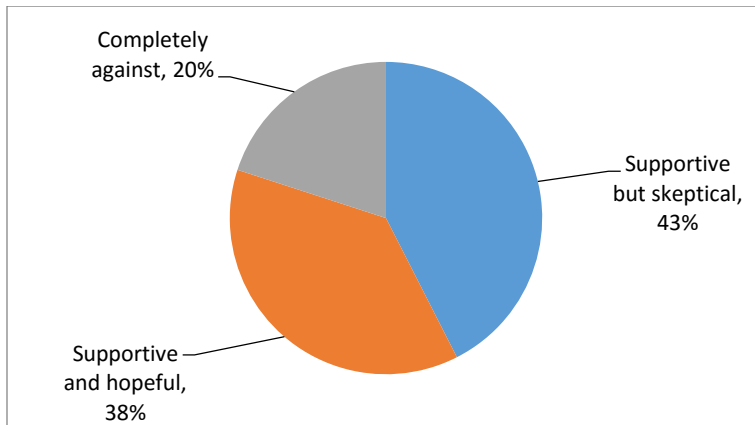
4.1.2.1 Supportive and hopeful

The 37.5% of respondents supportive and 'hopeful' cited the main advantage of localizing power as being the assurance that leaders know the local needs as well as the traditional values of their areas of administration. Many of these respondents showed awareness of the paramount role of leadership in mobilizing the people to realize the full potential of their local endowments, and in the distribution of resources. This was for instance reflected in an interview with a 60-year-old male peasant in Bugisu:

> If the Umukuuka (traditional ruler of the Bagisu) was given more power, he can bring the services and employment to his people without political wrangles and intervention. Politicians don't seem to be carrying our voices. They have too much pressure from elections.

A 22-year old female university student from the same region echoed similar optimism:

> Economically, there would be mobilization and a clear explanation of policies to the locals. For example, now there is the case of our local cooperative union, Bugisu

Cooperative Union (BCU).[70] It is not clear who is killing it. It is possible politicians who do not have Bugisu at heart are killing it.

These sentiments were also echoed by a 25-year old female student from Acholi:

> Yes, I think we need to have more political power for the cultural leaders. Political cultural leaders should be more effective in controlling issues like land which are dear to us. Sometimes there is too much meddling by the central government in things that don't benefit the people ...

Speaking through an interpreter, a 60-year old female farmer in Busoga summed it up thus:

> We could do better like in the good old days when local areas benefitted from their local productions.

These opinions reflected grassroots awareness of the fact that the ruling elite are intent on entrenching a patrimonial system of authority. It is a system that basically doesn't take into account the local leadership needs, especially the coherence of the tradition-bound communities. It is a system that is intent on rewarding followers. Individual administrators are sorted out for their support of the system and 'rewarded' with administrative jobs in tribal areas whose kinship and cultural value systems they know nothing about. The field interviews revealed that the grassroots' preference and hope for an 'ethno-nationalistic' leadership system, 'ethnic federalism' as it were, is born out of protest against such indifference on the part of the centralizing state.

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[70] Bugisu Cooperative Union (BCU) is a Ugandan agricultural cooperative federation established in July 1954. It was started by a group of coffee farmers in the region.

These positive voices were also hopeful because they think the decentralisation drive,[71] born out of this indifference and the drive to reward ruling party zealots, is now failing,[72] and that soon it will be inevitable to restore power to the traditional foci of the people's social allegiance. Many of the respondents in this category said they were, for example, weary of district chiefs who are appointed in Kampala and brought to places outside their tribal and cultural areas whose local needs and traditional values they don't know. As a 55-year old male peasant from Soroti (Teso) put it,

> Politically, it (federalism) would strengthen the leader because it makes him more legitimate. We need to consult and work with a local man. A Residential District Administrator (RDC) or a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) from Kalungu (in Masaka in Buganda) to my area here in Ngora District may not know the real local issues. It is culturally important, especially for land issues in Teso. This is an economic issue too.

Similar sentiments were expressed by a 20-year-old, female high school graduate from the same area:

> There is actually a case of a CAO (Chief Administrative Officer) in Serere (one of the new districts in the Teso region) who was removed because he did not know the way things work there. I hope for instance Captain Mukula (a local politician) rules here with other Itesot … See the case of (Lord Mayor) Lukwago (of Kampala) who was elected by his people but was replaced by Tumwebaze.[73] There is too much confusion in government. A

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[71] See the Uganda Local Governments Act 1997 (1.2.1).

[72] See *The Observer*, June 29, 2016.

[73] Erias Lukwago Ssalongo is a Ugandan lawyer and opposition politician. He is theLord Mayor of the city of Kampala, the capital of Uganda and the largest metropolitan area in the country. He was first elected to that position in January

bad image is portrayed of Kampala. Plus confusion and corruption. The current system is like taking a man to a family and say this is your father!

From Bugisu again, a 24-year old unemployed male graduate summed it up thus:

> I think it would even be better to have a Umukukha in all three (sub) tribes for a fair local representation. Economically, we would have a good and fair supply of goods and services from our own who knows us well. Politically, there would be a fair division of power and natural representation. It is not like having a Muganda RDC here in Bugisu. It is beliefs, not politics. This is possible if government changes their thinking and accept the natural belief that people have in their natural rulers.

The field interviews reflected this as a growing concern in various tribal areas. A 30-year old male accountant from Buganda took it beyond just appointed outsider-administrators to ordinary people ('migrants') coming from other regions to settle in Buganda:

> I feel so bad when I see people coming from other cultures to encroach on my region, yeah, you understand, things that I used to be proud of, lately, they are being taken by other people, coming from other regions.

The cultural and moral heritage, as well as the value of traditional institutions, also came up among some respondents. They urged that the traditional leaders, in their respective areas, need more power in order to effectively safeguard their traditional institutions and norms. Many, even non-Baganda respondents, referred to this central kingdom and to

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2011 and re-elected in February 2016. He, however, spent much of his first term in a wrangle with the central government which actually appointed a minister for Kampala (Frank Tumwebaze for 2011 – 2016 and Betty Nambooze for 2016 ~) and a Kampala City Authority Mayor who effectively run the city. It is yet to be seen how his second term goes.

the fact that the restored king of Buganda has over the last 20 years exerted real influence on his people through active campaigns to restore and maintain what the Baganda call "ebyaffe" (literally 'our things').[74] As one 51-year old peasant in Teso put it:

> People used to pay keen attention to their kings and chiefs' rulings and biddings. They used to obey them by all means. Even today, the youth in Buganda, who sometimes may look really disturbed and delinquent, pay close attention to and obey the king's biddings. Therefore if we are governed under our own traditional rulers society will be more upright.

A 68-year old female respondent from Madi (West Nile) echoed similar sentiments:

> In developmental issues, the chiefs can do better than the LCs. The LCs cannot even mobilize people now. When the LCs go to the people, they have to pay something. But when a (traditional) chief goes to the people, people come and listen because that is their chief, and he has natural authority. And they will not ask him for money...so now like for the land issues, cultural leaders can take the lead in solving land problems...Also, now politicians don't know what to do with children who do not want to go to school. But if chiefs take up the issue, all children will go to school.

Also from Madi, a 59-year old male respondent said:

> The culture is so important because first, the moral fabric of the youth is getting spoiled. It's only through the culture that we can restore that. In the past people used to respect themselves. But today the youth are so reckless because they don't

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[74] "Ebyaffe" is interpreted by the Baganda and political commentators in many ways, including the throne and the cultural rituals that go with it, properties owned by the Buganda Kingdom prior to 1966, but also political power for Buganda to regulate her own institution.

like the culture. When the cultural setting is very strong, the youth can definitely improve their way of living. Because even now as you look around, you see immorality being practiced everywhere, and people don't care about this.

In Ankole, a 60-year old female peasant questioned the meaning of a culture without a cultural symbol:

What of a culture without a cultural symbol? We are going down, and it's worrying. I am worried even more for the Ankole state. I only wish they could resolve the absence of a king. For now, we shall resign to teaching culture at home – mother to child.

A 26-year old female receptionist in Bunyoro lamented the fact that local cultural standards have gone very low, "and our culture needs to be rescued by a more powerful King":

Girls are getting married, and they don't know what to do culturally. From the moment they get married things get tough. Now for us we know only what we see in films and the internet, but we don't know what to do culturally. Traditional leaders need more power and resources to be able to organize workshops and teach young people what they are supposed to do culturally.

A 51-year old female primary school teacher, also from Bunyoro, argued that it's our cultural identities that ultimately dictate our socio-economic and political aspirations. If traditional institutions have shared, but real power, they will be not only more effective symbols of our cultures, but also effective tools for socio-economic development:

> We follow our culture in all manners, in marriage, even in death and burial customs. The king is the symbol of this culture, and with more power he can be instrumental in the future for economic development too.

As symbols of culture, and as effective tools for socio-economic development, cultural institutions were seen by these respondents as uniting their respective cultural groups and restoring what colonialism had dismantled. As another Munyoro respondent noted:

> Bunyoro is supposed to be an umbrella uniting the Banyoro. When the "Bazungu"[75] came our culture was dismantled. We started copying things from the western style of life. But at least now the kingdom is trying to restore our culture. Language and other things are being restored. In the same way, we had our institutions which were taken away by the central government, and now we need them back plus the power to manage them.

Reducing inequalities was also cited as a possible positive outcome. Many respondents complained of the current system of electoral politics which entrenches political patronage and rewards areas as well as individuals in exchange for support, and which has resulted in unacceptable levels of inequalities and a breakdown in intercommunal relations and trust. Berhanu Gutema Balcha (2008) argued that in multi-ethnic African societies an exclusive access to the state's resources and power by a particular group could create a process of 'social closure' that alienates other groups from playing any significant role in politics and economics. Hutchinson and Smith have also criticized this instrumentalist approach "for its exaggerated belief in the power of elite manipulation of the masses and neglecting of the

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[75] *Bazungu* (singular *Muzungu),* and other very similar words among the Bantu tribes of Uganda, refers to the 'White Men'.

wider cultural environment in which elite competition and rational maximization take place"
(Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 9). By citing inequalities respondents in different tribal areas
often referred to the fact that not only public offices in their own areas are filled by outsiders,
but also all their economic affairs, including employment opportunities, are in the hands of
people sent in as 'reward' appointments. This sentiment can be found in the words of a 51-
year-old retrenched civil servant in Teso:

> I think if carefully scrutinized *federo* is the solution. It will enable people at the base to
> control the local resources. It will help fight corruption. It will ensure a fair distribution
> of resources. There is a lot of confusion now. Sometimes money and resources are sent
> where nobody knows what to do. The people who know what to do don't get the money.

Similar sentiments were expressed by a 20-year-old female Mukiga student:

> Like in this kind of government, if they bring a Muganda administrator here, if we have
> a contract he will go and bring another Muganda to take it. But if it is a Mukiga, let's
> say, he can employ fellow Bakiga and mind about the district because he himself is from
> that particular district and knows the challenges …

And by a 32-year-old male Musoga businessman:

> I support it (federalism) because if there was a project in Busoga, I could get a tender
> and money stays here in Busoga for local development.

Per Molander has argued that local decision makers know the local conditions better and
can ensure a better and needs-related production (Molander, 2004: 5). As locals and 'sons
and daughters of the soil', as we say in Uganda, this Musoga business man, and some
other respondents, feel both their political status and the power to determine their own

local affairs is being undermined. They also feel they are denied their due share of the national politico-economic cake. They therefore understood and answered the question for or against federalism with an eye, not on entrenching ethnic cleavages and competition, but on the provision of accommodative and flexible politico-economic frameworks. As I write, this is a question worth serious consideration in a country where the recent discovery of oil is the biggest economic story of the day. This discovery is touted by the government as cause for joy with the claim that Uganda is soon to become a 'middle income' country. However, it is seen by some Africa watchers and political commentators not as a sign of well-being, but as a 'resource curse' or what is also called the 'paradox of plenty' (Mwenda, 2013).

It could be for political reasons, as one respondent in Bunyoro observed, that some areas are developed more than others. Equal development devoid of any political biases, she argued, would be possible if cultural leaders had both political and fiscal power:

> I think it would help if they had more power. Now, as you can see, even the *Rukurato* road[76] is not paved. If the king had that power, he would construct it. But now they say it belongs to the central government. If traditional rulers had political and fiscal power, they would do certain things.

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[76] The *Rukurato* originally refers to the royal parliament of the kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara, and the Rukurato Road is the road leading to the *Karuzika*, the King's palace in Hoima town.

4.1.2.2 Supportive but sceptical

The hopeful and sceptical supporters of ethnic federalism cited similar reasons for their support. The 42.5% 'sceptical' voices were, however, doubtful of the unitary government's commitment to such a fundamental change in both the main arms of state and in the civil service at the expense of the political patronage that benefits the ruling elite. Many respondents were also aware that the (current) NRM Government's efforts at decentralisation have created an unprecedented number of districts (from 33 when NRM took power in 1986 to 116 as of July 2016), but have failed to ensure a viable system of nation building. They were also weary of the fact that decentralisation has failed to guarantee sustainable integrity for the local "units" – their identities, cultures and traditions. These respondents argued, therefore, that such a government may obviously not be so keen at pursuing the alternative strategy of recognizing the pre-existing cultural and political structures of our diverse ethnicities.

Another reason for scepticism was cited as the awareness, even by people at the grassroots, of the current government's continued intervention in the affairs of local traditional institutions, especially the kingdoms of Ankole and Busoga and the chieftaincy of Bugisu, let alone the (mis) handling of the Buganda question. Most sceptical, however, were voices from areas which do not have as solid a base of local political organization as the regional kingdoms of Buganda, Toro, Bunyoro, Ankole, and Busoga, which traditionally constituted the apex of political organisation in Uganda. For example, scepticism in Ankole was attributed to the fact that it is because of government intervention that the traditional *Obugabe* (Ankole kingship) has remained in limbo even

after the 1993 restoration of traditional rulers. As a 63-year-old Anglican pastor from Ankole noted, it is simply a case of giving back what was taken:

> There are voices that are crying out that our inheritance was occupied and it must be returned, and the present administration is saying, 'No, Let us take our time. Let us first study the situation.' What are you studying? If you enter into someone's house, and you found it was his house, why don't you come out and then this one enters? But you say, 'No, let's first study the situation.' What situation are you studying? You are killing the culture!

Overall, respondents who view ethnic federalism favourably are divided into those who are hopeful it can be realised sometime soon, and those who are sceptical about it. Both groups, nevertheless, favour federalism to an overly powerful centrist state for similar reasons, main among them being:

1. That since independence, Uganda, like many other African countries, has been dogged by problems and has faced formidable challenges to nation building and to the consolidation of her independence. All this has been under the watch of very strong, sometimes dictatorial unitary governments. It follows therefore, in the minds of most respondents, that there should be a solution in genuinely devolving power to the people through the institutions that are close to their political, economic and cultural values; that amidst all the uncertainties, one thing is clear that given the systematic fading of the hopes and ambitions of the post-independence era, re-thinking the structure of the state is indispensable.

2. The current NRM Government's effort at decentralisation has proved to be far from ensuring not only a viable system of nation building, but also a sustainable

integrity for the pre-colonial ethnic, administrative units, the kingdoms and chieftaincies – their identities, cultures and traditions. This assertion by the respondents is confirmed by a recent survey by Isaac Katono and Terrell Manyak that reported that the biggest problem with one of Africa's most ambitious experiments in political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation is "conflicts arising from the interplay of corruption, illiteracy, and ethnic tensions (which) are inhibiting effective collaboration between elected and administrative personnel" (2010: 17).

One respondent, a 52-year old self-employed male Muganda, succinctly summarized the 'supportive' sentiments:

> Federo would be best for Uganda because people can pull together and use the resources that are common to them honestly and responsibly. Federalism is the way for Africa, not Pan-Africanism, let alone unitarism. These are but superficial. People can have better respect for, and understanding of people within the same ethnic boundaries. It is feasible economically and politically because of the common resources. In 10-20 years, we are going there because unitarism has failed: 100 years of unitary colonialism failed; 20 years of northern rule failed; 30 years of western rule failed.

4.1.2.3. Voices opposed

Although it was the minority of grassroots respondents that rejected the federation of tribes, they also raised quite a few issues that cannot be overlooked. Prominent among these issues is the fact that some areas cannot really stand on their own in terms of economics and development. They lack resources, and cutting them off the unitary state

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would simply aggravate inequalities. Related to this argument, the Buganda question was also often raised, especially the fact that Kampala is the heart and soul of Uganda, and that Kampala is in Buganda. What would you do with the city in a federal Uganda? This worry was expressed, among others, by a 22-year-old male primary school teacher from Ankole:

> The problem is saying Buganda is ours. Remember Kampala is in Buganda, and it is the capital city of Uganda. If the Baganda say Buganda is ours, it means that Kampala is for Baganda. And Kampala, remember, is for Uganda. It means they would be saying that Uganda is ours.

Comments from respondents in other tribal areas indicate similar concerns regarding regional imbalances as this 25-year-old male from Bugisu put it:

> In economic terms our traditional functions and institutions are good as tourist attractions. For example, the *Imbalu*[77] month is a big tourist attraction here. In the bigger economic picture, however, federalism is difficult and not practical because of the regional imbalances.

The worry for some other respondents was lack of consensus, even where there is no government intervention on who can effectively lead the federal units. As a 52-year-old, female nurse in Madi (West Nile) put it,

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[77] The *imbalu* is a month-long celebration of circumcision and initiation ceremonies among the Bagisu tribe.

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> The number of local leaders here is too big, and I don't know if a decision has been made as to who will be our number one. They are still divided, and there is no one single pillar.

Other respondents who belong to different tribes from where they are originally from raised the fear that federalism would be an omen for confusion. A 51-year-old Musoga farmer of Teso descent, for example, was worried that creating a semi-autonomous Busoga local government could see local people discriminate or even rise against non-ethnic Basoga irrespective of how long they had been part of the kingdom:

> Politically, federal demarcation could be good, yes; for we are not only Ugandans but also tribal. It may be good for education and health services. Economically it is good for our own children's employment, but no, federalism would create confusion and discrimination, so I am against it.

He was echoing scholarly critics of ethnic federalism who argue that it could institutionalize ethnic discrimination, obstruct individual citizens' rights, strengthen centrifugal forces, introduce zero-sum ethnic competition and generate dangerous reactions like ethnic cleansing, expulsion and disintegration (Balcha, 2012, citing Lipset, 1963; Nordlinger, 1972; Ake, 1996; Fleiner, 2000; Nyang'o, 2002; Egwu, 2003; and Mamdani, 2005).

Some other respondents were just concerned about suddenly 'turning the clock backwards' on decades of politically, economically, socially and even culturally co-existing as a unit of nations. A 50-year-old male Ankole respondent for example argued that anybody advocating for political federalism would be advocating for cultural chauvinism. In his view, "they are not receptive to all cultures, and a culture that does not absorb ideas from other cultures is actually destined for extinction."

In a long run, they cannot have anything new to add on, anything new to improve their culture. So we need people from all walks of life and from all cultures to come and mix with us. Let me give you an example. The *kabaka* of Buganda, with his chiefs, they came to Ankole and the whole western Uganda. They came as chiefs, as colonial agents at the time, and they have continued to live and harmoniously co-exist with this culture … You see what Kakungulu did in eastern Uganda. So if you go to Mbale you would think you have Baganda people in Mbale, when actually they are Bagisu but speaking Luganda. If I am a Munyankole in Acholi, it doesn't water down my Kinyankole culture. Right now we have people, Banyankole people, and pastoralists in Lango. That area is called Buchiri, but it is currently Lango, the place where our late President Milton Obote comes from. We have many Banyankole there. They speak the language, they speak Langi, but when they go back to their homes, they speak Kinyankole, and they behave culturally, as Langi. They still have their cultural heritage, the cows; they still hold the culture that rotates around the cow, but they have also accepted the Langi culture. And they have co-existed since they went there in the 1930s. They are still there. So, there is no problem.

He argued that after so many years of existence as a nation we cannot now turn back. Another issue this respondent raised was what he called the danger of returning to sex chauvinism. He argued that if we allowed our cultural institutions to go political, then you would suffocate the talents of women, who would otherwise become good presidents, prime ministers, good religious leaders.

We would start to segregate people according to sex because our cultures were kind of sex chauvinist. You would want to believe that a man should be the cultural leader. You guess how many years it would take Buganda to have a lady *Kabaka*? It can take centuries and centuries. You can never have a lady *Kabaka* in Buganda.

These are some of the voices that prefer keeping the unitary system for people to keep sharing the country's resources and learning from each other wherever they are. To the suggestion (implied in this researcher's line of questioning) that federalism will be of cultural value as it ensures the preservation of our respective cultures, some of these respondents argued that the family is the ultimate cultural school, not the traditional leadership. As a 22-year-old female school clerk from Ankole put it,

> Culture can't disappear because I don't think we have to go to school to learn the culture. We can learn it from our homes. Our parents bring us up. We are taught by the parents, and by the grandparents, and that cannot be done by the *Mugabe* [the Ankole traditional king]. Do you think that the *Mugabe* can come and tell me the Banyankole behave like this and that? It's all for my parents to tell me how the Banyankole behave. I can learn, when I am being brought up, and by watching how people do things, and I learn from them.

A 64-year-old retired female school teacher from the same Ankole region expressed similar sentiments:

> There are too many differences, so federalism would not be effective, neither for the culture, nor for the economy nor for the politics. For culture, let them introduce it in the education system, cultural festivals, crafts, songs etc. *Bugabe* [Kingship of Ankole] was segregationist, so don't bring it back. We are all Ugandans.

Besides the unfavourable forces such as government intervention, there is also the concern that in some cases the cultural institutions may not be a solution because they themselves are infiltrated by politics and corruption. As one respondent from Bunyoro pointed out:

For me as an individual Munyoro the kingdom of Bunyoro is important, but there is a lot of politics in the kingdom. People in the kingdom are divided. Leaders are divided too. Someone suggests doing something to develop the kingdom, but when they get the money they just swindle it. We have received millions from organizations and from oil … we were given money to construct a wall for the fence of the palace, but it was swindled. People in the kingdom are not happy. I am a *Mubiito*[78], but I am not happy.

There was no other survey evidence to support the claims of corruption in the Kingdom of Bunyoro, but recent media reports do confirm that both the sub-region as a whole, although gifted with natural resources such as oil and forests, is one of the least developed in the country (Kiwa, 2011; AllAfrica.com, 2016; Kiggundu, 2016). Other media and observers, nevertheless, blame Bunyoro's woes on Government-sponsored corruption and the mismanagement of the oil project in the region (Mugerwa, 2011, 2016; Tripp, 2010; Kron, 2011; Izama, 2012).[79]

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[78] A *mubiito* is a member of the royal clan in the ancient kingdoms of Bunyoro and Tooro. All Kings in Bunyoro and Tooro come from the *Babiito* clan.

[79] Significant amounts of oil reserves were discovered in 2006 in the Lake Albert region in Western Uganda, and this led to speculation that Uganda could become one of Africa's major oil producers.

4.1.3. Attitudes by tribe

Table 9 Attitudes towards federation by tribes

		Acholi	Ankole	Buganda	Bugisu	Bunyoro	Busoga	Kigezi	Teso	Toro	West Nile	Total
support and hopeful	n	5	1	0	4	4	4	2	5	3	2	30
	%	63%	13%	0%	50%	50%	50%	25%	63%	38%	25%	38%
support but sceptical	n	3	3	7	2	3	3	4	3	2	4	34
	%	38%	38%	88%	25%	38%	38%	50%	38%	25%	50%	43%
completely against	n	0	4	1	2	1	1	2	0	3	2	16
	%	0%	50%	13%	25%	13%	13%	25%	0%	38%	25%	20%
total	n	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	80
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

As table 9 above shows, differences in support of federalism with hope that it can be realized sooner than later were widely varied among tribes. Respondents that stand out in this category were from Acholi and Teso, both at over 60% of those interviewed. Respondents from Acholi and Teso tribes were almost five times more in hopeful support of tribal federation than those from Ankole, and over six times more than those from Buganda. It must be emphasized, however, that these levels of support cannot be taken as absolute numerical indices for the tribes in question – given the size and rather arbitrary choice of samples – but it can be assumed, for the purposes of this study, that they are adequately reliable as inferences.

On the other hand, tribal differences in the sceptical support of federalism proved to be not as varied as differences in hopeful support. Respondents from one tribe, Buganda, stand out prominently in this regard. A vast majority (over 80%) of respondents in Buganda disclosed this attitude. If we exclude this rather exceptional case, the difference between the most and least hopeful tribal samples was 25 points. The tribes with the least hopeful respondents are Bugisu and Toro, while those with the most hopeful respondents are Kigezi and West Nile.

The interviewees that stood out in opposition to federalism were from Ankole, with over 50% unfavourable responses. Interviewees that showed least opposition were from Acholi and Teso (both at 0%). The maximum difference is 50 points. Respondents from Acholi and Teso tribes were almost four times less likely to oppose the federation of tribes than those from Buganda and Bunyoro, both of which are just over 10%.

One can deduce from these findings that belonging to a particular tribe seems to have had a significant influence on whether respondents were opposed to the federation of tribes or not, and whether they were hopeful or sceptical about this prospect.

4.2 Discussion of Results

The overall consideration of the grassroots perceptions of ethnic federalism as narrated above is significant in two ways:

First, it is significant because of the correlation between the results and the main thesis or hypothesis of this research. It had been predicted that ethnic federalism would be viewed positively by respondents as a viable option for managing diversity in Uganda.

All in all, a majority of respondents thought that an ethnically-based devolution of power was a better system of governance for Uganda.

Secondly, it is also significant that the respondents also predict in their narratives that the federation of tribes would give solutions to the intractable challenge of HIs in their political, socio-economic and cultural dimensions. A theoretical question had been raised in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.2) that if federalism is political, fiscal and cultural, can it, in practice, be a solution to the political, socio-economic and cultural dimensions in which Uganda's culturally defined salient groups experience HIs? Several respondents, in their various narratives, castigated past and present ruling elite's entrenchment of patrimonial systems of authority which are neither inclusive nor coherent with the leadership needs of the tradition-bound communities. An ethnically based federal system is, on the other hand, depicted as returning power to the people through their ethno-nationalistic leadership systems with an eye on the specific local needs and traditional values.

It is also apparent from the narratives that people at the grassroots expect local, traditional authorities to be better tools for the fiscal management and development of their areas of jurisdiction. This would consequently be a remedy to the socio-economic HIs which, in the all-powerful, patronage-driven centrist government, are the result of exclusive access to state resources and power by particular groups to the alienation of others. These grassroots views and expectations admittedly do not take into account issues of economic viability for the smaller ethnic units, and these are considered more analytically in the elite perceptions in chapter 5. Nevertheless, grassroots perceptions of ethnic federalism confirm the ordinary people's verdict on a system that renders them

and their traditional foci of social allegiance both politically and economically powerless. It also confirms the grassroots grievances about worsening socio-economic HIs.

It has been argued that people who enjoy linguistic or any other form of ethnic commonality should be organised into a single local government within a federal arrangement (Nsibambi, 1994). It has also been argued that for traditional rulers to be effective guardians of these forms of ethnic commonality, they should be given significant political powers; they shouldn't be merely mediators between customary practices of people fragmented within several political and administrative units (Kayunga, 2000). These arguments have also been reflected in the grassroots perceptions on the cultural value of ethnic federalism. Ordinary people interviewed in the study are informed by their experiences and memories that the body of customary laws and traditions that bind them together are less threatened under an ethnically based federal system. They are aware that the threat of cultural HIs is less likely if traditional leaders in their respective areas have more power to effectively safeguard their traditional institutions and norms.

The data collected is limited in scale. Nevertheless, as I argued in the introduction, there were enough interviewees "to reflect the range of participants and sites that make up the population so that others outside the sample might have a chance to connect to the experiences of those in it" (page 15, citing Seidman, 2013: 58). The data is therefore representative in terms of the range of participants and in terms of the depth of the description of their perceptions.

4.2.1 Regional sentiments

Grassroots awareness of how Uganda's tribal institutions have evolved over the years from colonial days to the current unitary state depended very much on the age and education levels of the people interviewed. One common factor across both age brackets and levels of education, however, was the high degree of awareness of the current chronic crisis of national governance and the relevance of the resurgence of the debate on the need to rethink and reinvent the structure of the state to align with the demands of pluralism and gross HIs. According to the survey interviews, however, grassroots perceptions of these demands differed according to the site of the interview.

At the regional level, the majority of respondents in Buganda, as expected, were supportive of ethnic federalism. The Baganda, whose kingdom has been described as a "modernizing autocracy" (Apter, 1967: 4-9), stand to benefit from continuity. It can also be argued that as recent events have shown, they are also more likely to identify themselves as a political, let alone cultural entity, capable of self-control and the autonomous preservation of their vital institutions, namely the *Kabakaship* (kingship), the royal family, the clan system, the centuries-old Buganda *Lukiko* or Parliament, and the Buganda traditions called *nnono*. They know more than any other tribe that preserving this heritage requires a system which balances national aspirations with those of the region of Buganda as such. Nonetheless, as Table 7 above shows, none of the respondents in Buganda were hopeful that the federation of tribes can be achieved in the near future. This is phenomenal but meaningful. The Baganda are aware of the history, older and recent, of the so-called Buganda question (see sections 1.3.3 and 3.4.1 above) which cast the Buganda Kingdom, so large and so ceremonious, into the role of a mere

local government unit. The Baganda themselves are aware that this question, which historically arose out of several agreements made between the Imperial British Government and Buganda Kingdom, entails too much that has to be resolved before they, and consequently the whole of Uganda, can enjoy federal status.

The Kingdom of Buganda was in any case widely viewed as an example of tribal loyalty and mass mobilization for community development under the *Kabaka* who has been a major unifying factor among the Baganda, helping in some projects that seek to eradicate poverty. Following the restoration of traditional kingdoms in 1993, the Buganda Kingdom Administration took it upon itself to ensure the consolidation of unity amongst all the people of Buganda and to rebuild and develop the kingdom to a satisfactory level. In a policy document to this effect, for example, the Kingdom Government drew up a vision, mission and goal for the benefit of the people of Buganda:

1. Vision: To be a strong kingdom headed by the *Kabaka* with a united, cultured, creative, hardworking, vigilant, prosperous and peaceful people living and working in harmony with all Ugandans
2. Mission: To utilise culture to mobilize the people of Buganda to promote better standards of living.
3. Goal: To enable every person in Buganda to competently use their possessions to attain meaningful development.[80]

The kingdom was presented by respondents from other tribes as an example of hope in the relevance and possibility of some kind of federal autonomy. Buganda was even admired by respondents from areas where kingdoms never existed, or where they existed, but have not been restored even after the 1993 restoration decree. Although people in

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[80] See http://www.buganda.or.ug/

those areas are highly sceptical of their tribes achieving any organizational efficacy to match the needs of ethnic federalism, many of them mentioned Buganda both regarding her potential and her problematic position at the heart of the country. It was thus evident from the interviews that the 'Buganda question' is still a major issue among political debates in Uganda.

Respondents from the north and northeast of the country shared a common view that their areas were benefiting less from the current state of affairs. Their narratives and aspirations during the in-depth interviews also tended to echo Sasaoka and Nyang'oro's 2012 survey findings that "the North represents the poorest region, and Northerners recognised their disadvantaged status and shared the view that the North had been the least favoured by the government … The recognition of their own poor status by Northern people seems to have made them feel alienated" (Sasaoka and Nyang'oro, 2013: 145). These findings also corroborate with various regional forecasts which, as discussed in chapter 3 (see section 3.5.2.2), confirm the double-edged predicament of an area left behind because of both the scourge of war and neglect during and after it.

Overall, respondents from the north, north east and east were more supportive than those from the south and south west. They were also more hopeful. One can only speculate about the rationality of these sentiments basing on the above-mentioned recent political history. Previous post-independence-governments, notably Obote 1, Amin and Obote 2, survived on ethnic loyalties. As stated elsewhere, both Obote and Amin entrenched regional-ethnic loyalties through the ethnicization of both the security forces and civil services, thus alienating most of the southern and south-western part of the population. Likewise, the current President Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance

Movement's guerrilla welfare, revolution, and subsequent handling of conflicts in northern and north-eastern Uganda have been seen by some as ethnic marginalization and revenge against people in the north and northeast. As Ian Legget lamented, even at the peak of the Lord's Resistance Army's northern conflict, there was remarkably little national concern among the residents of southern Uganda about the atrocities that were being perpetrated against the people of the north. There was also "an apparent lack of understanding among southern Ugandans about the sheer scale of the humanitarian and economic crisis that has evolved" (Legget, 2001: 27). Mari Tripp was to echo similar sentiments 10 years later, noting that nowhere had the Museveni government failed its own people as much as during the north and northeast conflicts which began as soon as he took power in 1986. "The lack of serious effort to resolve the crisis in the north despite ample opportunities – not to mention the active sabotage of some of the peace talks – left the northerners feeling that they were being punished for the actions of previous governments, armies and armed groups" (Tripp, 2010: 157).

Some opinion leaders from the region have even claimed that there was a link between President Yoweri Museveni, the NRM government, and Joseph Kony's LRA insurgency that rocked northern Uganda for over two decades. For example, in 2010, Olara Otunnu, who was leader of the opposition Uganda People's Congress (UPC) at the time, was quoted in the local press as saying President Museveni had an interest in sustaining the war which had become a huge source of corruption with government ministers and army commanders making lucrative money out of its continuation.[81] There were also reports in the local press that the government army was guilty of some of the

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[81] The Independent, April 26, 2010.

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most gruesome human rights abuses during the war, as well as claims that "the war in the north gave Museveni the perfect excuse to keep a lid on competitive politics and have a one party state for 20 years."[82]

Could it be feelings of anger that the people of northern Uganda, the Acholi in particular, have been ignored over the last three decades and not treated as full citizens of Uganda which are behind their relatively bigger support for the federation of tribes? Has politics as the monopoly of the unitary state let them down? Is people's loyalty fading away from the centre and towards their traditional foci of allegiance and to politics as the arrangement (also) of their traditional societies?

In the southwest, respondents from Ankole were particularly less supportive perhaps because they are considered to be more prosperous and benefiting from the long-running NRM rule, and they would be happy with the status quo. However, the more apparent reason from the interviews was either uncertainty because of the on-going wrangle about who would be the rightful king (*omugabe*) of Ankole, or the central government's hand in the issue. Buganda and Ankole thus appeared to be mirror opposites. The state of Buganda and the role of the king inspire the Baganda and give them confidence in their cultural institution, although historical experiences diminish their hope in any federal autonomy. It nevertheless encourages other tribal areas to strive for cultural unity in hope for socio-political autonomy. Ankole, on the other hand, is a modern-day addition to Uganda's political puzzles. When the NRM restored kingdoms in

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[82] The Monitor, August 30, 2006.

1993, it at the same time barred the Ankole Kingdom. Political commentators and activists give varying reasons for this move by the government.

One reason is grounded in history. The current Ankole (with an 'l') society encompasses many other groups like the former independent kingdoms of Buhweju, Igara, Mpororo, and Sheema, which were forcefully merged by the British into the original kingdom of Nkore (with an 'r') with a 1901 agreement. The original Nkore Kingdom was meanwhile a dual pyramid of the minority pastoral Bahima and the majority agricultural Bairu communities. Both in old Nkore and in later Ankole, the *omugabe* (king) came from the Bahinda clan which is considered an exclusively Bahima clan (Tumusiime, 2011). Associated with the monarchy, therefore, the pastoralist Bahima "ruled the agriculturalist Bairu in a caste-like system" (Tripp, 2010: 61). Activists led by the Banyankole Cultural Foundation (BCF) are lobbying to oppose the kingship and the Bahinda rule on the ground that the purported minority Bahinda-led kingship in Ankole was an imposition by imperial Britain. They say it is illegitimate in the eyes of the majority of Banyankole who detest it for its perpetuation of cultural hegemony. President Museveni's argument for blocking the restoration of the kingdom is that the issue is potentially a cause of ethnic tensions between the Bahima and the Bairu, and therefore a threat to public order. He argues that the people of Ankole must themselves decide which way to go.[83]

Similar minded observers indeed argue that the resistance to the Bahinda rule in Ankole did not start with the current Banyankole Cultural Foundation. They argue, for instance, that there was an anti-*omugabe* movement active as far back as the 1940s, and

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[83] See for example, The Monitor, December 23-31, 1993; The Observer, October 26, 2011.

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that when kingdoms were abolished in Uganda in 1967, the people of Buganda where kingship was legitimate and popular mourned, while in Ankole where it was considered illegitimate, people jubilated. Furthermore, when Amin came to power in 1971, the Banyankole elders quickly signed a memorandum to Idi Amin requesting him not to restore the *obugabe*. Moreover, during the Odoki constitutional commission hearings in the run up to the Constituent Assembly (CA) in 1994, the Banyankole overwhelmingly rejected the view that the *obugabe* could have any further role to play in the area. People in this camp argue further that even of late there have been many meetings of LC5 councillors in Ankole and the majority have repeatedly rejected the restoration.[84]

Supporters of the kingdom and Museveni's critics argue, on the other hand, that the continued suppression of *obugabe* is illegal, and it is another indication of the ambivalent and calculated manner in which the post-colonial state has handled cultural and traditional institutions in Uganda.[85] Others argue that the ban on the kingdom is a calculated move by Museveni who, as a Muhima situated outside the aristocracy, sought political alliance with the majority Bairu to broaden his political base.[86] A pressure group, the Ankole Cultural Trust (ACT), is actively lobbying for the restoration of the Kingdom. The trust was formed by prominent people in Ankole on February 27, 1993, the year cultural institutions were restored, and it has since spearheaded the campaign for the restoration of the kingship. However, a stand-off has developed since then, and has continued to grow between those who want the King, and the President and others who

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[84] See for example, Daily Monitor, December 11, 2011; Daily Monitor, October 28, 2012.

[85] Daily Monitor, October 12, 2012.

[86] The Independent, April 4, 2008.

argue either that the kingdom is a potential cause of conflict, or that it is outright illegal. While the communal (sub-tribal) identity of the Ankole respondents remained concealed during the interviews, this historical background might explain the differing views and opinions on kingship in Ankole and ethnic federalism in Uganda as a whole.

There have also been disputes about who should succeed the late *Kyabazinga* (King) of Busoga Wako Muloki, who died in September 2008. Two families are claiming legitimacy to the throne, and ruling NRM politicians are reported to have been involved in deals aimed at settling the dispute. State-house meetings between the President and the Busoga hereditary chiefs, members of Busoga *Lukhiiko* (Parliament) and clan leaders have also been reported.[87] Subsequently, President Museveni has "vowed to work with the newly enthroned *Kyabazinga* (King) of Busoga, William Gabula Nadiope" who was enthroned after a period of over five years without a crown king.[88] Meanwhile the President has been criticized from within and without the kingdom for taking sides in cultural grievances. Opposition Democratic Party (DP) President, Norbert Mao has for instance said, "We as DP don't want government to interfere in cultural issues and therefore warn the people of Busoga and the new *Kyabazinga* to avoid 'Musevenification of the *Kyabazinga*-ship."[89] The President has also been criticised by key personalities in the kingdom for allegedly meddling in the affairs of Busoga Kingdom since *Kyabazinga* Henry Waako Muloki died in September 2008.[90] There is confusion and uncertainty even

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[87] See, for example, The Monitor, September 9, 2009; New Vision, September 10, 2009.

[88] New Vision, September 13, 2014; The State House of Uganda homepage, 13th September 2014.

[89] Chimp Reports, September 17, 2014.

[90] The Observer, August 9, 2012.

after the coronation of a new king, and this uncertainty might explain the apparent scepticism among Basoga respondents, as well as their admiration for the current Buganda arrangement.

4.2.2 Ethnic federalism vis-a-vis current policies

A common view was noticeable in all areas surveyed that decentralisation, the widespread NRM (government) devolution method, has failed to realize its intended goal of bringing both power and services closer to the people. Decentralisation in Uganda had been expected to represent a major change in the structure of the planning and management of public affairs. Legal frameworks have been established over the past three decades to aid the decentralisation process with the stated aim of introducing efficiency and effectiveness in the generation and management of resources and the delivery of services. First there was the Resistance Council (RC) Statute in 1993, then the Constitution (1995) and the Local Government Act (1997). The 1997 Local Government Act was amended in 2001 to extensively empower the elected local governments. From the interviews and narratives, however, some respondents were sceptical about a system where leaders appointed by the central government for political reward are the primary beneficiaries of the system, not the local people.

Some of these respondents also knew and recalled that the apparent ineffectiveness of decentralisation comes hard on the heels of the failure of the earlier promulgated LC system to meet the initial high expectations that it would radically transform local politics in Uganda and bring about effective governance at all levels of society. However, as the role of the state rolled back both in socio-political affairs, through decentralisation, and in the economy, through privatization, the predominantly agrarian

grassroots population became more and more alienated. Political appointments to local administrative offices, together with the politicization of the LC system, as discussed in chapter 3, gave rise to the practice of exchanging favours for political support, and left the sectors that drove Uganda's economic growth out of reach of most people at the grassroots. These were the service sector (especially banking, telecommunications, transport, and wholesale trade) and construction. "This indicates that agriculture, from which about 70% of the population ekes a living, grew dismally and at rates lower than the population growth rate ... The low growth of agriculture compared to the relatively high growth rates of services and construction explains the increase in income inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient."[91] The Gini coefficient, for example, increased from about 0.32 in 1990 to 0.48 in 2012, and this stood in total contrast with the high rates of GDP growth, averaging about 7.5% per annum over the past two decades.[92] Thus, macroeconomic stability and the government-promoted market-based economics have not benefitted people at the grassroots. Ordinary people, therefore, see in ethnic federal autonomy the chance to have leaders on the ground, who have their respective areas' socio-cultural and economic heritage at heart. Many respondents expressed the view that if leaders are chosen from within their cultural areas of origin, they would be considered as representing everybody in the area, and not just factions, as is the case with most of today's political representatives. Resources in and for the cultural areas would be used to the benefit of the local populations, and there would be better chances for people to drive

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[91] Economic Policy research Centre (EPRC), 2013.

[92] Ibid.

themselves out of poverty. Ethnic federalism was seen, therefore, as one way of fighting both horizontal and vertical inequalities.

All in all, the grassroots perceptions of ethnic federalism may not have been so much influenced by this political arrangement's relevance and irrelevance as by the difficulty of its realization in the current political climate in the country. It may also not have been influenced so much by the possible practical hurdles in setting up such a system – given issues like historical socio-politico disparities and economic imbalances – if and when it is legally approved. These hurdles are real indeed, but they were not directly part of the in-depth qualitative surveys, and would require another study altogether.

The current political climate epitomizes the post-colonial state's handling of the federal question. The 1961 independence constitution adopted a haphazard, quasi-federal system, perhaps mainly to prevent the secession of Buganda. As noted elsewhere in this work (See section 3.4), the other kingdoms of Ankole, Bunyoro and Toro were only granted semi-federal status, while the rest of the country with no traditional kingships was divided into administrative districts that were incorporated into independent Uganda on a unitary basis. Obote would soon not only dismantle the system, but also completely and constitutionally outlaw the various cultural institutions which mainly formed the basis of federalism. As it was noted in the introduction, the allegations that Museveni, a master of both the military and civic complexities of Uganda, had promised *federo* (federalism) to the kingdom in exchange for her unfettered support during the 1981-1986 war, simply do not go away. What eventually happened was another haphazard handling of the federal question. Federalism was restored to the ethnic sub-regions (except Ankole), but only in its cultural variant. It can be argued, from a close look at the

narratives from the grassroots populace interviewed, that there is a desire for political and fiscal autonomy as well, especially given the current political and economic inequalities in the country. The desire also arises, according to the narratives, from the populace's disappointment with the current decentralisation process.

How to approach and effectively realize the dispersing of cultural, fiscal and political power to ethnic sub-units in a federal model, if Uganda decides to, can have many complex challenges that this study did not set out to address. Also challenging in that event would be the necessary but complex adoption of the social realities of a modernizing Uganda to the traditionally cultural kingdoms and other tribal institutions. What this study intended to do was to seek the grassroots opinions about empowering cultural-ethnic institutions with the goal of integral and balanced development in sight. Judging from their narratives, the respondents are clear about the reasons for or against the adoption of ethnic federalism their low educational levels notwithstanding.[93] The next chapter presents responses from a small group of more educated, more enlightened representatives of civil society. I used the same guiding questions as used with people at the grassroots to conduct open-ended interviews with this group, the only difference being in my expectations. I was of the assumption that these "elites" would have a better grasp of the past, and therefore a more informed interpretation of the present as well as prediction for the future direction of the country.

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[93] The majority of the focus group had minimal education as they were found at LC 1 levels in villages and small towns which largely consist of low educated or uneducated local citizens.

Chapter 5

Elite perceptions

In another series of qualitative interviews, I sought the views of 10 opinion leaders with the purpose of looking deeper into the pros and cons, as well as the intricate process of federating tribes in Uganda. These particular participants were selected based on their potential to more deeply analyse Uganda's national history in general, and how the country's tribal institutions have evolved over the years from colonial days to the current unitary republic. They included a Central Government Minister, a minister in the Buganda Government, a county (*saza*) chief in the Buganda government, a Catholic Bishop, three University Professors, a journalist, a relations officer in the Ankole Cultural Trust (ACT) and a Missionary and School Chaplain in the United Kingdom. They represented five of the ten tribal areas covered in the grassroots survey: Acholi, Ankole, Buganda, Kigezi, and Teso.

The interviews took place during this researcher's final field work in March 2016, most of them in Kampala. A few more people had been requested for interviews, but they did not materialize due to conflicting schedules. The numbers turned out thus to be relatively small. However, just like the focus group numbers, they are qualitatively representative of the experiences and perceptions of other opinion leaders. The main criteria for the choice of interviewees was, as mentioned above, their knowledge about national issues, their experiences, and their ability to articulate more clearly what they stand for and why they stand for it. These respondents answered most of the event and (related) perceptive questions at length, where the majority of the focus group could not

really give substantive answers to such questions like "how do you evaluate the colonial legacy in relation to the regional power bases?" Common themes that arose from their responses are outlined below with highlights from their own narrations.

One may ask whether elite opinions are relevant to an inquiry into grassroots perceptions of ethnicity and federalism. The main reason is that it is these opinion leaders that shape the ordinary people's opinions. As teachers, as religious leaders, as local and national politicians, they share with their subjects their wealth of knowledge about the cultural, socio-political and economic issues that affect them and their societies. However, it is also true that the opinion leaders' perspectives on ordinary life are shaped by the same people they lead, and by their ordinary, daily lives and experiences.

5.1 On the Divide and Rule Hangover

First, these respondents generally agree that it was always going to be hard for independent African states to harmoniously keep their pluralities together under a unitary government after they had been so deeply divided by the colonial policy of divide and rule. As respondent A, a 48-year old male from Ankole put it, "the colonialists were mainly concentrated on dividing us." Respondent B, a 65-year old *Ssaza* (county) chief from Buganda was even more elaborate:

> Since the British came here with the system of indirect rule, they were, I think, happy keeping the tribes apart as opposed to uniting them into a strong state-to-be. So they were happy to keep us separate, and perhaps to see us continue with our invisible conflicts...

He elaborated further that their administrative method was twofold:

They came here with a method of signing treaties and agreements, but where they found resistance, they went with full military force, for instance in Bunyoro and Acholi. Then, that approach kept each and every tribe independent. They also preserved their cultures and languages. They were happy, and that was to the advantage of the British. When the nation that came to be known as Uganda was formed, it took too long for Ugandans to think of nationalism and to think of demanding for independence. The British had come mainly as friends, and they were protecting the tribes. They were helping them to do some business, grow raw materials, and get some little cash. In the meantime they were propping up the Asian minority to do all the trade. That was the legacy. That was the beginning of everything. It would actually become the springboard of thinking about federalism.

Respondent B's argument was that the kingdoms of Ankole, Buganda, Bunyoro, Toro, and even the other smaller districts, had actually existed before colonial rule as sovereign, independent states, each with their own central governments. He noted that the Baganda, for instance, knew that they were independent of the Bunyoro, and were busy conquering land to expand their territories. He argued that they should, therefore, have been kept in a system where sovereignty or political power is divided between them and the central government so that each of them within its own sphere is independent of the other. But that was not the case.

They were actually subordinate to Her Majesty's Government through her agents, the commissioner and the governors. The demand for federalism at independence was,

therefore, a *sine qua non*; for this would be the only way to ensure that the general and state governments are each, within a sphere, coordinate and independent.[94]

B therefore lamented what he called the "overly strong sense of unitary governance in Uganda today," and the continuation of the problems which Buganda, for instance, faced before and after independence. In his view, it is incumbent, not only on the Baganda, but on all the people of various ethnicities living in this central part of the country, to convince their colleagues elsewhere, and in parliament, about the advantages they see in a federal system. He particularly argued that they need to assure them that federalism has nothing to do with kingdoms and monarchies, but that it is rather a means of investing some of the sovereign powers of the nation into the various, local, ethnic institutions which alone can provide lasting answers to local problems:

> ...because someone may ask, why *federo*? And we should have ready answers. First of all, it is because of our cultures and languages, as well as our unique problems. Our problems are different. A Karamojong will love to safeguard his cattle; a Muganda will like to preserve his culture which has been watered down by the amalgamation of tribes. And of course some economic developments; because we think that if the Bunyoro were allowed a royalty of their oil of some kind, they would be happy now and demanding for *federo*. Even the Karamojong. They have a lot of wealth. They have a lot of minerals. But now what happens is that the central government simply goes there and mine and take away. So, that economic point is very important.

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[94] This Respondent referred the researcher to Kenneth C. Wheare's definition of federal constitutions where "the powers of government are divided between a government for the whole country and governments for parts of the country in such a way that each government is legally independent within its own sphere..." (Wheare, 1952:27).

B argued for the political advantages too, that if federal states were in place, each region would have the power to take care of its own immediate affairs, while the centre would hold too:

> The centre will take care of issues of national defence and foreign policy, and their work would definitely be some kind of oversight on those two issues. But these others would be there also. I have had a chance to live in Switzerland for some time. And you will not even ask me the name of the President because of the system. But things are moving very well. But even the USA, the President is there of course, but actually the real work is done at the federal level …

Another side of the "divide and rule" policy that some of the 'elite' respondents elaborated upon were the inequalities that colonialism created among the ethnic groups, which would come back to haunt the post-independence unitary project. They noted that Buganda particularly, which had helped in forming the present day Uganda by linking and facilitating the colonial powers to the other kingdoms and tribal areas, came to be outstanding. Respondent C, a 53-year old Muganda Catholic missionary in the UK, noted, for example:

> Exposure to education helped to raise the civilization level of Buganda over the rest of the surrounding kingdoms. In turn, the educated people in Buganda became bearers of the keys to social-political-economic power in the region. So they were viewed as the 'cream' or 'elite' tribe given that the colonialists worked directly with them from the very beginning. All the politico-socio-economic development policies and programmes had to originate from Buganda, and then could spread to other regions gradually. This way, Buganda was the power base. But at the same time it created some kind of envy and enmity from other tribes towards the Baganda.

Respondent C argued that this privileged position of Buganda[95] should position the kingdom at the forefront of a federal political arrangement, where the devolved ethnic powers "would help create a healthy competition and accelerate national growth." He argued further:

> Not only Buganda, but other tribes too, would re-align loyalties to a central power base and avoid the current greedy system where the winner takes all and dominates the rest of the tribal regions. Political players would be driven, not so much by power hunger and control, but by patriotism, working for their own region to be the best it can be.

Respondent C also noted that in economic terms, Buganda had moved far ahead of all the other regions, and both the colonial and post-independence governments have always planned from and ran everything on the Buganda platform. He argued therefore that a federal system would create a healthy environment for Buganda to set the tone and pace of regional development:

> We would have a more diversified development system and plan so that less pressure is on Buganda and its land resource. It would be better for people to work hard and develop their own home areas as best they can with support of funding from the federal government. With time, there would be no need for everyone eyeing the central region to raise themselves from poverty. The only problem is that the sporadic so-called 'development' we witness today is still concentrated in the central region, i.e. Buganda. Most other regions are not at the same level of development. So I wonder if any of the other regions would accept the federal arrangement, convinced that they are already somehow behind Buganda's level.

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[95] The fact that since colonial days Buganda has enjoyed a special status which was not available to other communities is also highlighted in sections 3.3.1 and 4.2 of this thesis.

Respondent D, a 55-year old Philosophy Professor from Teso, also agreed that it was the colonial policies that have partly contributed to the current failure of unitary structures:

> I think the colonialists had their own agenda when they came. Whether they wanted one Uganda which would be also politically one, for me it is the question I have been asking myself. I think they had their own agenda. They wanted a country in which they could get raw materials easily...get cotton and coffee...yeah...so, even the type of education they promoted was in favour of service to the mother country, to the colonial power Britain. If the missionaries hadn't built schools at the lower levels, for example, many Ugandans would not have been educated. So most of the education that Ugandans got was education that was given to them by missionaries who built schools at the lower level and even later at the secondary level.

The selective and divisive colonial policy, particularly Buganda's privileged position, was, nevertheless, the basis for respondent D to cast doubts on the overall benefits of having a strictly ethnically based federal form of government:

> If politicians in the present arrangement would accept Uganda to be a federal state, Buganda would then become very powerful. The capital of Uganda is in Buganda. The main airport of Uganda is in Buganda. The major universities of Uganda are in Buganda. The most fertile part of Uganda is in Buganda. And whether we like it or not, the most educated people in this country are in Buganda. So, to give Buganda a federal state would be very good for Buganda. But whether that would be good for the rest of the country that is the question that I think most politicians are very hesitant to talk about. But I think it would be a very good thing for Buganda to get a federal status. That's my view.

D cautioned that as good and favourable as the federation of tribes would be for Buganda, it is practically not good for the other tribes. In other words, Uganda does not necessarily

have to be ethnically federal. In fact, according to D, it cannot be for the reason that we have so many ethnic groups in the country, and some are too small to stand on their own. He gave the example of the Pygmies in the west, the Banyori in the east, and some other small groups in the north. He argued that such tribes will be at a disadvantage because they are too small, and they will have to merge with other ethnic groups in order to form a state. He noted that an ethnically based federation would be clearly favourable for Buganda, on the other hand, because of its homogeneous character, economic development and sheer size. If Buganda was left to manage her own local affairs, she would doubtless prosper. D argued however, that none of the other regions of Uganda has the advantages that Buganda has. He alleged that although nobody is saying it clearly, this is one of the reasons some people in and out of Buganda are a little bit uneasy about *federo*.

> The unsaid dictum is that 'we either rise or fall together'. A very relevant question to ask now is, why should an autonomous government, in this case the government of Uganda, give some of its sovereignty to a federal authority, or authorities for that matter?

Perhaps part of the answer to this question, as respondent D himself noted, is provided by Rod Hague et al., who argued that although power is difficult to acquire and consequently difficult to give away, a decision to create a federal government "represents a decision to invest rather than renounce power...federalism is a gamble: some autonomy is given up in the expectation of greater benefits to come" (Hague et al., 1998: 169-170). These benefits, according to respondent D, include the advantage of giving local interests a political voice. He noted however that in his opinion, these interests should not be just ethnic interests. They should rather be regional:

I think there is a time they talked about the regional tier.[96] Maybe we could have a regional tier … personally for me that would be OK. It would be like the western region would have its federal state. Whatever they would call it. The eastern region would have a federal state whatever they would call it … Karamoja and Teso, people with similar culture, would come and federate. The northern part, Acholi, Lango, and maybe the Alur, would also make a federation. Then in West Nile, the Lugbar and the Madi, could also federate, then see which other federation would have a very powerful state called the Bantu. Buganda could be on its own- Buganda as it is. But as I said it would be a very, very powerful state *vis-a-vis* the others, and *vis-a-vis* Uganda. It would be a very powerful state, and I think that's why for a long time no politician has granted a federal status to Buganda. That's what I think.

D's proposition of regional, and not tribal federations, was also echoed by E, a 66-year old Journalist from Buganda. He expressed exactly the same sentiment that Buganda as a tribe is just lucky to occupy a large geographical space on the map of Uganda, and, together with the other kingdoms of Ankole, Bunyoro, and Toro, to have well organised structures right from the grassroots. He argued that Buganda can therefore pass as a regional government, and then we can have other regional governments in the northern, eastern and western regions.

> We can call them regions or provinces. They would have their own schools, hospitals and other institutions, as was the case during colonial days. That way, it would not matter whether you went to school in western Uganda or in northern Uganda. But today it matters because we are no longer in that kind of system. Now it is a unitary state, and therefore most of what you would call the good things are concentrated only in one area, Buganda, which is the seat of the unitary government. We used to have such good

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[96] Following the rejection of federalism, the Constituent Assembly (CA) accepted a non-federal regional tier where two or more districts shall be free to co-operate in the areas of culture and development (The 1995 constitution of Uganda, Article 178 (l).

schools as Sir Samuel Baker in Northern Uganda, Teso College in the east, Mutoorere College in Kabale, Nabumali High School in Busoga, and many others. But all these are slowly dying out. Now, if you are a serious man and you want your son to go to a good school, you have to make sure that he goes to St. Henry's college which is in Buganda. You have to make sure he goes to Namugongo SSS, which is in Buganda. And all the good things, the headquarters of all commercial banks are in Kampala in Buganda. The biggest hospitals and all religions are governed from Kampala. And therefore, the people who are well educated in Northern Uganda, they want to make sure they have a plot of land in Kampala, they get a job in Kampala, they seldom go back to build their villages where they came from. They don't even want to build their homes there because very likely they have no electricity. Very likely there is no internet connection. Very likely there is no piped water. So they find themselves settling here, and producing children here, who learn Buganda culture.

All in all, this group's participants recognised the disadvantages different tribal groups have inherited from the colonial policy of divide and rule. They argued thus that this disadvantaged position has been a setback to these groups' emancipation as well as to national development, and it should be rectified.

5.2 The Nostalgic Arguments for Federalism

Ethnic federalism was also seen by some respondents as a possible restoration of the life that was interrupted by the colonial occupation of Uganda and Africa as a whole. In their discussion of traditional African agency in conflict resolution and social transformation, Moyo and Mine have demonstrated that there are historically rooted modalities that influenced this and other various aspects of African life. But they also note that these modalities "have been neglected, distorted and manipulated by colonial administrators, and, furthermore, by the

authoritarian rulers of African states after independence" (Moyo and Mine, 2016: 21). This account of African reality was also reflected in some of the elite respondents' comments about our socio-political settings. Respondent E, for instance, contended that colonization interrupted life in Africa as was known then, and disrupted it.

> The *Muzungu*[97] came with a new religion, and despised our religion, our way of linking with God, and destroyed our beliefs. That is because he came with a culture that promised opportunities and found it easy for Africans to forget about their own practices and to adapt. Yes, he taught them how to write, and how to read, and those who learnt and got those skills acquired European jobs to the white man's service. But because he was also strong and he had the weapons and fire power, it was easy for him to take over our way of life, and up to now it is still changing.

This respondent contended further that this was also a political disruption as the white man came up with new ideas that leaders should be elected or somehow appointed following particular qualifications. Yet these are dependent on skills measured and valued in western standards, not on skills that might matter for our own growth, nor on the wisdom of our traditional systems of government. He argued that we need to go back to the drawing board, take stock, and make the best of our traditional power-bases.

> My traditional power base is very important for me for personal identity. It is a very strongly interwoven, united ethnic group. Even Luganda,[98] the language we speak, means 'brotherhood', so we relate to each other as brothers and relatives. That's why

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[97] See note 74

[98] Luganda, the language of the Baganda, is the most widely spoken language after English and Swahili. It is also the de facto language of national identity.

our culture is still strong, although with time it is bound to change; for cultures change, and cultural institutions also change. The only problem is that in the case of Africa, cultures don't change on their free will. They are influenced by external forces ... because of modern technology, we are like a village, a global village. And because we are a global village, cultures are rapidly changing. And I am personally worried that they are changing too fast.

E's sentiments were also echoed by F, a 50-year old Mukiga Professor of Philosophy, Theology and Peace Studies. He argued that the value of our regional and tribal power bases is made the more relevant by the fact that the state, both colonial and post-colonial, has not presented any coherent ideology, and in the meantime the region and the tribe still play a key role:

> Colonial legacy destroyed the basic unit of organization and fabricated a Leviathan state that most people still fail to relate with confidently.

This lack of coherence in the "fabricated" state was the main reason F gave for supporting an ethnically based federal arrangement. He argued that it is only through the preservation of our local cultural values that we can have meaningful education, economic development, and national unity, going forward:

> Unity can be kept by asserting cultural identity and diversity. The unity of a country does not mean uniformity. Culture is an essential element of politics and economics. It can be exclusionary if not well handled. It can create ethnic tensions.

F's argument for unity in diversity is indeed a far cry from the anti-federal, 'tribalism' argument which dictated the post-independence developments. As noted earlier, the argument for devolving African nations at independence in order to effectively manage their

ethnic diversity had been largely and simply dubbed "local separatism and tribalism encouraged to prevent a strong national movement" (Oginga Odinga, 1967: 255).[99] F notes on the other hand that besides the essential preservation of cultural values, ethnic federalism would ensure meaningful political participation through self-determination and autonomy. He argued also that economically resources would be better used to serve the local communities, and there would be better accountability and a sense of ownership. This was also a central grassroots argument for the relevance and advantages of federating tribes (see narratives in section 4.1.2.1). In this respondent's view, as in the view of many grassroots respondents, the economy is closely linked with culture: with food, language, art, clothing, music, religion, etc....

In a more extreme political proposition, F argued that it would be better if multi-ethnic Africa came out straight and recognised tribal kinship as an organizing principle and main component of our politics. He said this is on account of the fact that the post-colonial state is compromised and the tribe is manipulated for what are in most cases not credible elections (giving the examples of Uganda and neighbouring Kenya):

> The post-colonial state is still contested. Elections are not credible in most cases (Uganda and Kenya are good examples). Both in Kenya and Uganda, politicians still manipulate tribes (ethnicity) for political mobilization. Why not come out clear and recognize them as units of political mobilization? Small ones might suffer, but hey, let

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[99] See the full pathology of federations in post-independence Africa in section 2.2.4.3.

us be real, numbers matter. The small can be lumped together as in the Ethiopian Southern Peoples and Nationalities cluster.[100]

F was echoed by D, who argued that although a nationalistic outlook would be the ideal, we may have to adopt a parochial way of thinking first in order to embrace 'patriotism' at the right level:

> The ideal would be to have a more nationalistic outlook. But at the moment, as things are, it has not worked. So maybe we should go there first…For me I think that even political parties could be regionally based. Why not? For example the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) is very strong in the Lango area. Let UPC concentrate its efforts there. The (ruling) National Resistance Movement (NRM) is certainly very strong in the west. The Democratic Party (DP) is strong here in Buganda, and so on. For me I don't see anything wrong…Personally I think if these are the parties that answer to the aspirations of the people in that area, then maybe these parties can make coalitions with the other parties, and form a national government. I see that in Germany for example. There is a party called CSU, which is a civic party only for Bavaria. Christian Social Union is a party you find only in Bavaria which is one of the states in Germany. But to form a government, you need a coalition. For example, the present government, the CDU of Angela Markel. She is in coalition with the CSU of Bavaria. So maybe we need also to discuss that kind of thing. Do we have national political parties in Uganda? Do all the political parties in this country answer to the aspirations of all the people of this country? Maybe on paper they do, but in practice, is that the case?

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[100] At the 1991 introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, an amalgam of homelands of numerous ethnicities was formed into the Southern Nations', Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS).

F cautioned, nevertheless, that any implementation of an ethnically based federal arrangement should be premised on being only a foundation for developing sound national, regional, and even pan Africanist ideologies:

> But I am very open to transcend the tribal power base when and if an appropriate ideology is developed. In fact from the tribal power base I would then promote integration at the regional level and continental level.

This respondent's argument takes us back to the observations made in chapter 2 (section 2.2.2) and the discussion of the interwoven relevance of all three variants of federalism. It was argued then that while the main focus among the independence fathers was on building national unity, and for some, African unity, African independence could have been more complete if, in the order of things, priority had been given to re-empowering the 'tribal model', which, "with its essential unity, clear body of customary law, and unambiguous legitimacies, is better suited to the task of maintaining public tranquillity" (Kopytoff, 1989: 5). As respondent F argues here, once "an appropriate ideology" has been developed for forging national unity, attention would be paid to strengthening regional blocks, and ultimately, continental unity.

Another elite group participant G, a 64-year old Muganda female (at the time of the interview a Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities in the Ugandan Cabinet), told me in the same regard that on gaining independence, "national" power came too early and too pre-maturely.

> We had a false start. We should have started at regional level. We could have benefitted a lot from what we have in common in our regions. The Banyoro-Batoro and the

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Banyankore-Bakiga groups,[101] for example, would have had a lot of good from what they have in common, including their respective common languages, Runyoro-Rutoro, Runyankore-Rukiga. What is not common could have been a chance to learn from these closest ethnic peers first, and from there, to build our institutions towards true nationalism. The current position of our regional and tribal power bases is at best precarious, and now we need to devolve more power.

5.3 Federalism and Equity

From all the forgone arguments by the opinion leaders interviewed, it is clear that the one and most important advantage of the federation, or even a regional amalgamation of tribes, is to build equitable units out of the multi-ethnic nation that colonialism left behind. It has also been argued by these respondents that the best way to achieve this is for the units to run their own affairs as much as the system allows, through channels that are natural to them. These channels, as respondent G, a 55-year-old Buganda Kingdom Minister of Heritage and Culture argued, include the family, the clans, the chiefs, and the heritage of each tribe. And "the colonialists," according to him, "could not penetrate this setting; rather they used it as they found it to set up their own colonial structures."

> We know where the colonialists left us. We need to be able to run our own affairs
> through channels that are natural to us. This is the only way we can effectively do things
> naturally, economically and politically. In Buganda, for instance, our 18 *masaza*[102] had

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[101] It has been stated in chapter 4 (4.1.1) that language of the Bakiga, Rukiga, is as closely related to the Runyankore language of the Banyankore as the language of the Banyoro, Runyoro, is related to the Rutoro language of the Batoro.

[102]*Ssaza* (plural, *Masaza*, English, county) is the main administrative unit below the king in Buganda. The *Ssaza* (county) chief, inspects and coordinates all that goes on in the lower units, and reports directly to the *Katikkiro* (prime minister), the king's deputy, and this is the only way the king knows about his subjects.

their own natural settings. The central government today, on the other hand, doesn't know who does what and where to get what."

These respondents argued that whether they are self-sustaining entities like Buganda and the other traditional kingdoms, or smaller ones that would have to amalgamate, let go a few things and accept others, "there would be," as respondent E put it, "equitable sharing of not only power and resources, but also the income and taxes."

> For example, if the national income of the country were say 8 billion shillings, Buganda region would be given two billion, western region would be given two billion, and then they would know what to do with it. They would probably have a cancer hospital in Kabale, or a leprosy unit in northern Uganda. But the way things are, all of them must come to Kampala. Today, Buganda is getting a lion's share of the national resources. Without knowing it, these people from other tribes are helping Buganda to develop much faster than their own regions because they have refused to accept this federal arrangement – regional-federal system.

E was even a bit sarcastic commenting on the newly discovered oil resources in the Bunyoro area:

> Oil has now come about (in the Bunyoro area), but I have a feeling that the head office for the oil sector will be based in Kampala, not Bunyoro. That's my feeling. The head offices of all these NGOs, the head offices of all these other organizations are in Kampala. The Cardinal[103] lives in Kampala. The Chief Mufti[104] too ... not in Fort Portal.

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[103] The metropolitan Archbishop of Kampala is effectively the head of the powerful Catholic Church in Uganda. The previous two have been Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church.

[104] In Arabic, *mufti* means one who gives legal opinions and advises on the law of the Koran. It also meant 'leader of a religious community' in the former Ottoman Empire. Hence, the chief Mufti of Uganda is the leader of the nationwide Moslem community.

Why not? In America, you don't have to go to Washington if you are going to have a heart surgery. It can be done in LA. It can be done anywhere because America chose the federal system. But here, if you are a graduate teacher, you want to be posted in Kampala, or somewhere in Buganda. But not in Hoima (in Bunyoro area). You don't want to go to Dokoro (in Lira district of northern Uganda).

Respondent A also argued on the same line that Uganda's main problem has always been the inequitable distribution of resources, and only a federal arrangement and the devolution of power can help the country to overcome this problem:

Economically, you see, in Uganda we have had the problem of inequitable distribution of resources. You go to Rwenzori, you get copper from Kasese[105] and it feeds the whole of Uganda. But now you find that there is no electricity in the Kasese area; there is no this, no what…So if federalism can resolve the equitability of those resources, it would be a great idea. Even politically, federalism can be an advantage because now all this friction we have as a nation is mainly brought by imbalances. We don't get the real resource to do the real work. Somewhere someone is not happy with the way things are balanced! It is basically economic, but it also affects the politics – the political mentality of the people.

Similar to the grassroots narratives in chapter 4, the opinion leaders' narratives here maybe seen as an indictment of the post-independence unitary system which not only inherited colonial inequities, but also created new ones in all three areas of culture, the economy and politics. While the current NRM government has for instance restored some traditional cultural institutions – their banning by Obote had been seen as a serious

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[105] The chief town of Kasese district in the region of western Uganda, Kasese town originally grew around the copper mines at nearby Kilembe.

encroachment on the people's cultural rights – it has also blocked or politically intervened in the restoration of others (see section 4.2 above). Economically speaking, equity in the post-independence republic has been compromised by what respondent F (cited above) called the absence of accountability and a local sense of 'ownership', which he reasoned has resulted from the disconnect between the economy and the people's local cultures: their food, language, art, clothing, music, religion, etc. In the political arena, as respondent C argued, there has been a post-independence plot to destabilize and curb the influence of the tribal power bases.

> In Buganda, for instance, we cannot see the fruits of independence. We are in a cycle of coups and dictatorships at the expense of Buganda! There is a total political mess now. People in general do not have much loyalty to the kings and kingdoms. Their minds are on power, control and self-aggrandizement.

The opinion leaders have thus generally argued that while the colonial administration created strong feelings in the sense of tribal groupings, the post-independence republic has not brought about unity, whatever the intentions of the leaders that have been. The latest attempt by Yoweri Museveni and his Movement system is a case in point. As respondent H, a Catholic Bishop from the central region put it,

> With his (NRM) Movement, a collection of everyone who was useful to him, Mr. Museveni was intending to say, okay, lets shape a new Uganda, a one Uganda with one government, one political mind and all that. But also people were afraid of that because it seemed to have introduced some communistic elements, and so I think we still have to do a lot to bring about the unitary system while maintaining our tribal bases … So some people think some kind of federal arrangement would address those problems

because it doesn't, in essence, rule out unitarism; for you would have the centre still, which shares power with the units.

This respondent agreed with all the other opinion leaders interviewed that given Uganda's tribal background, a federal system would be preferred to the current outright unitary government. He also claimed that the majority of Ugandans would seem to favour that system[106] as it would let each area work out its own way to development:

> Some think that such a federal system would speed up development because you would have competition among the leaders, and you would galvanize the resources and then create a more concerned people, concerned for the area, and contributing to growth and so on. Culturally, the federal system is favoured because culture, especially those strong cultures, will be catered for. Politically, then we would have leadership in the hands of people really interested in rectifying their own areas. Economically, some think that it would boost local production. But then you must have open markets. For instance one area rearing cattle will be sharing by selling it to their neighbours. So, there will be healthy competition which will help different groups to produce more and more of what they produce best.

Respondent H was, nevertheless, more sceptical of the practicability of the regional tier which, when it was proposed,[107] was left free for tribes which are willing to come together and form a kind of union.

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[106] In any case, the 1993 "Odoki Commission" report found that at the Resistance Council (RC) levels one and two, 97% of the Baganda population supported federalism, while 67% did so in other parts of Uganda (*Report of the Constitutional Review Commission Government of Uganda (1993), Kampala: Government Printer*).

[107] See note 95.

But as long as we still feel comfortable with our own tribes, this will not come. Maybe tribes feel there is nothing which brings them together so far. I haven't heard of anyone trying it, and it has been now several years…they talked about it and then left it there…

5.4 Overview

As the evidence presented in this chapter clearly shows, opinion leaders' perceptions of the state of the nation echoed those of the focus group. Both the opinion leaders interviewed and people at the grassroots agree that there is need to rethink the structure of the post-colonial state in order to ensure equity, as well as peace and stability. Similarly, the opinion leaders' perceptions, like those of the grassroots, correlate with the main thesis or hypothesis of this research – albeit more analytically – that ethnic federalism would be viewed positively by respondents as a better system of governance for Uganda, culturally, economically and politically. Given their small numbers, nevertheless, their perceptions and opinions are by no means exhaustive. They are rather suggestive of the experiences and expectations of the more elite members of society.

On Uganda's historical experiences, the opinion leaders agreed that the British colonial "divide and rule" policy had left the country so deeply divided that any post-independence unitary project was bound to fail. They argue that with that policy, the history of Uganda as a nation had been founded on deep cleavages, leaving parts of the country more developed and socially, economically and politically more advantaged than others. They also noted that the post-independence unitary governments have failed to ensure cultural, political, and socio-economic equity. They have instead promoted extortion, expropriation and a violent use of force by power-wielding ethnic groups against others. This sad analysis of the state of the nation has been too often the subject

of research projects, books, and newspaper columns on understanding post-independence Uganda's politics and for the study of ethnic politics more generally. As Charles Onyango Obbo [108] recently argued about Uganda's often tumultuous post-independence experience, "except for the short-lived period of (first Prime Minister Benedicto) Kiwanuka in 1962, the rest of the regimes have had corruption, nepotism, and violence, and people have tried to cling to power."[109]

On the resultant inequalities, the opinion leaders interviewed almost unanimously agreed that the all-too-powerful post independence unitary government has always been the centre of reference, and the tribal or regional identity has counted less. The regions and their deeper past, the opinion leaders argued, had the potential to be an essential and effective part of the nation-building process. They echoed such historians as Richard Reid's (2012) verdict on Africa, nevertheless, that since this past has been long used – or, more commonly, abused – by politicians, guerrillas, statesmen, and would-be builders of nations of every hue, these regions would become less enthusiastic and more cynical about history as time went on. Such cynicism was indeed most evident in Uganda, where even much of the cultural heritage of the tribal groups, including the centuries-long heritage of traditional kingdoms, lay under siege for decades since the 1966 abrogation of the more accommodating 1962 quasi-federal constitution. Chapter 3 dwelt at length on the contemporary crisis of the legitimacy of the post-1966 state, its institutions and their political incumbents in general.

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[108] Mr. Obbo is a renowned Ugandan author, journalist, political commentator, and former Editor of The Monitor and Mail and Guardian Africa.

[109] Daily Monitor, January 4, 2017.

Economic inequalities and the lack of sustainable national economic development strategies have been identified by the opinion leaders as the most tangible manifestations of the suppression of Uganda's tribal and regional identities. Areas with abundant resources, as one of the respondents lamented, are still some of the poorest in the country. That particular respondent (F) had given his own home region Kigezi as an example, which "has an abundance of resources such as natural forests (especially the famous Bwindi impenetrable forest that is home to mountain gorillas) and Lake Bunyonyi." There have also been concerns recently that huge mineral deposits in the remote North Eastern Karamoja region, which would be expected to regenerate this poverty and conflict-ravaged area, could instead further deepen the suffering of people living there. As a recent Human Rights Watch report observed:

> From the frayed outposts in Moroto district to Rata in Amudat district and Nakapiripirit, gold lies in every tiny pocket of Karamoja, Uganda's most marginalised region in the country's north-east. This has generated huge interest from private companies. Meanwhile, the indigenous people engaged in artisanal mining are being edged out... As companies have begun to explore and mine the area, communities are voicing serious fears of land grabs, environment damage, and lack of information as to how and when they will see improved access to basic services or other positive impacts.[110]

More recently, there is the ongoing oil exploration in the Lake Albert region of western Uganda, and already there are worries that the government is not doing enough to ensure that the people of Bunyoro region get full value of the oil resources. Local leaders

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[110] Human Rights Watch, February 3, 2014; The Guardian, February 4, 2014.

have been quoted in the press calling on the national authorities to undertake efforts "to enhance the livelihoods of the oil hosting communities so that they co-exist with oil and reap benefits of economic growth."[111] Some of the elite respondents did indeed refer to Bunyoro directly, and on the prospect that the area's resources will be used mainly to finance the national budget, which, nevertheless, is almost always exploited for the central government's ends. This researcher also heard first hand from respondents in the focus group in Bunyoro, echoes of suspicion, lost hope, uncertain expectations and a struggling local economy.

5.4.1 The way forward

Elite perceptions mainly point to one fundamental means of overcoming socio-economic HIs and their potentially violent and disastrous consequences, namely, adopting a different system of political administration. Stewart et al. have also argued, basing on quantitative analysis and qualitative case studies of several sub-Saharan African countries, that an inclusive political system, and the way in which people perceive their positions in such a system, is very important for stability (Stewart et al., 2013). Stewart et al. recognised the fact that sometimes the "popular" perceptions of HIs are not always in tune with the "objective" socioeconomic HIs shown in the statistics. People's perceptions of their political inclusion or marginalisation tend to reflect the realities of their actual HIs than their perceptions of their socioeconomic situation:

> Our surveys show that there can be considerable differences between perceptions of socioeconomic HIs and actual HIs, with notable examples of this in Nigeria and in

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[111] Daily Monitor, August 28, 2013.

Ghana, where the groups perceived as poorest are not those who are the poorest according to social and economic statistics. This distortion of perceptions seems to be associated with political HIs. In both of these cases, the groups that are politically marginalised appear to regard themselves as also being economically marginalised, even when this contradicts the objective evidence (Stewart et al., 2013: 262)

In the end, Stewart et al. concluded from their case studies that political systems that lead to power dispersal are important in reducing HIs and supporting stability.

On the best form of government for Uganda today, moving forward, there was consensus among the opinion leaders interviewed that it should be federal in the sense that power is shared between the central government and the units. As to what level of devolution, however, the debate continues. Most of the elite respondents supported the idea of federating tribes, arguing, as variously cited above, that this would ensure the preservation of cultural values; it would also politically ensure self-determination and autonomy; and in economic terms, resources can be used to serve the local communities better and with accountability and a sense of ownership.

Some elite respondents nevertheless objected to the federation of tribes as such for fear of entrenching the very inequalities that federalism is actually intended to be fighting. The fact that there are many smaller tribes interlaced among the broader tribal and linguistic groups was the main reason given by these respondents for objecting to ethnic federalism. These smaller tribes are, as one of these respondents argued, too many and too small to stand on their own, not so much for sheer geographical and spatial reasons, but rather for economic reasons. He argued that there would be a lot of imbalance

economically, and compensating for these fiscally disadvantaged units would be a burden on the other units and on the federal government.

One respondent also raised the fear that ethnicity and ethnic boundaries would be hard to define given the migration of peoples across the country, and the fear that under the circumstances, many people may not be able to live freely in ethnically defined regions. I did not ask the respondent directly why he thought such fears should be taken seriously. I mentioned to him instead that similar fears had been expressed to me by respondents in the focus group who were against the federation of tribes because they were worried that it would create confusion and discrimination (see section 4.1.2.3). Moreover, there would be an even bigger problem in the central region of Buganda which is at the centre of the federal debate. Given her historical central position both in colonial days and the independent republic, it is estimated that to date, nearly 50% of the population of Buganda is made up of descendants of non-Baganda (Mwami and Muriuki, 2012). Being the capital city where most of the important institutions are and activities are carried out, many migrants are attracted to Kampala for settlement, and business opportunities within the area (Bakaluba et el, 2015). In a country where the urban population increased rapidly from less than 0.8 million persons in 1980 to 5.0 million persons in 2012, representing an increase of more than six times,[112] this strategic position of Kampala must have had massive influence on the demographics of the city. The question of what to do with Kampala in the event of the federation of tribes is therefore a

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[112] Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2012.

legitimate one which was also raised by some of the more sceptical respondents from the focus group (see section 4.1.2.3).

For these ethnic sceptics, therefore, regional, rather than tribal federal units, would serve better to ensure even and well-spread out development. Indeed, while Uganda has over sixty diverse cultural groups, they speak a combined number of just over thirty languages (Tumusiime, 2011). While bigger groups like Buganda and the other traditional kingdoms (Ankole, Bunyoro, Busoga and Toro) and bigger chieftainships like Acholi can stand on their own as regional-ethnic entities, many a smaller tribe can only be classified under broader linguistic groups, and are considered to be too small to have individual governments of their own. They should be taken for what they are, as respondent E put it:

> They are sub-tribes with similar cultures, and speaking different dialects... and regional tiers would be the best way to enable people to strengthen their cultures in places where they are a little bit autonomous; to work harder knowing that they are economically developing their own areas. And by going regional, they would have to let go of a few things and accept others.

Consequently, the main question that arises from conversations with these opinion leaders is whether a strictly ethnic federation is feasible, or whether there is a need for some kind of regional amalgamation to cater to the more minute ethnicities? And what kind of amalgamation?

5.4.2 Tribe, or region? Elite suggestions

The regional tier proposed by the government with a 2005 amendment of the 1995 constitution, under article 178 (Regional governments)[113] proposed the following:

> 1. Two or more districts may cooperate to form a regional government to perform the functions and services specified in the Fifth Schedule to this Constitution.
>
> 2. A district shall not be taken to have agreed to enter into a cooperation arrangement to form a regional government unless   a. the proposal to join the regional government has been approved by resolution of the district council by a majority of two thirds of the members of the district council; and b. the decision of the district council has been ratified by not less than two-thirds of the sub county councils in the district.
>
> 3. Subject to clause (1) and to the provisions of this Constitution, the districts of the regions of Buganda, Bunyoro, Busoga, Acholi and Lango, specified in the First Schedule to this Constitution, shall be deemed to have agreed to form regional governments for the purposes of this article.
>
> 4. The headquarters of the regional governments deemed to have been established in clause (3) of this article shall be as follows   a. in Buganda, Mengo Municipality which shall be created by parliament;   b. in Bunyoro, Hoima Municipality which shall be created by parliament;   c. in Busoga, Jinja Municipality;   d. in Acholi, Gulu Municipality; and   e. in Lango, Lira Municipality.
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> 5. The districts forming the regional government shall form a regional assembly.

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[113] Constitution of the Republic of Uganda as of 15th February, 2006.

6. A regional government shall be a body corporate with power to sue and be sued and shall have power to do all things that maybe done by a body corporate and shall be subject to all obligations to which a body corporate is subject.

7. Notwithstanding article 180, a regional government formed under this article shall be the highest political authority within its region and shall have political, legislative, executive, administrative and cultural functions in the region.

8. A regional government shall in particular have in relation to the region, the functions and services conferred upon a regional government in the Fifth Schedule to this Constitution and may make laws which shall have the force of law in the region.

9. A regional assembly shall have power to legislate on matters within its jurisdiction.

10. Subject to this article and to the Fifth Schedule to this Constitution, the executive and administrative powers of a regional government shall extend to the execution and implementation of the laws enacted by the regional assembly and other laws operating in the region and the management of the affairs of the regional government.

11. The laws made by the regional assembly shall be in conformity with the Constitution and the national laws and shall be consistent with national policies.

12. The provisions of the Fifth Schedule to this Constitution shall have effect in respect of the matters specified in it in relation to regional governments.

13. Regional governments shall commence on 1st July, 2006

The regional tier, nevertheless, did not commence with the 2006 fiscal year as had been planned. Indeed, the system, which was a direct response by government to the persistent demand for a federal system of governance by a section of the Ugandan public

led by the Buganda Kingdom, has not been implemented up to now. The main reason is that it met so much opposition as it was not so endearing to established traditional kingdoms like Buganda who feared it would dismantle them. As an opinion column in a local newspaper titled "Regional Tier Will Destroy Buganda"[114] argued, the Buganda Lukiiko (Parliament) and the Baganda, for example, would never accept the system because it has a clause stipulating that two or three districts in Buganda can decide to break away and to choose a new name and be independent. The columnist argued further that the tier, after all, allows the President to take over the administration of the kingdom if he/she sees that it's not being run the way he/she wants.

It can be argued that an even bigger issue at stake is that the regional tier model as proposed by the government of Uganda cannot be a solution to the regional amalgamation suggested by elite respondents interviewed in this research to cater for the smaller tribes. Indeed the intentions and the means are completely different. The 2005 regional tier was proposed as an alternative to federalism. It vaguely encouraged the splitting up of entities that in the view of the opinion leaders interviewed should by their shared histories "enable people to strengthen their cultures in places where they are a little bit autonomous; to work harder knowing that they are economically developing their areas."[115] The regional amalgamation of smaller tribes should be on the other hand accomplished to help them to fit in an autonomous federal system with the bigger ones. Whereas regions big enough to be designated as federal states based on tribal dominance should be identified as such, the smaller tribes should be formed into amalgams of autonomous homelands of

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[114] The Observer, March 27, 2014.

[115] Respondent E, quoted above.

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numerous ethnicities similar to Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regions (SNNPRS).[116]

In summary, conversations with opinion leaders have demonstrated that Uganda was made a state with various autonomous parts by colonial design. It was later made a republic for instrumental purpose. The original statehood was a marriage of convenience, and there have been efforts since independence to wish it away in the name of unity and tranquillity. Restoring full cultural, fiscal and political power to the original, culturally defined, "natural" parts of the state has been depicted by the opinion leaders as the best way to reset the lustre of the African gem that Uganda is. However, since the nature of these parts is such that some of them are not endowed with a sufficient size and resources to stand on their own, they should be encouraged to join hands on the basis of geographical and cultural proximity. To quote respondent E again,

> They are sub-tribes with similar cultures, and speaking different dialects ... and regional tiers would be the best way to enable people to strengthen their cultures in places where they are a little bit autonomous; to work harder knowing that they are economically developing their own areas. And by going regional, they would have to let go of a few things and accept others.

Federalism is a wide term, and formal federalism on the American pattern may not necessarily be required for places like Uganda. The opinion leaders' perceptions of the best political system for Uganda seem to reflect this reality. Thanks to this additional survey, the elite perceptions have helped us to understand better the nature of ethnic

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[116] See note 99.

configurations and HIs in Uganda. They have helped us to understand better the pros and cons – well, mostly pros – as well as the intricate process of federating tribes in Uganda. The opinion leaders' perceptions were never intended to be the main focus of this study. However, as findings in this chapter show, they have given deeper insights into the cultural, socio-political and economic issues that affect people at the grassroots whose experiences they share and whose opinions they shape in their various capacities. In closing, the final chapter will turn the focus again to the people at the grassroots of society, to reiterate their main message and make recommendations towards the dispersing of cultural, fiscal, and political power to their ethnic sub-units.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Implications

Writing about politics in West Africa during the first decade of independence for most countries in the region, Arthur Lewis observed that "the fundamental political problem is neither economic policy nor foreign policy, but the creation of nations out of heterogeneous peoples" (Lewis, 1965: 49-50). Writing about Ghana in particular, which in 1957 had become the first sub-Saharan African country to break free of colonial rule, Lewis noted:

> When one strips away all the superficial explanations of recent Ghana history – the radicalism of the party, the obsession with Pan-Africanism, and the philosophy of the single-party state – the basic explanation is that a country which has very wide geographical differences can live together at peace only in a federal framework (Lewis, 1965: 53).

6.1 Summary and implications of the research

This empirical study developed and tested the hypothesis that federalism is relatively suitable to the Ugandan situation; that it can be a politically useful and socially relevant power-sharing instrument for the country. Its relevance and utility are premised, at least for this study, on the views and experiences of ordinary people whose interests may or may not be protected by federalism. At the core of this study was the inquiry into how much the need to manage problems associated with ethnic and cultural diversity influences grassroots perceptions of federalism. The main question as outlined in the introduction was, therefore, whether respondents support the idea of an ethnically based federal arrangement for Uganda.

In Uganda, however, problems associated with ethnic and cultural diversity are usually mainly problems of political, socio-economic, and cultural HIs. The question of the meaning and relevance of federalism in Uganda was, therefore, considered in light of all three conceptual frameworks of political, economic and cultural federalism. Thus, in chapter 2, where a conceptual analysis of the key terms of *ethnicity* and *federalism* was made at length, a theoretical link was made between the main question of research and the relationship between the two terms themselves. If federalism is, practically speaking, often practiced and evaluated in terms of its shared and divided contribution to the cultural, socio-economic and political well-being of two or more constitutionally defined orders of government, can it theoretically give solutions to the three corresponding status dimensions in which culturally defined salient groups experience HIs? These are the political status, the socio-economic status, and the cultural status dimensions of HIs. Respondents were thus asked whether they think a federation with ethnically defined regions is the most suitable form of government for Uganda today, culturally, socio-economically, and politically. They were also asked whether they think such a federation could be realised sooner rather than later.

Regarding the main question, the majority of grassroots respondents from 10 tribal areas of Uganda were in agreement with the theoretical expectations of the study: that people at the local level, the ordinary people as distinct from the active leadership of political parties or organizations, think federalism is a better system for Uganda, culturally, socio-economically, and politically.

In cultural terms, people at the grassroots of society saw in ethnic federalism a guarantee for the continuity of the symbolic elements such as language, kinship, and

physical proximity, among others, which define their group boundaries and collective identity. This common identity has been abused and threatened by successive unitary regimes since independence. Remarkably, at one dark moment in the history of Uganda all cultural institutions were constitutionally banned. As the study showed, only very few respondents thought that tribes don't necessarily need ethnically-based federal governments to preserve and promote their traditional cultures; that culture is learned, first and foremost, at home, in the family, and in schools. On the other hand, most respondents at the grassroots level of society thought ethnic federalism can motivate them more to safeguard and promote the values that are unique and dear to them, and that this will have implications on the way they engage in the issues of local development and administration. The link between the cultural identity of the Baganda of Buganda and the various socio-economic development activities going on in the kingdom, frequently referred to by respondents, maybe an enduring reference for other tribes going forward.

In socio-economic terms, and with frequent reference to the Kingdom of Buganda, most respondents saw in ethnic federalism the guarantee for a more sustainable socio-economic growth of the various tribal areas of Uganda. Many respondents acknowledged that the common culture and collective identity that binds them together within their historical ancestral boundaries would presumably motivate them, but more importantly their leaders, to work more to develop their own cultural areas of origin. In many cases the local people interviewed had deeply entrenched grievances against the government and her politically appointed leaders. These leaders are usually brought from other tribal areas, and they have been described as usually not having their areas of work at heart, which hinders development and entrenches horizontal inequalities. After all, different

tribal areas have different problems and aspirations. This study has revealed the local people's conviction that ethnic federalism will put local traditional institutions, such as kingdoms, and local men and women, at the forefront of the local leadership. A cultural, political and fiscal federation of ethnic groups will alleviate political and cultural status HIs, and may also mitigate economic inequality. The traditional institutions will supposedly have better knowledge of the local needs, and will be in a better position to manage the economic functions and instruments which will be placed in the sphere of the local government. This will supposedly lead to a better delivery of services, which is perceived by most of the grassroots respondents as lacking despite the current government's multi-sided efforts at decentralisation. These efforts include the five-tier LC system statute, the Local Government Act, and the decentralisation (and district creation) drive. They have all been caught up in a catch-22 situation where power is "decentralised", but the central government retains too much of it in order to run and maintain a patronage system.

William Easterly, in his acclaimed criticism of the foreign aid system, *The White Man's Burden,* makes a distinction between the advocates and the beneficiaries of the traditional approach by which the West dishes out billions and trillions of dollars to the Rest.[117] Easterly argues that the good intentions of the advocates and implementers whom he calls the "Planners" notwithstanding, foreign aid has over the years become an unfortunate cycle of "idealism, high expectations, disappointing results and cynical backlash"

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[117] Easterly contrasts the "Rest" with the "West", the latter being "the rich governments in North America and Western Europe who largely control international agencies and the effort to transform poor nations … Although, over time, some non-Western nations (Japan) and professionals from all over the world have also become involved" (2006: 8).

(Easterly, 2006: 5). He suggests that focus should be turned more to the beneficiaries, whom he calls the "Searchers", because they always ask the right question: "What can foreign aid do for poor people?" He argues further that while a Planner believes outsiders know enough to impose solutions, "a Searcher believes only insiders have enough knowledge to find solutions, and that most solutions must be home-grown" (2006: 6). It is, likewise, not impossible that the powerful, centrist, post-independence government in Uganda has, at least sometimes, had good intentions in its projects such as the recent decentralization drive. It is also possible, however, that government is like Easterly's Planners in aid, who "keep pouring resources into a fixed objective, despite many previous failures at reaching that objective, despite a track record that suggests the objective is infeasible or the plan unworkable … Yet Searchers in aid are already finding things that help the poor, and we will see that they could find many more if the balance of power in aid is shifted from Planners to Searchers" (Easterly, 2006: 12).

Consequently, this study suggests that giving local political autonomy to the citizens not only allows them more freedom to exercise their rights, but also empowers them to fulfil both their cultural and socio-economic wishes. Views from the grassroots level of society have suggested that it is only by working hand in hand with local, culturally-based, autonomous governments that the central government can be seen to be relevant to the people's lifestyles and economic well-being. It is evident both from the review of Uganda's recent history in chapter 3 and from listening to the grassroots respondents in chapter 4, that traditional authorities need to be involved in a shared political leadership in order to ensure an open system in which Uganda's indigenous peoples and their indigenous systems of governance must be recognized and respected. Going by the results of this

study, therefore, it can be argued that the issue is not "whether", but "how best" to genuinely decentralise government bureaucracy, and ultimately, the very essence of democracy.

Regarding the second question, hope that an ethnically-based federal arrangement for Uganda can be realised in the near future was not as widespread as the desire to have it was. Two contesting perspectives emerged regarding the future of federalism in Uganda. Hope or scepticism among the respondents depended mainly on their locations. Perhaps the most surprising but understandable results were from Buganda, with equally high levels of support and scepticism. Buganda's unique position and role in national politics has been highlighted all through this thesis. Buganda stands to gain most from an ethnically-based federal arrangement for Uganda, but she is also aware, from a long experience, that her demands for a full-fledged cultural, political, and socio-economic federal arrangement have been denied her since Uganda became independent. As I have already speculated, the Baganda respondents' scepticism may be informed by this long experience of demand and denial. This could also be the reason why Buganda has instead wholeheartedly embraced the little that has been given to the cultural institutions in the name of a purely cultural federalism.

Buganda's demand for a federal arrangement has always been linked to the popularity of the monarchy. Buganda has thus embraced their king even if he is a mere symbol of ethnic identity. To Buganda's benefit, even if the *Kabaka* lacks political power, he has embarked on the path of mobilising his people for self-sustaining socio-economic development projects possible within the limits of his constitutional powers. Ironically, and I could only speculate reading between the grassroots narratives, Buganda's

committed *resignation* to, and witty utilization of her constitutional right, has inspired many other areas to look to the future of ethnic federalism with hope. Some of them are traditional kingdoms like Bunyoro, Busoga, and Toro, others are just chieftainships like Acholi, Bugisu and Teso. What they all have in common with Buganda is a popular cultural figure to look up to for internal organization. They also share the desperation of gross and biting socio-economic inequalities. The Kingdom of Ankole's opposition to and scepticism about a federal arrangement has been partly linked to a generally unpopular monarchy as well as the Banyankole's relative domination at the elite level.

It was also not surprising that some of the tribal areas where hope that ethnic federalism can be realised soon was very low are areas that never had kingdoms or united chiefdoms. These are segmentary societies such as Kigezi, and respondents there tended to be sceptical about the possibility of an ethnically-based federal state.

When it came to the elite perceptions, the opinion leaders surveyed all agreed that some kind of federal arrangement, ethnic or regional, is indispensable. They all advocated for a distribution of powers between the central government and ethnic or regional states so that matters of national importance are kept under the control of the former, while those of regional importance are placed under the control of the latter. They decried the all-too-powerful unitary system which, emanating from the colonial design through independence to the current republic, has always left too much political power in the centre, denying the ethnic and regional units the autonomy they need to address their unique political, socio-economic and cultural needs. The opinion leaders interviewed also gave a deeper analysis of the issues related to the relevance of regional or tribal autonomy. They also gave more realistic pointers, both to the problems of accommodating ethnic

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diversity in an overly strong unitary state, and to the challenges of adopting a power-dispersing federal system.

6.2 Challenges to the ethnic-federalism project

This study identifies two major challenges to the idea, let alone the realization of ethnic federalism. First, as testified to by both Uganda's national history and the respondents' narratives, ethnic federalism is being proposed against a deeply entrenched unitary project. It has been argued that "the post-colonial state in Uganda made several attempts to obliterate ethnic movements and the cultural institutions that go with them, such as traditional rulers and monarchies. The project was aimed at creating national unity because it was believed that ethnic movements and traditional rulers are pre-modern and a danger to national unity" (Kayunga, 2000: 59). Indeed, in Uganda, like in many other African states, federal schemes adopted at independence to create autonomous self-governing regions with equal status were deemed 'unworkable and unjust', and politics soon became obscured by the nationalist politics of the 1960s. More than half a century later, however, Uganda and many of these other countries are being defined more by friction between different ethnic groups than national unity. Certain groups have dominated others, and patronage systems have been created and reinforced. In a patronage system, as this study has highlighted, the chain of favours goes down to the rank and file of the ruling party, and culminates into nepotism, favouritism and a distribution of resources that is patrimonial and reminiscent of gross HIs. Such a system will be difficult to uproot, and the debates about federalism, especially ethnic federalism, will become more and more inconclusive as time goes on.

The other major challenge to the federal project, given there is consensus on a devolution, is how to identify the best model of federalism to be adopted. This study started with a blanket suggestion for a purely ethnically-based federal union of states. In the course of the interviews, however, it became clear that from among both the grassroots and the elite respondents there were voices sceptical about the practicability of federating tribes. This is mainly because the tribes are unequal in population size and economic power. The other reason is that these tribes have been treated differently under the colonial divide and rule system, and through the various hegemonic post-independence regimes. As a result, some are more privileged than others in many ways other than size and economic power. It therefore became apparent that a blanket federation of tribes would inevitably end in the retrenchment of the HIs it is meant to improve. This is a big challenge both to the main proposition of the current study, and to future devolution proposals and projects in Uganda.

There are many other issues that may arise both in debates about the federal question in Uganda and, more so, in the event that federalism of any model is adopted for Uganda. There will be constitutional issues; there will be issues about land and resources, and many other issues. These two challenges have been identified as immediately relevant to the very concept of ethnic-federalism, its meaning, acceptability and practicability, and all the others can be addressed once these ones have been debated and cleared. Going forward, I will accordingly make two major recommendations in line with the two major challenges.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Study Options

Besides the mere federation of tribes, there are many important factors in the realization of lasting national stability. Most important among them is good will and consensus among national and ethnic leaders. This study has made many references to Arend Lijphart, one of the strongest proponents of the consociational model of democracy. Lijphart has argued elsewhere that "in a consociation democracy, the centrifugal tendencies inherent in a plural society are counteracted by the cooperative attitudes and behaviour of the leaders of different segments of the population … it may be difficult, but it is not at all impossible to achieve and maintain a stable democratic government in a plural society" (Lijphart 1977, 1. Also see note 15). It is difficult mainly because, in these multi-cultural societies, values, beliefs, and languages are heterogeneous and may lead to different political preferences. These are preferences and choices which are so embedded in the histories and cultures of individual ethnic groups that they are not always easy to accommodate. The good will of all the leaders and policy makers across the heterogeneous society is indispensable. The absence of such good will may lead to the failure of even the most meticulously crafted federal systems such as that of Ethiopia. Ethiopia's 'ethnic federalism,' initially widely acclaimed for introducing the principle of self-determination for the nation's six ethnic provinces and three multi-ethnic ones in a formerly highly centralised and unitary state (Turton, 2006:1), has been reported in chapter 2 as crumbling because of the lack of commitment on the part of government to the implementation of this unique and challenging agenda.

In Uganda, therefore, policies towards federalism must be backed up by both legal and moral commitments to help the country to avoid the fate of Ethiopia. "The

cooperative attitudes and behaviour of the leaders of different segments of the population," a prerequisite for Lijphart's consociational model referred to above, will go a long way to ensure the healthy co-existence of the "socially enacted relationship between ethnic identity, authority, and legitimacy" and the "legally sanctioned membership, authority and legitimacy of the nation-state" (Ndeswa, 1997: 602, also cited in 2.2.4.3.viii above). The state has the challenge of considering the future of a nation overburdened by hegemony, patronage, and gross HIs, in the light of the aspirations of the tribal areas and their peoples who, with increasing globalization, continue looking back to their roots.

The other recommendation, which is also a suggestion for a future research agenda, is to examine in more detail how to define the boundaries of the federal states in Uganda. This study was undertaken with the awareness that the state is an amalgamation of competing interests, which in multi-ethnic societies like Uganda can be even more complex. The relevance, necessity, and benefits of dividing powers between the state and the local levels must be seen in the light of the latter's cultural, political and fiscal interests. It can be argued that addressing people's cultural and political ambitions can, in theory and practice, be easier than addressing their economic needs. By giving traditional authorities autonomous powers, for instance, an ethnically based form of government can be seen as tackling the problems of cultural and political inequalities and empowering cultural groups to pursue their ambitions and destinies. Addressing socio-economic HIs in plural societies can, on the other hand, be trickier. It is trickier because restoring equity to all ethnic groups with different geographical sizes, different human and natural resources, as well as varying historical experiences, can be more challenging.

It is in due fairness to the views and perceptions of the respondents in this study that an ethnically-based regional tier system should be considered. A careful study must be undertaken to identify tribes that can stand on their own regarding size, resources and historical experiences in autonomy and leadership, and other smaller tribes and sub-tribes that can be possibly incorporated into their bigger "cousins" or even amalgamated among themselves to form semi-autonomous regional federal states. The nomadic hunters and gatherers of the Pygmoid Bambuti of western Uganda are a good example. They are predominantly found in the greater Toro region and can be incorporated in the Toro federal state. On the other hand, the Banyole of eastern Uganda seem to be a sub-group of the Basoga, but they are very closely related to the Basamia-Bagwe in customs, language, and origin (Tumusiime, 2011:94), and they can amalgamated among themselves. Some form of "cooperative federalism," such as that practiced in Switzerland, would nevertheless be inevitable given the way development, both of infrastructure and workforce, is concentrated in some areas of the country at the expense of others. In the Swiss model of cooperative federalism, differences in fiscal revenue are adjusted between rich and poor cantons or communes and bigger cantons are compensated for the services they provide for the smaller ones (Linder 2012).

The issue at hand is to consider equity moving forward. It has been noted, and it must be re-emphasized, however, that the "regional tier" being proposed here is different from that proposed and appended in 2005 as an amendment to the national constitution by the Parliament of Uganda. The catch is that this design, which is yet to be adopted anyway, leaves too much political power in the centre. The regional tiers in this model would directly report to the central government, and just like the on-going

decentralisation system, with a multiplication of districts that all have presidential appointees, the regional tier would become another 'decentralised centrism' with no power to check the excesses of the central government. Moreover, this parliament-proposed regional tier is too arbitrarily left to the "cooperation" of districts that "wish" to form a regional government. Instead, this study recommends a careful study of the geographical, linguistic and cultural boundaries of the different ethnic groups in the country. In that way, ethnic groups that can stand on their own, and smaller groups with similar cultures that bind them together, even if they speak different dialects, can be identified. Demographic and geographical issues aside, the balance of natural resources must also be thoroughly studied. It is only a meticulous and delicate balance of cultural proximity and natural resource distribution that will ensure meaningful cultural-political autonomy and sustainable socio-economic development for the regional-ethnic federal states.

6.4 Conclusion

All in all, the post-colonial state and its nation-building projects are viewed as failures by most respondents in this study. Post-independence leaders are also accused of personalizing power to the expense of the cultural, economic and political ambitions of the various ethnicities of Uganda. The loyalty of the people at the grassroots level of society, as most of the narratives show, is therefore fading away from the state to traditional authorities such as monarchies and chieftainships. These have been depicted in this study as being capable of playing an active role in addressing three central issues raised in this research:

First and foremost, a federation of tribes has been depicted as good for the identity of the various ethnic groups that make up Uganda. Ethnically-based federalism has been widely predicted as one way of empowering people in their traditional institutions and enabling them to play a decisive role in economic and political development. Leaders in ethnically-based federal units would presumably have their principal areas at heart, and would steer these areas to provide a safe accommodation of ethnic diversity in a democratic state.

Secondly, ethnic federalism has also been seen as a means of fighting the pronounced social, economic, political and cultural inequalities that have inevitably become the defining feature of the divisive, cleavage-driven post-independence state. It is true that many 'sceptic' voices and others 'opposed' to federalism have cited the natural and historical inequality of the tribal areas as the main argument against the relevance and practicality of federating tribes. However, it is also evident from the views of most respondents that federalism as a power-sharing instrument would ensure a fairer distribution of national resources with each and every customary institution getting their proportionally fair share irrespective of their political allegiance or even ethnic relationship to the executive.

Thirdly, federalism has been linked to the possibility of good governance and accountability to the people. In the present state, as many respondents complained, local leaders are only accountable to the appointing authority. As a result, local government bureaucracies are detached and uninvolved in local affairs even though they get the funds as they are channelled down in an outward and upward looking patronage system. Leadership and political offices have come to be equated to "eating" from the

national coffers as long as the leader pledges allegiance to the appointing authority. People at the grassroots have expressed hope that unlike the bureaucratic elite who are intent on entrenching an upward-looking patrimonial system, the customary institutions can take into account their needs and coherence as traditional-bound communities. They have a burning desire to fight poverty and improve their lives and those of their children, but they are frustrated by the high levels of corruption, the politicization of power and all forms of administration, and the inaccessibility of the most essential of human necessities.

Finally, with the risk of sounding a bit too ambitious, I would like to hope that this study in the grassroots perceptions of the role of traditional authorities in multi-ethnic societies has implications for the wider world. In many multi-ethnic countries, particularly in Africa, practices of poor governance and HIs are still widespread. These practices and inequalities are almost always overseen by hegemonic, centrist governments, and they have sometimes been associated with ethnic violence. A look into the grassroots perceptions of what can be done in Uganda to prevent needless tragedy and ensure peace, development, and equity can be a message for Africa and the wider world. As a matter of fact, the emerging dynamics of devolution are not only a Ugandan phenomenon; for Uganda's cultural, socio-economic and political HIs are microcosmic of other multi-ethnic societies. The relative advantage of federalism as a model of governance in Uganda, as predicted in this study can, therefore, also be a microcosmic answer to a worldwide problem.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PEOPLE IN THEIR 50s and 60s

A. OPENER

1. Uganda has many traditional, tribal power bases and administrative districts. Where are you originally from?

B. EVENT QUESTIONS (Chronologies, relationships and reactions)

1. What do you know about the events around independence and the subsequent positions of Uganda's regional, tribal, power bases and administrative districts?

2. What do you know about the 1967 constitutional crisis?

3. How old were you when the kingdoms were restored in 1993?

C. PERCEPTIVE QUESTIONS

1. How do you evaluate the colonial legacy in relation to the regional power bases?

2. How do you evaluate the post-independence governments' legacy in relation to the regional power bases?

3. Could you talk me through your understanding of the current position of Uganda's regional, tribal kingdoms and administrative districts?

4. Is your own tribal power base of interest to you?

5. Is your own regional-powerbase relevant to you and your life?
a) Culturally
b) Politically
c) Economically

6. Would you support the idea of the federation of tribes in Uganda?

1. Where do you see the tribal areas (e.g. the traditional kingdoms and chieftainships of Uganda in 10-20 years? Is ethnic federalism a possibility soon, or later?

7. Where do you see Buganda in particular in 10-20 years?

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PEOPLE IN THEIR 20s and 30s

A. OPENER
1. Uganda has many traditional, tribal power bases, administrative districts. Where are   you originally from?

B. EVENT QUESTIONS (Chronologies, relationships and reactions)
1. Can you tell me what you know about the events in history that brought these tribes together into one Uganda?
2. What do you know about the events around independence and the subsequent positions of Uganda's regional, tribal power bases and administrative districts?
3. What do you know about the 1967 constitutional crisis?
4. How old were you when the kingdoms were restored in 1993?
5. What do you know about the history of kingdoms and tribal power bases in Uganda?

C. PERCEPTIVE QUESTIONS
2. How do you evaluate the colonial legacy in relation to the regional power bases?
3. How do you evaluate the post-independence governments' legacy in relation to the regional power bases?
4. Could you talk me through your understanding of the current position of Uganda's regional, tribal, power bases and administrative districts?
5. Is your own regional -power base of interest to you?
6. Is your own regional-powerbase relevant to you and your life?
   a) Culturally

b) Politically

c) Economically?

7. Would you support the idea of the federation of tribes in Uganda?

8. Where do you see the tribal areas (e.g. the traditional kingdoms and chieftainships) of Uganda in 10-20 years? Is ethnic federalism a possibility soon, or later?

9. Where do you see Buganda in particular in 10-20 years?