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## Editor's Desk

Like the previous years, the 14th Annual Issue of the Jadavpur Journal of International Relations contains an array of articles of varied interests. A wide-ranging academic scrutiny from analytical pieces on broad themes of foreign policy to explorations into country-specific local concerns, from local governance to Indian politics, have found their way into this volume, which we believe, will attract critical appreciation from the readers. JJIR remains a platform of a widely diverse set of scholars who bring very different perspectives and commitments within a single volume. The journal also remains open to various kinds of publications that cut across various themes of both International Relations and Political Science. Publishing an academic journal involves numerous challenges and involves coordinated action on the part of many. It is believed in that this process some errors would invariably escape the best of vigilance on our part. We have, like previous issues, subjected all writings to stringent editorial checks and several rounds of modifications following referee's comments. It remains our endeavour to publish quality material in JJIR, and we hope that our effort is justified if the journal receives appreciation from its readers.



# Traditional/Cultural Institutions in Uganda's Democratic Transition, Political Stability and Nation Development : A Case of Buganda

Murindwa Rutanga\*

As I write this article, the Toro Kingdom is celebrating its King's becoming eighteen years old; the Buganda Kingdom has been militarily bruised in its fight for federalism (federo) of 1962 and it is now mourning the burning of the building covering four graves of its last Kings at Kasubi; the Bunyoro Kingdom is struggling to have shares in the oil wealth in its territory; the Busoga Kingdom is locked in succession battles in court and the prince of Ankore who has been engaged in fruitless struggles for the throne has threatened to appeal to the Constitutional Court over the matter. While a section of Ugandans see these kingdoms being developmental and uniting, others see them being parasitic, useless and divisive. The triple tragedy that befell Uganda in early March has helped to shed light on these issues and the national and regional integration project. Buganda's response to the national tragedies involving other peoples vis-à-vis its reactions when the structure covering the graves of the late kings caught fire plus the physical attacks on the fire brigade, on the security forces, on the president of Uganda and on non-Buganda that tried to go to the site do reveal the averseness of kingdoms in the nationalist project.

## Introduction

Peoples in territories that the British colonialists invaded and conquered to create Uganda in 1894 had attained varying levels of socio-economic and political development. Societies like Buganda, Bunyoro, Nkore, Mpororo, Buhweiju and Igara had highly developed state and administrative structures, with long histories and genealogies. The common denominator of societies with states was the exploitation of social surplus by the state and the ruling class from the subjects and the surrounding areas through raids. In other areas, states were either still in nascent formation or people were still living isolated lives under household and/or clan heads, councils of elders, etc. People without states had not attained any central authority.

The British colonialists defeated them, disorganised and reorganised them as part of the larger colonial project to establish control over them and access their resources. While the colonialists retained some of those

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tates after defeating them and subduing them to British capitalist interests, they either destroyed some, merged others or they created new ones. The kingdoms of Buganda and Ankore fell in the first category while the kingdoms of Bunyoro, Buhweju and Igara were in the second one. Captain Hurston noted in his Diary the British scorched earth policy in Bunyoro - to burn houses of Banyoro, destroy their crops and cut down their banana plantations. Much of Bunyoro's land was then gifted to the Buganda Kingdom and it became known as the Lost Counties. These included Buyaga, Bugangaizzi and Buruuli. Toro was created into a kingdom for a runaway prince from Bunyoro Kingdom. The catastrophe that befell the Apororo Kingdom was more complex. The kingdom was divided amongst the three imperialist powers in the region - Belgium, Germany and England. Thus, the subsequent developments to the 1900 Buganda Agreement transformed the surviving kingdoms into powerless monarchical institutions.

These kings were transformed into colonial subjects. From then, they had to avoid being deposed, dismissed, deported or killed by being submissive, docile, cooperative, non-rebellious, conformist, obsequious and obedient. Colonisation became characterised by a wave of repetitive enthronement of kings by the colonial authorities. Whichever king that failed to conform to the colonial dictates would be unceremoniously deposed and replaced by a baby king. Within a short time, baby kingship became a very handy colonial technology of power. This enabled the colonialists to rule through handpicked regents from local collaborators. The colonial object of baby kingship was to continue duping people that they were still saving a king. The colonialists harnessed this stratagem to enforce their demands after depriving the *indigenes* of the remaining powers. This transformed kingdoms into apolitical collaborative institutions in the service of foreign interests. This *modus vivendi* obtained, albeit with modifications till the arduous struggles by Africans yielded political independence on October 9, 1962.

When Uganda got political independence, irreconcilable and antagonistic contradictions emerged between the central government and the Buganda Kingdom over the Lost Counties and it ended in the 1966 battle between the two. The central government then abolished the kingdoms and declared republicanism over Uganda. Debates on the restoration of kingdoms gradually died out as if they were inconsequential until when the National Resistance Army Council at Gulu resolved to restore them in 1991. The National Resistance Council (NRC) - the then legislative arm of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) - enacted a law in 1993 to restore all of them, save for the *Obugabe* of Ankore. However, there were sharp contestations

over their hurried restoration. People questioned their relevance and functionalities. They reflected on their divisive and parochial character vis-à-vis the nationalist project, governance and democracy.

Since then, there have been continued struggles between the Buganda Kingdom and the NRM government. While the NRM wants to containerise them into exclusively cultural domains and exact gratitude from them, the Buganda Kingdom has through its *Lukiiko* (Parliament) been demanding for a return to the 1962 federal status (*federo*) and privileges. Its demands include land, economic, political, fiscal, administrative, legislative and economic powers. The 1962 Constitution had given Buganda a privileged status over all the other kingdoms and non-kingdom areas. This constituted a new challenge to the Ugandan state of whether to allow the creation of a strong political Buganda state within the Ugandan state or not. It is this type of politics that has been causing crises for modern states. Buganda has decided to challenge the Ugandan state head on. It has challenged the NRM's two proposed land reforms. One aimed to regulate the landlord-tenant agrarian relations while the second one was on the upgrading of Kampala City to international standards. The Buganda *Lukiiko* was bold enough to instruct the NRM government to remove its government from Buganda land on July 19, 2009.

The media of the kingdom have opened spirited attacks on the NRM and organised civil disobedience. These resulted in the recent violent and fatal ethnicised riots that covered most of Buganda. The state had to mobilise enormous resources to put the riots down, and put in place new measures to control them. The most recent challenges have been over the burning down of the Kasubi Tombs - the burial sites of the *Kabakas*. This led to suspicions, threats and weeping of the *Kabaka* in public. The Buganda Kingdom then declared a week of mourning for the burnt tombs and the mourning ended with prayers at the site. This article analyses these developments and the consequences of this acrimonious relationship between Buganda and Uganda.

### *Events Which Led to the Abolition of Kingdoms*

The seeds of destruction of these kingdoms had actually been sown right from the 1900 Buganda Agreement which was signed between Buganda and Johnston on behalf of England. These seeds then grew and expanded during the colonial period. They were then transplanted into the 1962 Constitution. The departing British colonialists imposed on the newly independent Ugandan state an unworkable, untenable and unimplementable constitution. This constitution singled out Buganda from all the other



kingdoms and districts and it granted it a federal status. Buganda was granted excessive political, legal and administrative powers and economic privileges independent of the central government. It controlled public services, local government and its public debt. It had powers of taxation and the central government had to give it grants. It had its own court system, and a police force which was under the control of the Uganda Inspector General of Police. The constitution allowed it powers to select indirectly its 21 representatives to the National Assembly. The Central Government had to have the support of two thirds of the *Lukiiko* to change any of these.<sup>6</sup> This privileged Buganda over Uganda and it would not last for long.

Those constitutional trappings aimed at blinding Buganda from transcending the nationality confines and neo-colonial pitfalls which were embedded within that constitutional arrangement. This is the Buganda State which Uganda abolished in 1966 and is the one currently being agitated for under the *federo* project. These privileges contrasted sharply with other kingdoms which were granted semi-federal status. For instance, the Western Kingdoms and Busoga Act of 1963 required that the Minister of Regional Administration of the Central Government had first to approve all bills before presenting them to the Kingdoms' assemblies. Worse still, non-kingdom areas were to be ruled directly by the central government.

One of the trickiest and most problematic aspects in this transfer of power was the issue of self-determination for the people in the Lost Counties. They were to vote in a referendum on October 9, 1964 and decide whether to go back to Bunyoro or remain in Buganda. This referendum was called by the Uganda Order in Council of 1962. These people had lived under crude exploitation of the *Kabaka* and the Baganda chiefly landlords without any political or legal protection throughout the colonial period. They had joined UPC and overwhelmingly voted for it in 1962 with the hope that it would liberate them from the oppression, humiliation and exploitation of Baganda landlords. Incidentally, these were people who had a very glorious history of military successes prior to colonial invasion. That history continued to rekindle in them nationalist thoughts.

On its part, UPC's obsession for power hindered it from checking the consequences of its actions. In the political alliance between the *Kabaka Yekka* (KY) and UPC, the *Kabaka* of Buganda became the constitutional President of Uganda while the UPC President became the Executive Prime Minister of Uganda. This was because UPC and KY had come to power through an alliance between the two. This would later give rise to sharp conflictual politics which was characterised by duplicity, manoeuvrability, threats and bloodshed. Being a ruling party without a base in Buganda -

the seat of power - UPC had to strengthen its socio-political and economic base outside Buganda. This had to be done at the expense of its alliance with KY. That was why it had to insist on the 1964 referendum. Its ultimate goal was to undermine and weaken Buganda economically and politically since most of the resources and tax revenue in Buganda came from this contested region. They are these reasons which explain why the *Kabaka* made fruitless efforts to block this plebiscite. These included protesting to UPC, resettling 4,000 Baganda families in the contested counties with a demand that they be allowed to vote. When the High Court overruled this, he resorted to intimidation and coercion at micro level. He took 8,000 Baganda ex-servicemen on a hunting expedition in the Lost Counties and he shot nine Banyoro men in a market place one morning. However, all these failed to yield the intended results. The referendum was conducted and 75 percent voted in favour of returning to Bunyoro.<sup>7</sup>

Another cause of the 1966 crisis stemmed from the central government's retention of money which it collected in form of taxes from non-Africans as part of the annual grant to the Buganda Government. The Buganda *Lukiiko* appealed to the Privy Council in London and the latter entered judgment in favour of Buganda but the central government maintained its position. Faced with the increasing estrangement with UPC and the latter's increasing strength and power in the country, the *Kabaka* responded by disbanding the KY. He instructed the members to join UPC and expand the reaction against the UPC countrywide.

This was done and KY won all the UPC party offices in the Buganda UPC branch during the 1966 Party elections. Dr. Lumu, a former minister in the Buganda Kingdom became the chairman of the UPC branch within Buganda.<sup>8</sup> KY operated within the UPC party until when it fomented an anti-Obote faction within parliament. In 1966, it attempted to form a parliamentary coup against him by accusing him of giving logistical and human support to the Lumumbist forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They levelled corruption charges against Obote over the confiscation of money captured during the Congo conflict for personal use. It was when they convened to appoint a parliamentary commission of enquiry and force the government to resign that Obote arrested five of his cabinet ministers. These developments led the Buganda *Lukiiko* to issue and ultimatum to the central government without first gauging the kingdom's capacity to enforce it. It instructed Obote to remove his government from Buganda's soil by May 30, 1966. Having been preparing for this showdown, he responded with coercive instruments. The Uganda Army attacked the Buganda Kingdom, defeated it and forced the *Kabaka* to flee to England. Obote declared a state of emergency, abolished the kingdoms and he



introduced a republican constitution. This effaced Buganda's federal powers and feudal privileges; and it erased Buganda's financial and political autonomy.<sup>9</sup>

### *Debate on Restoration of Kingdoms after the 1971 Military Coup*

When the military overthrew Obote's government on January 25, 1971, Baganda monarchists considered it the right occasion for restoring Buganda's Kingdom and its lost glory. When they therefore asked for the restoration of the kingdom, the military regime under Idi Amin decided to appease them by bringing back the *enjole* (remains) of Kabaka Muteesa II from London and bury them. Amin's political aim was to popularise and hegemonise his rule. He however refused to entertain their demand for the restoration of the kingdoms.

A number of questions call for deeper reflection if one is to grasp the role of these institutions in contemporary Uganda. Can the NRM – a movement which shot its way to power through an arduous five-year guerrilla movement in the Luwero forests readily self-destruct by relinquishing power to any other contenders for power? Why did it restore cultural institutions? How have cultural institutions operated and how have they been relating with political parties under multipartyism? How free and independent are they from manipulations, cajoling and coercion by the ruling NRM and other contending political forces? Given that they were restored by the NRM, what is the possibility of their survival without their restorer? If they existed, is the fate of the two categories of states intertwined? Given the inherent contradictions between monarchism, democracy and capitalism, what are the possibilities of dynamising and democratising cultural institutions with transformative and progressive possibilities? What has been the effect of their long absence since their abolition of about three decades on the population? Could their revival sow seeds of ethnicisation, power rivalry and conflicts in conformity with Livio Sansone's scepticism about any intrinsic liberating and emancipatory possibilities in political mobilisation around ethnic identity?<sup>10</sup>

In his address to the nation against the restoration of *Obugabe* (kingdom of Ankore), Museveni succinctly declared that he was the *Sebagabe*.<sup>11</sup> This was not light talk. He had been responsible for their reinvention, packaging and marketing after convincing the National Resistance Army Council seated at Gulu in 1991 to make the 64<sup>th</sup> pronouncement on the matter.<sup>12</sup> The intriguing question is why then and why by the then 'revolutionary' NRM. Their explanations lie in NRM's political calculations.

The NRM had interest in reinventing them for its own political agenda.

It needed them for mobilisation of political support for it, guarantee its smooth ruling and longevity. While it had established its hegemony in the larger part of the country, largely through ideological work and resistance council system, it still understood very clearly that it needed to maintain popular support if it had to retain political power. It was facing mounting political pressures and economic challenges in the country. These included negative effects of the structural adjustment problems (SAPs), opposition parties, the press, youth and the imperialists. Opposition groups were lobbying the donors to force the NRM to open up political space for free political organization and competition. It therefore saw the solution being in resurrecting the monarchical institutions in Uganda and even creating conditions for the rise of new ones.

Its political calculation was that the restored kings would mobilise mass support in their kingdoms for NRM's continued political support. They would have to do that as their political fate would be intertwined with its own. Popular support was crucial for the NRM, given that Uganda was heavily indebted to the western financial institutions and states. Monarchical institutions would thus enable it to hegemonise and consolidate its rule in the country.<sup>13</sup> Another possible reason is that NRM could have done all these in a hurried manner in order to gain political capital by projecting itself as the champion for kingdoms. In that case, its object would be to gain praises for bypassing the ongoing constitutional making process.

The country was increasingly feeling the ravages of structural adjustment problems (SAPs) and the accompanying conditionalities, plus the shifty positions and unreliability of donors. The restored kingdoms would therefore constitute a safety valve for it. What it needed to ensure was to preclude them from the political domain, the way it had done to the other political contenders, including the old political parties like DP, UPC, the Conservative Party (CP) and the Uganda Patriotic Front (UPM). It would retain kingdoms as its preserve by defining them legally and constitutionally as traditional/cultural institutions. This would bar them constitutionally from making any political claims. On seeing the benefits from these fossilised institutions, it created conditions that allowed even people from non-kingdom areas to establish kingdoms. This monarchical project became known as the *Ebyaffe* (Our property) politics.

They were mainly these considerations which guided the NRC to amend the 1967 constitution in favour of the kingdoms. The NRM would soon transform itself from a movement form of government to multi-partyism. What was conspicuous to these developments was the absence of debates and discussions on these issues. This is well explained by Michel Foucault (1991) when discussing the importance of tactics and strategies instead of



laws. It was reconfirmed by Museveni in 2004 over the *Obugabe* – the Kingdom of Ankore. He compared laws with butter. He explained that while butter was for softening the bread, bread could be eaten without the butter but that butter could not be eaten alone. Analogously, while laws facilitated politics, political actions could be undertaken without laws. Thus, the constitution would have to be amended to suit the interests of the ruling NRM and its allies.

NRM was aware that the largest section of the Ugandan population would reject it. A section of Ugandans rejected kingdoms basing on the horrendous historical memories. This was well-informed by the anti-kingdom memorandum to Amin. Elders from Ankore presented a memorandum to Amin in 1971, supporting his government stand on kingdoms. They argued that whereas abolition of kingdoms had guaranteed national unity, reviving them would resurrect divisive, sectarian and factional politics, plus undesirable impositions like indirect taxation. They castigated monarchists for undesirable, anti-nationalist tendencies of divided loyalty between their kings and the central government. They therefore appealed to Amin not to entertain any monarchical demands and tendencies that could divide the population. They reasoned that the military government needed time to consolidate its position and carry out the programme of re-organisation unimpeded so as to develop Uganda into a strong and united sovereign nation. They argued that the country lacked resources to waste on restoring kingdoms as it was facing a very heavy deficit. They wanted it to break with the past, march forward to freedom and progress by putting all its efforts on the country's economic and social reforms for the benefit of all Ugandans instead of wasting them on a few individual kings.<sup>14</sup> This situation was maintained until when NRM revived the kingdoms in 1993. Since then, the anti-monarchy fears have become a reality and they are threatening to wreck the country as will be discussed later.

On their part, the youth and the educated did not see the relevance of monarchies in contemporary times. Some saw them as nuisances and stumbling blocks to development. Many had heard or read of dreadful atrocities and excesses by monarchies in the interlacustrine region and other parts of Africa, in Asia and Europe. The beneficiaries of the spoils of the abolished monarchical institutions - through land acquisition and other property - would also oppose their restitution for personal interests. There were also some people who wanted a peaceful and united Uganda. They did not want to be bothered at all by obsolete, extinct, irrelevant and parasitic institutions that would make some people assume superiority complexes over others though without any relevance to people's aspirations in modernity and development.

Being apprehensive of possibilities of a constellation of these forces, it therefore had to use its *locus* and political muscle to dictate the political process and guarantee a steady funding. The non-transparency and potential dangers of this restoration process of monarchies were exposed through the media. The Monitor Newspaper castigated the NRM and *Baganda* monarchists for machinations, scheming and manoeuvrability for political advantage in this restoration project of monarchies while thinking that the other party was blind to those machinations. It argued that the two parties were reaping heartbreak and bitterness which they had sown.

There is no open honest discussion on the question of federalism. However, if the leaders encouraged a more accommodating approach, a middle ground in which everyone gets something will emerge. But as long as the NRM wants to play on the gratitude the Baganda feel for the little they have got to beat its other opponents like the multi-partyists; and as long as Buganda thinks its support is so vital for the NRM that if the movement lost it, it would crumble, then the winner will be the stronger of the two. And he will win by force. That is the last thing this country needs.<sup>15</sup>

Given that this political project was of mutuality to both parties, the kingdoms became dependent on the NRM government not only for historical existence but also for financial and security resources. Consequently, this tended to deny them independent existence. They faced a dependence problem in terms of history, resources and existence. Their fears stemmed from the resurrection of multiparty democracy, which brought back UPC - their historical enemy. UPC had possibilities of resuming political power if they did not take steps to block it.

### ***Federo: Buganda's Demand for a Political Kingdom***

Suspicious and fears against the Buganda Kingdom became a reality when the Baganda monarchists came to the open and began to agitate for the restoration of Buganda's 1962 constitutional federal status (*federo*). The agitation for *federo* gradually gained ground and it became a Buganda nationality project, with ethnicised anti-nationalist demands and ideology, pushing towards secession. Overtime, it developed into a hot demand by Buganda. Its proponents began dismissing NRM's restoration of non-political traditional/cultural institutions as *Ebyoya byanswa* (plucked wings of grasshoppers or useless). They contested the July 1993 Statute which revived them as purely cultural institutions, devoid of any political,



administrative and fiscal powers. They began to demand that Buganda had to be given all powers and property which the colonialists gave it at independence.

Buganda began by demanding for a political kingdom under the disguise of a strong cultural institution. Its proponents depicted monarchies as developmental, progressive and unifying. They swore to fight for *federo* at whatever cost. This was articulated by *Kabaka* Mutebi II, just a year after his coronation. He turned round and dismissed restoration of the *Kabakaship* without a geographical kingdom as meaningless. He reasoned that building of a united Uganda could not be at the expense of a united Buganda. He therefore called upon all Constituent Assembly (CA) delegates from Buganda to fight for the restoration of a federal status for Buganda and consolidate *kabakaship* with a geographical region for its jurisdiction.<sup>16</sup> He argued that this had to be done to avoid blames by future generations for restoring a meaningless and powerless monarchy. The problem with this demand was that it was in essence demanding for the pre-colonial kingdom status, which would create a strong state within a state.

Given the turbulent political history of Uganda, this *nouveau* demand was likely to threaten the existing political balance, plus these cultural institutions' existence, and the flow of resources from the centre for their support. Their situation is complicated by their lack of any form of taxation powers and other alternative sources of resources for their survival and development. They lack internal dynamism, acumen and entrepreneurial skills. Tradition debars *kabaka* from any form of work, business or trade. These are some of the problems which explain why many of the kingdoms in Uganda have not been enthusiastic to support the transition to multiparty democracy and the push for regime change or for separatism as Buganda has been doing. To many of them, the only reliable solidarity has been demonstrated by the NRM. Even during the riots in Buganda and after the recent burning of the Kasubi tombs, Museveni continued searching for ways of retaining the kingdoms while containerising the Buganda Kingdom instead of demolishing them. In other words, his stand on the kingdoms has been proved by time.

Incidentally, Buganda's rising demand for *federo* followed the pattern which Odoki Kassidis and Tumwine-Ruhemba had predicted at the time when the proposal for the restoration of the Buganda Kingdom was being initiated. Odoki Kassidis had argued;

Today, they demanded the restoration of their traditional rulers and properties. And their demands have been fulfilled. Tomorrow, they shall demand for their political and administrative powers to enable them rule and service their institutions. And there shall be their

political and administrative powers. Next, they shall demand independence. And there shall be their independence. And there we shall have reached the mature age of *Ebyaffe*.<sup>17</sup>

In the same way, Tumwine-Ruhemba used the analogy of the mischievous proverbial camel to warn Ugandans of how Buganda's incessant agitation for *federo* if unchecked had destructive possibilities for Uganda at the expense of Buganda. The proverbial camel had requested its master to allow it put its head inside his tent and shelter if from cold outside. The master granted the request and all its other subsequent ones of entering its other parts until when it was completely inside. It then kicked the master out of the tent. He concluded that the chaos in Uganda had arisen from *Kabaka's* attempts to chase Obote's government from Buganda's soil. He went on to elaborate how Baganda had requested the NRM very kindly for the restoration of their king and this was granted. But Buganda could not be satisfied with being given half a kingdom and it therefore demanded for a political one. He likened NRM to a proverbial man who could not complain about visits by lizards after he had brought home ant-infested faggots.<sup>18</sup> They had to 'Beware of *Federo*.' He reminded the *Kabaka* how it was *federo* that had led to the abolition of the Buganda Kingdom and Muteesa's (Mutebi's father) subsequent death. He warned the *Kabaka* against archaic elderly advice of making whatever demands.

Another contributor to the debate blamed NRM for being lured to open a can of worms for Uganda by engaging in opportunistic with Buganda. He castigated NRM's subsequent defence for decentralisation versus federalism on the ground that NRM would not sacrifice the principle of decentralisation at the altar of opportunism. He elaborated how Ugandans knew that federalism had been buried in 1966 when Obote made Uganda a republic. He blamed NRM for opportunism of bringing back federalism and the unrest that accompanied it by trying to survive on the good will of Baganda. He concluded that NRM had no right to condemn federalism while it was the one that had stirred the problems.<sup>19</sup>

Though NRM refused to heed such multiple early warnings, they soon became true as it faced incessant demands for *federo*. These demands came to fruition through political and social paralysis and deaths of people plus increased mistrust and hatred. The following section explores how Buganda's ethnicised antithetical and anti-historical efforts to recreate the past and relive it have enormous potentials of bloodletting and national destruction.

#### *Clash between Nationalism and Federalism*

A year after the restoration of the *Kabakaship*, two NRM senior Cabinet



Ministers hailing from Buganda were accused of threatening that whoever opposed a federal system of government would have to leave the country. A third NRM Senior Cabinet Minister from the same region threatened the CA committee that Baganda would take up arms if the constitution failed to grant *federo* to Buganda.<sup>20</sup> Though erroneous and frightening, these views were basically the reigning ideas in Buganda. This brought out a rising nationality consciousness that equated Buganda with Uganda. Ugandans hailing from outside Buganda became apprehensive of a possible return to the 1966 constitutional crisis if Ugandans did not come to a peaceful settlement over *federo*.<sup>21</sup>

On his part, Museveni came face to face with *federo* demands during the 10<sup>th</sup> coronation anniversary of *Kabaka Mutebi II* on August 2, 2003. The then *katikkiro* (Buganda's Prime Minister) asked Museveni to grant Buganda *federo*; and not to refer the Land Bill back to parliament as there were a lot of rumours surrounding it. Museveni told Buganda that government would review the situation along the way. He informed them that he had set up a Constitutional Review Commission to collect views from the population and that it had already received proposals from Buganda.<sup>22</sup>

Though the *federo* project was later defeated in the CA, it continued simmering. Some *Baganda* pro-monarchists started a guerrilla movement headed by Major Itongwa but it was defeated. The *federo* debate returned to the centre stage during the multiparty elections. It first came out during the Third Term or *ekisanja* politics. This was a new political project to return Museveni to power for the third term since the promulgation of the new Constitution in 1995. The NRM had to ally with Buganda in order to get support against FDC in the 2006 national presidential, parliamentary and Local Council elections.

### ***Buganda's Rejection of Government's Land Reforms***

In 1998, Parliament enacted a Land Act to amend Article 237 of the Constitution so as to vest land in the state instead of the citizens. Its proclaimed object was to enable tenants by occupancy to acquire titles for the land which they were occupying. It aimed to harmonise relations between landlords and tenants especially on *Mailo* (square miles) of land in Buganda. The new law gave powers to the Minister of Lands to stop illegal land evictions using administrative, Police, landlords and Land Committee Measures.

Despite its seemingly good intentions of stabilising agrarian relations, this Land Act resulted in a stand-off between the NRM and Baganda

landlords. The latter got support from opposition politicians to turn law on its head and use it to mobilise the landless tenants and peasants against it. They deliberately (mis)interpreted it as being aimed at oppressing all Baganda. This transformed this conflict to appear as if it was Uganda versus Buganda. The opposition politicians capitalised on this issue with the object of demonising and isolating NRM from Buganda. In pursuit of this, the leader of DP alleged that Museveni was a *Muchwezi* with a grand plan of creating a *Chwezi* Empire by purchasing land to settle *Balaalo* (pastoralists) of his ethnic group (Sic). He cited Mukono District as a case in point where he claimed that Museveni had purchased land in 2004 to settle his relatives. He warned of a genocide from unabated land sales. The spread and momentum of their mobilisation against this Act exposed NRM's political failure to reach the intended beneficiaries of this Act.<sup>23</sup> All these developments blocked the NRM's efforts to implement it. They confirmed Machiavelli's warning against landlords as useless parasites and enemies of a republic that had to be done away with.<sup>24</sup>

On 24 June 2009, government tabled to parliament the Kampala Capital City Bill. Its intention was to expand the boundaries of Kampala City to include parts of the districts of Wakiso, Mpigi and Mukono. This was in line with the 1995 Constitution of Uganda which had declared Kampala the international Capital City of Uganda.

The Buganda *Lukiiko* categorically rejected the Bill on July 19, 2009 and it asked the Central government to relocate the Capital City from Buganda land to any other part of Uganda, where it would develop it to international standards, with better infrastructure and facilities. It wanted Kampala to remain only as the commercial city.<sup>25</sup> The NRM had not planned for this. It had all along hoped for an apolitical monarchy. Yet, it was now faced with a hostile, radicalised anti-NRM kingdom, ready to push it out of Buganda. By this was the fourth time Buganda was pushing for secession from Uganda, the earlier ones having been in 1953, 1960 and 1966.

The new Buganda position had potentials of leading to bloody consequences similar to those of 1966 as Bidandi had warned Buganda against in February 2008. He had written to the *katikkiro*, warning Buganda of a boiling sinister situation. He warned it against associating with statements made by highly placed politicians as they would be misunderstood by Museveni as being aimed at alienating him from the people of Buganda. He also warned Buganda against ethnicity by explaining that it could not exist without Uganda the way Uganda could not do without Buganda or any other region. He requested the *katikkiro* to clear an impression infested with politicians in sheep's skin, just advancing interests



of their political parties. Incidentally, the *Katikkiro* ignored this timely advice.<sup>26</sup> The *Lukiiko* had over time become a mouthpiece of the opposition parties in Uganda. As such, claims made by Buganda would have to be understood by taking into account the political demands of the opposition parties. Opposition parties continued to use the Buganda Kingdom to foster their political project. This was demonstrated by the guidance of Buganda's Attorney General to the *Lukiiko*. He was also the defence Lawyer of FDC and a member of the FDC Executive Committee.

He interpreted the Bill as NRM's latest ploy to frustrate Buganda's hopes for *federo*, the return of Buganda's stolen land and other property. He explained that it aimed 'at usurping Buganda's rights and control of a large chunk of its prime territory from its key four counties without consensus or compensation. He linked this to Buganda's previous loss of Bugangayizi and Buyaga, and the impending loss of Buruli and Bugerere counties. He concluded that NRM was gradually decimating Buganda while *Baganda* were watching. He saw the Bill and the one of 2007 being aimed at destroying Buganda's cultural heritage and economic prosperity. He warned of 'dire consequences' if government continued with the plan.<sup>27</sup>

His submission helped to infuriate and radicalise the *Lukiiko*. The *Lukiiko* therefore rejected DP's earlier proposal for a referendum on this Bill. While it gave the excuse that it did not trust the Electoral Commission, the fact was that it actually feared losing the vote as the tenants could not vote against their own interests. The landed gentry would lose the vote as the law was in favour of the majority - tenants and landless. The Buganda Kingdom used these differences to sound war drums against the law that was meant to benefit the majority of the population.

The *Lukiiko* went further to rule out any talks with the central government that did not include *federo*. It did not want to associate with the state and anything related to it in any way. It condemned the government newspapers - the *New Vision* and *Bukedde* - as enemies of Buganda for publishing an article which alleged that the land title of Eulange - the seat of the Buganda Kingdom - had been mortgaged to a Minister in Central Government over a debt of Shillings One billion.<sup>28</sup> The *katikkiro* dismissed them as fabrications and he attributed them to the enemies of the Buganda Kingdom. It declared their boycott by the *Baganda*. It instructed its radio, the Central Broadcasting Service (CBS), to stop reviewing them, and the Buganda county chiefs to stop promoting activities of Bukedde Newspaper and FM Radio like wrestling competitions. To demonstrate their fighting readiness, the Buganda *Nkobazambogo* Youth inaugurated their enforcement through ceremonial torching of copies of the two newspapers in the presence of the *Lukiiko*.<sup>29</sup>

### *Response of the State*

Faced with those open hostilities, Museveni came out strongly to defend his government's proposal of taking over Kampala. He refuted claims by Buganda's Deputy *katikkiro* that the expansion and administering of Kampala by the Central Government was aimed at removing Kampala from Buganda. He also attacked the *katikkiro* for threatening the government over this bill.<sup>30</sup>

All these demonstrate how NRM's restoration of kingdoms did not provide an occasion for the Buganda Kingdom to hold the country hostage and block any plans for development. The ongoing impasse demonstrated how the national project and democracy were being sacrificed at the altar of Buganda's ethnicised class interests. They had exclusively sectarian and anti-nationalistic characteristics. Contrary to its designs and wishes, NRM was forced to shift from decentralisation at the district level to regionalisation of the tier system. However, the designs seem to be non-existent. The explanation for this was given by Barya and Mukwaya that the NRM had come from the bush to rule and it would not self-destruct. These issues notwithstanding, a combination of Buganda's *federo* project and NRM's *Kisanja* project gave rise to conflictual politics which was riddled with manoeuvrability, ethnic dishonesty and threats.

These developments did demonstrate how cultural institutions were neither nationalistic and democratic nor tolerant and progressive. By their inherent nature of their formation, their interests were bound to remain parochial, internally focused and isolated. They lacked interest and will to push the NRM onto any democratic path as democracy would involve the whole country. This also stemmed from the fact that they were dependent on it for resources, political and legal protection. Their fate and longevity did and still do largely depend on the existence of the NRM and the relationship between the two parties. It provides them grants for their operation and survival. While Buganda has been trying to push for an independent position from the NRM government, it is impossible to see it independent of Uganda. Bidandi had clarified it in 2008.<sup>31</sup> However, Buganda's unarticulated push for *federo* led to a bursting point through bloody riots that started from Kayunga on September 8, 2009 and spread to other urban areas of Buganda. They ended on September 12, 2009 and 32 people died.<sup>32</sup> These were followed a few months later by a mysterious fire which burnt Kasubi Tombs. The following part explains how these developments have deepened the estranged relations between Buganda and Uganda, undermined nationalism and regionalism.



### *Standoff between Buganda Kingdom and the Central Government*

The conflict between Buganda and Uganda stemmed from the Central Government's generosity to kingdoms. It on April 15, 2009 did give the Buganda Kingdom Shs. 350 Million as part of shillings two billion which the President had promised to support Buganda's educative programmes on CBS. He had promised similar financial support to the different kingdoms to support their developmental projects during a radio talk show on CBS. However, opposition members within the *Lukiiko* opposed this offer and the youth threatened to kill the *katikkiro* over it. The explanation for this militant rejection of such hefty money was the fear by the opposition in Kampala that NRM was using that money to influence Buganda for the 2011 elections. They therefore began to boycott the *Lukiiko*.<sup>33</sup> Their action was deeply felt as they constituted the majority in the *Lukiiko*.

The simmering conflict between the NRM Government and the Buganda Kingdom came to a head over Kayunga District on September 7, 2009. This was three days before the *Kabaka's* scheduled visit to that district. The *Banyala*, one of the ethnic groups in that district had, under the leadership of Kimeze declared autonomy from Buganda on August 20, 2009. He blocked *Kabaka's* visit and demanded that the *Kabaka* had to get his permission first. The Central Government supported Kimeze's demand and it asked the Buganda Kingdom to call off the visit. Given the belligerent developments in the recent past and the influence from the opposition, the Buganda Kingdom flatly rejected that demand. This was following an earlier occurrence in 2008 where the *Kabaka* had been blocked from visiting Nakasongola district to mark Buganda's 46<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary.

With the new developments, the *Kabaka* responded by criticizing the NRM government for creating chiefdoms in his Kingdom as a measure to weaken it and divide his subjects. This war of words constituted a firm foundation for the subsequent three-day militant and bloody urban confrontation between Buganda and Uganda. The question at the heart of these conflicts to be resolved was whether to have a powerful political kingdoms or a united Uganda under the Central Government. This therefore involved possibilities of erasing the Buganda kingdom or Uganda. By the end of the conflict, however, neither of the two possibilities had been resorted to. Instead, many new developments had taken place.

The confrontation started in Kayunga District and the new communicative technology immediately shifted both the conflict and battle field to Kampala City and other pro-Buganda monarchy urban centres in Buganda. The riots began when police blocked the Buganda Kingdom officials from erecting exhibition stalls in preparation to host the *Kabaka*.

This gave rise to spontaneous fighting between police and *Nkobazambogo* Youth. The latter immediately attacked police with stones and tree branches and they burnt old tyres on roads. Police responded with teargas and rubber bullets. These confrontations created insecurity in Kayunga and it brought business to a halt. The rioters beat off the police and chased them away until when police reinforcements arrived. Hundreds of youth were thereafter arrested. Police blocked all major roads leading to Kayunga and it checked all traffic.

On September 9, 2009, Members of Parliament hailing from Buganda walked out of Parliament demanding a statement on *Kabaka's* planned visit to Kayunga.<sup>34</sup> Just on the same day, the Bunyoro Kingdom warned the Buganda Kingdom to keep off the Banyala ethnic group on the ground that they were Banyoro. Bunyoro Kingdom claimed Bugerere, Buyaga, Bugangaizi, Buwekula, Bulemezi, Rugonjo and Buruuli as historically its lands that the British had annexed and gifted to Buganda so as to punish Bunyoro for resisting British imperialism under King Kabalega.<sup>35</sup> On their part, the UPDF Generals wanted Buganda punished. They expressed displeasure with Museveni for initiating and pushing for the restoration of traditional leaders. One of them expressed it in the adage that; 'It is the dog you tame that bites your leg.'<sup>36</sup>

Having defied the government's order, the *katikkiro* led a team of ministers and headed towards Kayunga District the following morning to prepare for the *Kabaka's* scheduled visit. He was scheduled to open a Youth Workshop at Ntenjeru. He and his entourage were however stopped by security forces at Sezibwa Bridge and ordered to go back. It was this incident which set the rumour machine into motion to mobilise monarchists, youth and the opposition in Buganda for militant action.

Grotesque lies, rumours, false reports and other fertile imaginations were skilfully crafted and instantly despatched through FM radios, mobile phones and internet to different audiences. One message with great mobilisation capacity alleged that police had arrested the *katikkiro* while on his way to Kayunga. These electronic messages were calling on Baganda to close shops and go to riot. They achieved their intended effect of instantaneously igniting riots in Kampala. Some FM radio stations even broadcast a confrontational encounter between the *Katikkiro* and the police Deputy Director of Operations at the Sezibwa Bridge.<sup>37</sup>

### *The Riots and the Lessons*

The riots in Kampala started around Kisekka Market in the heart of Kampala, and they spread like *California fires* to other parts of Kampala, Mukono,



Mityana, Wakiso and Masaka. The most riot-affected areas in Kampala included the Old and New Tax Parks, Natete, Nansana, Ndeeba, Kyengera, Kalerwe, Kanyanya, Kasanga, Bakuli, Nakulabye, Katwe, Kasubi, Busega, Bwaise, Najjanakumbi, Kamwokya, Seeta, Kireka and the Kampala-Jinja Highway. These are areas filled with the unemployed youth.

The rioters in the city carried sunglasses and water in plastic bottles in preparation for protecting and washing teargas from their eyes. They pelted vehicles with stones, barricaded roads with logs and huge boulders and they lit bonfires. They threatened motorists and curtailed movement of traffic to the city. They looted and burnt supermarkets, shops, buildings and trucks mainly belonging to Asians and other people hailing from outside Buganda. They burnt a bus, broke glasses of another, molested and injured passengers. Some of them even tried to burn petrol stations.

In some cases, they pulled government officials from vehicles and harassed them. In other cases, they harassed and molested people who looked like *Banyankore* (people from Ankore). Ankore is the region where President Museveni hails from. This was ethnicising violence.<sup>38</sup> They even molested those who failed to 'walk like Buganda' - which meant reciting their genealogies. The situation was not appealing for non-Baganda civilians, who would be beaten as they tried to walk majestically. Being mindful of Uganda's turbulent history, some Asians sought safety at the Central Police Station. Some non-Baganda civilians began to hope for a repeat of the 1966 crisis.

When the riots began, the rioters found the security officers easy targets for physical attack and molestation. This was because the security forces had been instructed to shoot in the air. The rioters therefore took advantage of this laxity to attack and fight them, grab guns from some of them and shoot at them. In one incident, they disarmed four policemen and took the guns away. In another case, they stripped naked a police woman and beat her up. They burnt down Nateete Police Station and 25 vehicles which were parked there. The mayhem brought Kampala city to a halt and it forced shops and offices to close. The USA quickly issued a travel alert to its citizens in Uganda.<sup>39</sup>

In response to the fast spreading mayhem in Kampala City and other towns in Buganda, government responded by switching off five FM radio stations in order to stop their ongoing incitement of ethnicised violence and recruitment of people to join the riots. It had to avoid a repeat of Rwanda's 1994 horrific experience where *Radio Mille Collines* had ideologised ethnicised hatred and guided a successful execution of a horrendous genocide.<sup>40</sup>

The UPDF Generals were quick to realise that the population in Buganda

was getting increasingly rebellious. They identified the need for immediate redress through stern reprisals. The Inspector General of Police immediately invoked Cap 69 of the Penal Code and he instructed police officers to arrest the situation by shooting in self-defence and disable those attacking them and causing mayhem.<sup>41</sup> The state also heavily deployed in Kampala with *Mambas*, the Presidential Guard Brigade, commandos and other heavily armed, combat-hardened soldiers and the *Kiboko* (Whip) Squad. It also recalled thousands of veterans. Another defensive measure by the state was to ban people from walking in groups.<sup>42</sup>

The riots paralysed public transport and prices shot up. Thousands of commuters had to walk home. People downtown moved past the security forces with hands raised to show that they did not mean ill.

By end of the mayhem on September 12, 2009, a total of 32 people had died, and 91 people had been injured. The dead included some security officers. The injured included 13 police officers and the Uganda People's Defence Forces' spokesman. A total of 836 suspects were arrested over the riots and charged in the courts of law with inciting violence and destroying property.<sup>43</sup>

Fire in form of bullets and arson emerged as the main weapon. The security forces monopolised firearms and teargas while the rioters monopolised arson. The rioters harnessed it very effectively to destroy property and block roads. The main targets included property and business of non-Baganda people. The inventory of government property which was destroyed by arson included Nateete Police Station and all the police records there, files, radio calls, exhibits, two police booths, office furniture and office diaries.<sup>44</sup> Destroyed property belonging to civilians included thirty-one motor vehicles, a bus, and a lorry carrying culverts, five motor cycles, kiosks, two supermarkets, a transformer and electric poles. On the whole, property and business worth shillings billions was lost or destroyed.<sup>45</sup> This mayhem therefore compelled the *Kabaka* to cancel his tour to Kayunga and wait for talks with government.

These riots were the most violent in Uganda's recent history in terms of lives and property. They had the highest number of fatalities, casualties and arrests. If compared to the earlier ones, five deaths had occurred in the riots of April 12, 2008; three deaths in the riots of November 16, 2005 and two deaths in the riots of 1992.<sup>46</sup>

Faced with the unexpected negative consequences and losses from the riots, and the negative picture that these events were likely to create on the Buganda Kingdom, the *katikkiro* came out and admitted that the situation had gone out of hand by a group of lumpens who had taken advantage of the situation to loot and cause havoc.<sup>47</sup>



There were some people who reasoned that the *Banyala-Baganda* conflict was a creation of NRM so as to provide NRM with opportunity to punish the unappreciative Buganda Kingdom for hobnobbing with the opposition parties and conniving with foreign enemies of Ugandan like Gaddafi of Libya. Gaddafi was being accused of bringing in hefty foreign money to carry out hate campaigns so as to undermine the Ugandan constitution and overthrow the NRM government. Foreign involvement was revealed during Museveni's address to the nation about the riots. He accused Gaddafi of trying to overthrow the NRM government in revenge for Museveni's opposition to Gaddafi's bid to become the first president of a United States of Africa during the 2007 Summit at Accra, Ghana. Museveni revealed that Gaddafi had overthrown Thabo Mbeki for the same reason and that he wanted to do the same to Museveni through traditional rulers. He disclosed that it was that reason why NRM had blocked Mutebi's visit to Nakasongola. He submitted that government would introduce a law to detail and regulate the activities of traditional rulers in Uganda.<sup>48</sup>

He unwaveringly stressed that the Buganda Kingdom would have to discuss with the *Sabanyala* and Kayunga leaders and agree on the way forward. This however was rejected straight away by the *katikkiro*. The second condition was for the kingdom radio, CBS, to stop negative campaigns against Museveni and the NRM. It had to stop promoting sectarianism and inciting *Baganda* violence against the police, and stop mobilizing listeners for the FDC by telling them to prepare for violence with promises of free fuel by Besigye.

Museveni blamed the riots on the excellent relations between Buganda Kingdom and FDC. He accused the Buganda Kingdom of allowing FDC to hold rallies at Bulange, the seat of the Kingdom. He also blamed the people surrounding the *Kabaka* for making the *Kabaka* inaccessible to everyone including the President. He accused them of making the *Kabaka* refuse to answer Museveni's calls for two consecutive years to discuss those matters. Museveni intoned; 'His Highness the *Kabaka* could not pick calls from the President of Uganda who led the struggle for democracy and restored traditional leaders. The one whose leg you treat uses it to kick you!' He defined this as 'politics of blackmail' which was being employed by the Buganda Kingdom in its quest for political autonomy. He also cited the *Kabaka's* open opposition to the proposed Land Amendment Bill, and the CBS radio's spirited campaigns to defeat that Bill. He cited opposition members like Mayega, Lubega and Namboze who had been using the CBS to spread hate, sectarian campaigns and 'all types of incredible lies' against that Bill, against Museveni and people with long noses.<sup>49</sup> He warned the *Kabaka* to distance himself from those 'Judases' as NRM was an

invincible force, with a long history of successes.

These accusations were reconfirmed by Besigye's call to all Baganda people to engage in civil disobedience against the NRM government by going to Kayunga to defend the *Kabaka*. He promised to provide free transport and free fuel for this. He promised to go since he was one of *Kabaka's* obedient subjects.<sup>50</sup> After the riots had been quelled, Besigye repeated the accusation that it was Museveni who had caused the riots and the consequent deaths.

Faced with these conspiracies and confrontations, the NRM was not ready to give the impression of weaknesses to members of the opposition, to the imperialist west and any other anti-NRM forces elsewhere. This would be creating a foundation for disputing the election results in 2011 and lead to power sharing agreements as had happened in Kenya and Zimbabwe. These reasons do largely explain why NRM had to forcefully stop the *Kabaka's* political tour of the country.

Contrary to the above positions, Barya argues that these riots portrayed Buganda as being more coalesced and agreed, that civil action could yield better results than round table talks. He surmised that the confrontation between Buganda and Uganda had stemmed from the realization that Museveni was not willing to give Buganda any form of autonomy and that his actions suggested that he no longer needed to please the Buganda Kingdom as he could survive politically without their political support.<sup>51</sup> Barya failed to recognize that opposition politics – local and continental – were thriving in the Buganda Kingdom. These left the NRM with no other option but to fight them out militarily.

On her part, the Ugandan Minister of Information attributed the violence and the lawlessness to inflammatory and sectarian broadcasts from the five Buganda FM radio stations that systematically incited the listeners to chaos and destruction. The BC had responded by immediately invoking the electronic Media Act to suspend them. It also suspended the external broadcast of *Ebimeza* (Talk Shows), away from studio premises especially in bars, and it also closed a television talk show – '*Kibazo on Friday*' on WBS. It took these pre-emptive measures to prevent more recruitment for ethnicisation of the riots and through the hate talk that was characterising those FM radios and the TV programme. They would have worsened the situation had that deterrent measure not been implemented. Over time, the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) introduced 'Ground Zero' Programme as a surrogate of the *Ebimeza*. This is broadcast live in the UBC studios

### *Role of Electronic Communicative Technology in the Riots*

Recent studies have exposed the role of local media in ethnicising demands



and conflicts, in fuelling and ideologising, organising and coordinating them. Ethnicising conflicts can release tremendous destructive energies as was evidenced during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and in post-election violence in Kenya and Zimbabwe.<sup>52</sup> They however lack any transformative revolutionary potential for the whole nation.<sup>53</sup>

In terms of mobilisation and organisation, the riots were fuelled by series of rumours and lies which were generated and sent by the organisers by word or mouth, electronic media, internet and mobile phones to mobilise the population. Mobile phone technology is one of the most abundant and unregulated technologies in Uganda. Cell phones, SIM cards and airtime are sold cheaply in every urban setting. Typing and despatching short message services (SMS) on internet to a multitude of recipients is free and has high chances of protecting the sender from police detection. It is handy for anonymity as it is very hard to track the sources of the SMS. The handset is thrown away after despatching the messages in order to avoid police detection and arrest. That largely explains why there was no one among those who sent SMS that was caught or implicated in organising the riots. The messages urged the supporters to continue with the riots. Some SMS talked of government arrests of: - the *Kabaka*, the *katikkiro* and Namboozee, etc. The *katikkiro* tried to dissociate the kingdom from those messages and he appealed to the population to go back to work hard and fight poverty.<sup>54</sup>

The other form of technology which was effectively harnessed to organise the riots was the electronic media. Government's liberalisation of the media had deprived it of monopoly and capacity to control the production and flow of information. Members of civil society and companies owned and controlled FM radios and TVs. They determined what to disseminate, the form of dissemination and language to use. What happened was that some of them were pushing for the *federo* project. They therefore went on crusade to dismantle the NRM. The following seven excerpts therefore do illustrate the role of the media – FM radios and TVs and other modern technologies in ethnicising conflicts, ideologising, fomenting, organizing and coordinating the conflict. The first six excerpts are from private FM radio stations while the seventh one is from the private television station.

- 1) During *Kasibante's* programme on September 10, 2009, the Councillor of Lubaga III called on all his constituents to assemble at Bulange and escort the *Kabaka* to Kayunga. He told them to come well prepared to engage the enemy that might attack the *Kabaka*.<sup>55</sup> He together with the chairperson of the Uganda Young Democrats (UYD) reinforced this with a special announcement on CBS FM stations, calling upon people, especially the youth and well wishers of the *Kabaka* and

Buganda to escort the *Kabaka* to Bugerere during the time of oppression that Buganda was going through.<sup>56</sup> They were to arrive at Bulange on September 11, 2010 and proceed with the *Kabaka* the following day to Bugerere. The announcement requested them to wear canvas shoes and jeans in the event of commotion. It appealed to all Baganda not to go to work that day but instead to go and fight for the throne of Buganda which had been in existence for more than 100 years unlike Uganda which was just 47 years old and the NRM government, which was just 23 years old. It declared that Buganda would live for ever.

One caller appealed to Retired Colonel Besigye, the FDC President to command the opposition and raid state house to oust the dictator. Besigye rang back and urged Baganda to come out and demonstrate that Buganda was not there to be used, even though NRM was using some *Baganda* like the Vice President and Senior Cabinet Ministers to oppose Buganda's quest for *federo*.<sup>57</sup>

- 2) The press review phone-in programme on *Radio Sapientsia* the following day was characterised by calls preaching ethnic struggles. One caller from Kisekka Market said that people were ready to go to Kayunga and die for the *Kabaka*. Another caller quoted *the Observer* which had alleged that Museveni had bought all strong members of parliament to be on his side and defeat the *Kabaka*. She therefore promised to abandon her lectures and go to Kayunga to brave death. Another caller from Mukono surmised that this could be the plan of the NRM government to make history by killing a lot of Baganda at the same spot in Bugerere since Baganda were not going to give up. Another caller from Kibuli told the listeners that the events of the following day would fulfil Museveni's adage that bloodshed leads to peace. He affirmed that they would not fear death as Museveni had already killed many of their people.
- 3) During the *Kalasamanyanzi* Programme on *Radio Two* the same day, the host of the programme told listeners that he had returned from sick leave specifically to fight for the *Kabaka*. He reasoned that though Museveni had been blaming Obote for causing the 1966 crisis, he ended up doing the same. He argued that Museveni's appointment of *Sabanyala* in Bugerere was an attempt to set the precedent for the next Buganda crisis as Bugerere was a well known territory of Buganda.
- 4) On the same day, *Suubi FM* gave updates on the progress of the rioting. The presenters condemned the police for shooting unnecessarily and forcing students who were returning home to flee. A caller from Kawempe claimed that security officers were shooting people with live ammunitions and that they had just killed a person in front of him. He



then called upon people of Kawempe to prepare for the journey to Kayunga the following day as there was free transport at exactly 9:00 a.m. Other callers also urged all Baganda to rise up and fight for the cause of Buganda. They asked all Baganda not to go to work since the *Kabaka* was under arrest and Buganda was in state of doom. One caller declared that whoever dared to point a finger at the *Kabaka* would be attacked with an axe. The host of the Programme called on all Baganda to sing the Buganda Anthem while pondering about its meaning and then leave the choice for action to the people.

- 5) During her programme on *CBS FM*, Nambooze described Uganda as a failed state where all the concerned departments of government had neglected their duties. She described Uganda as a terrain of jungle law where few people with power were eating and making a living while leaving the weak to die. She reasoned that the call for the killing of land owners in Uganda, where the *Kabaka* was the main land owner aimed to was to kill the *Kabaka* under the disguise of killing the landlords. She accused Museveni of using Baganda in government like his Press Secretary to execute his orders of instigating tenants to kill landlords. She warned that Museveni's trick was then to order his officers to arrest the killers.
- 6) The Member of Parliament (MP) for Kampala Central lamented on *Radio Two* of the utter crisis facing the institution of Buganda. He accused Museveni of having a systematic plan to weaken Buganda and he cited the following examples for this :- Museveni's appointment of *Ssabaruuuli*, his inauguration of *Bibanja* (tenant) holders association on Buganda land and his creation and appointment of the *Sabanyala* for Bugerere - where the institution had never existed before. He affirmed that *Kabaka's* planned visit to Bugerere that Saturday would prove to the whole country the future existence of *Kabakaship*. He therefore called on all Baganda to close their shops, business and whatever else they were doing and come prepared to escort the *Kabaka* to Bugerere. He appealed to all the *Baganda* to heed Minister Ssegona's war message of sharpening their *pangas* (machetes), spears, arms and arrows to defend their defenceless *Kabaka*. He threatened that any *Muganda* who failed to go would be considered as an enemy of Buganda.<sup>58</sup>
- 7) On the same day, *WBST* television hosted panellists for a live talk show programme entitled the "*Kibazo on Friday*" to discuss the rising belligerency between Buganda and Uganda. One of the panellists, Sserumaga, hailing from Buganda adopted a confrontational and demeaning attack at Museveni. He lamented that *Baganda* were victims

of Museveni's *obukopi* (uncivilised, primitive) and bad upbringing. He cited the case where Museveni had propped up *Banyala* while denying *obugabe* to the *Bahima* on the pretext that the majority did not want its restoration as evidence of Museveni's unprincipled favouritism. He reasoned that while acting in good faith presupposed creation of a uniform policy for everybody, Museveni's *bukopi* had blocked him from understanding basic good manners, a constitution, systems and procedures, and how organized institutions were supposed to run. He lamented that Buganda was under occupation (probably by the central government or non-*Baganda* Ugandans) and that that was the reason why the government could deploy soldiers and police to shoot people on spot. He refuted NRM's self-praise for restoring the Buganda kingdom and he instead submitted that it was Buganda which had created the NRM. He attacked Museveni for thinking that he could continue fooling people, and think that he could substitute argument with soldiers.<sup>59</sup> These utterances constituted the grounds for Sserumaga's arrest after the show. He was charged with sectarianism and attacking the president. He was suspended from the list of journalists.<sup>60</sup>

All the above examples do demonstrate the effectiveness of electronic media under the current form of globalisation to influence people's perceptions, opinions, attitudes, judgment and actions.

### *Initiatives to Conflict Resolution and Peace Building*

When this conflict began simmering, Bidandi Ssali wrote a letter to the *Katikkiro* warning him against the opposition politicians and their attacks on the government.<sup>61</sup> The *Katikkiro* did not heed this warning. Another effort came from the National Security Council (NSC). On seeing the impending showdown between Buganda and Uganda, the NSC recommended for dialogue between the *Katikkiro* and the *Banyala*. The *katikkiro* treated this with contempt.<sup>62</sup>

When the conflict flared up, different local initiatives came in to resolve it. Among these were religious leaders. The Ugandan bishops, who were attending a conference at Kampala on: 'Sustainable National Reconciliation, Justice and Peace' pronounced themselves on this matter and appealed for calm in the region. They set up a team of religious leaders to mediate between the belligerent parties, resolve the conflict and build peace.<sup>63</sup> During *Eid* Prayers on September 20, 2009, the National Muslim Leadership condemned the violence and appealed to the belligerent parties to use peaceful means to resolve their differences. It went on to warn the Muslim



leadership to avoid being entangled in public incitements.<sup>64</sup>

The Uganda Law Society came out publicly to condemn the riots, the lawlessness by the rioters and the excessive use of force by the government. It attributed the causes of this conflict to 'a lot of pride, ego, arrogance and disrespect' by the belligerent parties. It called upon the state to re-establish law and order in the country. Then, the Human Rights Watch Activists accused the government and the security agencies of using excessive force in stopping the rioters from destroying property and lives. The Minister of Information immediately counteracted this as biasness since this organisation had kept quiet about the violence, death and injuries that had been wrecked on security officers by the rioters.<sup>65</sup>

The business people attributed the riots on the redundant, unemployed youth. They argued that such activities usually became occasions for the unemployed youth to vent out their anger and frustrations through fighting, looting and destruction.<sup>66</sup>

The Chairperson of Gulu District LC V, Mao rejected Buganda's proposal to compartmentalise the country into four regional states – northern, western, eastern and Buganda; or any other form in a bid to establish federal states at sub-regional level. He opposed any federal system that would be founded on ethnicity, tribe or one that would entrench privileges of certain classes and create inequalities in the country on the ground that they would lead to national crises. He also rejected any federal arrangement that did not involve democratic elections by all the citizens in the country. He cited Buganda, where the Prime Minister and 100 Members of the *Lukiiko* were handpicked by the *Kabaka*.<sup>67</sup>

### *Reflections on the Riots*

When the riots began, Museveni appraised the MPs of the military measures which had been put in place to stop the riots. Principle among these was the ordering in of more troops from different barracks. The question therefore is why these riots increased in intensity, magnitude, virulence, violence and space for two more days with threats of overrunning State House at Nakasero Hill.

One of the explanations was the failure of state intelligence organs to know their level of training, planning, organisation and logistics. The state therefore underestimated the riots and it deployed 'baton welding policemen to quell it'. However, police later discovered that the mayhem had been 'pre-planned by ill-intentioned and malicious characters'.<sup>68</sup> The media disclosed that the rioters had been learning rioting tactics from DVD documentaries which the FDC leadership had imported to prepare for vote

protection during the 2011 elections. They revealed that the rioters had been trying it out in the streets of Kampala City and the surrounding suburbs to gauge government's capacity to handle civil riots. Another factor was the clandestine and effective use of the electronic technology. These included the electronic media - FM radios, TVs, cell phones and internet. These were effectively used to spread information about the riots, organise the riots, direct and alert the rioters about the movement of security. This initially enabled the rioters to elude the police and security patrols until when the Broadcasting Council switched off five FM radios which were fuelling the riots. Government immediately suspended one programme on WBS TV station.<sup>69</sup>

Thirdly, the rioters were hired and paid allowances ranging between Shs. 5,000/= and Shs. 15,000/=. Foreign forces were also involved in providing vehicles for transport. The source of this funding was traced to Gaddafi. This money was sent through a local bank.<sup>70</sup> It is this element of foreign funding that provides a plausible explanation for the free air time and programmes on the radio, enthusiasm and swiftness of the rioters for the three days plus free fuel and transport for the rioters from Besigye's petrol station at Nsambya. What needs to be added is that police raided one city bank in Kampala a few days later and arrested the top manager over that money. These do demonstrate how the rioters were not necessarily concerned with Buganda's *federo*. The opposition seemed to be using Buganda as a cover to test NRM, weaken it and erode its hegemony.

### *State Responses to the Riots*

The state moved fast and to re-establish law and order. After guaranteeing security, government took the following measures to secure its hegemony and guarantee stability.

First, it insisted that everyone in Uganda would have to be law abiding. Security agencies would no longer have mercy for the rioters. Museveni emphasised that those who took Uganda to be a banana republic where they could change leadership unlawfully by rioting were wasting time. He accused the opposition of masterminding these riots and the earlier ones. He pinpointed Besigye for supplying free fuel at his fuel station at Nsambya to vehicles which would ferry people to Kayunga district to engage in civil disobedience. Besigye responded by denying that the opposition had anything to do with the riots. He claimed that they were spontaneous, with no pre-arrangement. He then attributed them to Museveni's lies and denials to Buganda.



At the political front, the government made deliberate efforts to sideline and isolate the *Kabaka*. It had become clear to the NRM that the prevailing standoff between the Buganda Kingdom and the NRM government was not just about Kayunga, but about political and economic power for the *Kabaka*. As such, it was deep-rooted and not short term. Museveni explained this and the reason why the NRM had rejected the idea of political kings. In his words, kings were not democratically elected. As such, non-elected kings would have a problem of accountability for their mistakes if they wielded political power. He further explicated that unlike elected political leaders, kings could not be voted out. His final position was that since the *Kabaka* - who had a key for all the issues - had refused to answer Museveni's phone calls for two years, even when the riots broke out, government would thenceforth involve elected leaders from Buganda to quickly resolve disputes instead of depending on unelected traditional leaders. He argued that the constitution allowed all to work towards national unity while safeguarding cultural diversity and that what was needed was diversity but not to recycle cultural prejudices. He underlined that NRM would not 'revive ancient, undemocratic governance'.

While addressing the Uganda Episcopal conference, Museveni had unwaveringly spelled out seven legitimate interests of the people of Uganda as peace, security, health, education, employment, freedom of worship and regional integration for bigger markets.<sup>71</sup> He condemned Buganda's intimidation and manipulations, and affirmed that government would ensure that everyone in Uganda had to observe the constitution. He ruled out the kings' interference with people's legitimate interests and rights. He argued that the defeat of kings by the colonial powers did constitute a vote of no confidence in those kings as they failed to protect their sovereignty. He disclosed that government would make a law to guard against agencies with illegitimate motives to use the kingdoms. This law would require all traditional leaders to declare gifts. At the political level, government would implement regional tier the following financial year. This would be operationalised by the serving councillors electing regional leaders to serve for the remaining period before the general elections.<sup>72</sup>

He attributed the closure of CBS Radio to its meddling in politics, spreading sectarianism, lawlessness and violence with impunity; intimidating Buganda's political class 'not to think freely' by branding anyone with a different view as being against Buganda or anti-*Kabaka*. He exposed the fallacy that no one could answer the *Kabaka* and that the *Kabaka* could never err. He explained how these falsehoods had misled the *Kabaka* to take certain anti-people positions like opposing the Land Bill, which had led to the 1961 problem with catastrophic results when there was no radio.

He concluded that the situation could have been worse had there been radio.

On realising that the riots had been staged by unemployed youth, Museveni disclosed government's plan to address unemployment, to question corruption and poverty. He revealed that he had appointed a special advisor on employment for the youth and that government was about to secure Shs. 30 billion for supporting the cotton industry. He highlighted the plan to produce cheap electricity for facilitating the creation of industrial estates and food processing.<sup>73</sup>

On the punitive and retributive aspects, the state would arrest Namboze and all the other leaders of the riots who had gone into hiding and participating in the riots.<sup>74</sup> Namboze had earlier been arrested together with the Buganda Minister of Information and his Deputy. They were charged with promoting sectarianism and hate campaign against north Buganda.<sup>75</sup> The Director of Public Prosecution pursued this matter and on September 24, 2009 had sanctioned charges against Minister Ssegona, Lukwago and Namboze. The Director explained that there was no need for production of warrants for their arrest as their offences were 'cognizable in nature'.<sup>76</sup>

The NRM MPs discussed Buganda's demand for *federo*. Some dismissed the demands as 'irrelevant, partisan and promoting confusion among the population'.<sup>77</sup> Others thought that kingdoms had been given too much power including prostrating for the *Kabaka*.<sup>78</sup> While a section of them wanted uniform governance throughout the country, or regional tier system of governance, others wanted a new law to regulate the traditional institutions and deprive them of power.

The UPDF Generals were concerned about the increasing powers of the *Kabaka*, his intransigence, arrogance and deliberate violation of the constitution.<sup>79</sup> They blamed Museveni for creating and irrigating this crisis by continuously begging the *Kabaka* for talks while the *Kabaka* was besieged by opposition politicians, violating the constitution and fraternising with them to gain political capital by trouncing the NRM. They considered the revived Buganda Kingdom to be a more formidable enemy than that of 1966 and therefore a very big problem to the peace of the country. They wanted the NRM to unleash the full military might by arresting all the headhunting Baganda officials and crushing *Kabaka's* intransigence if he continued to despise Museveni and violate the constitution. They interpreted *Kabaka's* tour of the country as evidence for his participation in politics to cause confusion and discredit the government while mobilising the population for his political candidature.<sup>80</sup> They were also investigating whether the riots were linked to the Popular Patriotic Front Movement.



The riots enabled the state to learn of the possible magnitude, swiftness, virulence and fatality of future riots. It immediately started preparing for the future management of riots so as to ensure their retention of power while minimising chaos, death, injuries and other threats to people and property. The new measures included importing and stocking huge consignments of neurotoxin batons. These batons are meant to paralyse the central nervous system of the victim for some time so as to allow the security personnel time to effect arrest of the culprits. It immediately despatched senior security officers to train under Israelite instructors in sophisticated skills and technology of managing riots. It also purchased lorries of *kiboko* – (sticks) for containing future riots. Relatedly, it planned to train the *kiboko* Squad in how to handle the violent city riots.<sup>82</sup> Another measure was to close all business and force people to vacate the streets in times of violence so as to minimise material and human losses by isolating the rioters.

### *Reactions to State's Anti-Riot Measures*

The *Kabaka* was perturbed by the hunting and arresting of Buganda's officials. He planned to cancel the meeting with the NRM but found that he had no options left.<sup>83</sup> He held meetings with heads from the 52 clans of Buganda and they demanded for a militant *katikkiro* to lead Buganda to action instead of the current talks and moderate approaches. They wanted him to counter Museveni's moves in Buganda. These included Museveni's visit to Nakasongola and praising the *Baruuli*, his promise to give a radio station to *Sebaruuli* for mobilisation of the *Baruuli*. They were perturbed by the fact that Museveni had done so after switching off the Buganda Kingdom radio. Yet, *Luganda* would not be aired on that *Buruuli* radio. They were grieved that Museveni had blocked *Kabaka's* visit to *Buruuli* on the ground that this would annoy non-Baganda there. They were also grieved by Museveni's plan to split Nakasongola into constituencies.<sup>84</sup>

Faced with this complex political blockade, the *Kabaka* resolved to visit the other parts of the kingdom. The aim was to boost his popularity and bolster the kingdom's support and solidarity for its political and economic demands. He wanted to invoke the sympathies of the population for him. By then, Baganda 'right-wingers' were pressurising him to be political like his late father and compete with Museveni for presidency in the 2011 elections. Their argument was that Buganda would get *federo* only when *Kabaka* won the presidency.<sup>85</sup>

Being frustrated by the military defeat, the opposition parties rushed to form an anti-NRM coalition – the Inter Party Cooperation (IPC). They were

trying to replicate what the opposition in Kenya had done to defeat and dislodge the KANU Party from political power. This IPC excluded the DP. Having experienced the bitter wrath of the state on the streets, the IPC youth decided to internationalise their struggle by impeaching Museveni, the IGP and the UPDF Chief of Defence Forces in the International Criminal Court (ICC) in Hague over the killings and brutalities during the riots. They accused them of publicly ordering the security forces to shoot to kill or maim, ordering security forces to use live ammunition against unarmed civilians, of neither showing remorse nor regret after cold murdering "at least 42 unarmed civilians" and of refusing to compensate the victims. They sent a video to support their case. They were demanding for public apology and the resignation of the three from their offices.<sup>86</sup> The Buganda Kingdom supported this anti-Museveni ICC.<sup>87</sup> As these developments were unfolding, the Buganda Kingdom threatened to evict government from Kigo Prison land if government did not pay Shs. 18 billion as compensation for its illegal occupancy of the land. The government then contested this in court.<sup>88</sup>

### *Ethnicity vis-à-vis Nationalism and Regionalism*

The developments in the country from 1<sup>st</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010 and how they were responded to do reveal the level of ethnic consciousness and how it can undermine and wreck nationalism and regionalism. These involved natural disasters in form of mudslides in different parts of the country, on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2010; the shooting and killing of two Kenyan students at Makerere University and wounding a Ugandan Student on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2010 and the burning down of Buganda's Royal Tombs at Kasubi on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

The national tragedy first unfolded in Bududa, Eastern Uganda, when a 10-hour heavy downpour resulted in mass mudslide that covered 3.3 Kms. These mudslides destroyed property, livelihoods, crops, fertile soils, household economies, etc. It buried over 100 families with houses in three villages of Kubehe, Namakansa and Nametsi Trading Centre. This was a very densely populated district in the whole country. The mudslide covered hundreds of people, including 100 students. A total of 93 dead bodies were recovered while over 350 remained buried under the debris and 68 people were injured. A total of 176 cattle, 50 goats and 2,000 chickens were also buried alive. They rendered over 300,000 people homeless and in critical need of the basic necessities. This was high up in the mountains and the rains did not stop. A total of 2,531 survivors were below 18 years. By March 17, 2010, a total of 814 surviving children had registered for schools



and they were under charity organisations. Overall, a total of 40,000 survivors needed resettling to safer places.

The same situation obtained in Western and South-Western Uganda – Kabale, Kisoro, Kabarole, Kasese and Bundibugyo. In Kabale, the mudslides killed three and left 5,000 people homeless as it washed down homes, property, land, livestock and food.

Government rushed in 200 UPDF troops to rescue lives, retrieve bodies of the dead from the debris and assist the survivors. Top government officials including Museveni, Prime Minister Nsibambi, Ministers including the one for Disaster Preparedness, military officers, MPs, District officials, LC officials, civil society organisations and NGOs rushed there to help. Government immediately sent Shs. 200 million to Bududa for short term relief and it pledged to support. Parliament immediately convened and passed a vote of Shs. 7 billion as relief for Bududa. The Kenya Government sent 123 tonnes of food for the survivors and it was received by the Prime Minister at the border. Meanwhile, some of the media took off time to question why Museveni had flown to Bududa carrying a gun.<sup>89</sup> Government continued with the search for bodies up to now. It refused the call for declaring national mourning on the ground that people buried under the rubble had to be retrieved first.

This was followed by a regional tragedy at Makerere University in the night of March 15, 2010, where a private security guard at one students hostel shot and killed two Kenyan students of Makerere University and fatally wounded a Uganda student. These tragic killings led to students protests on March 16, 2010. The protesting students burnt tyres on roads, picked coffins from the coffin sellers and carried them around. They threw huge stones at police and it responded with rubber bullets and tear gas. The Kenyan Government protested to the Ugandan Government. The latter mourned the students and it handed over the dead bodies to the parents. It would be correct to state that the above two national and regional tragedies did not evoke public sympathy in the Buganda Kingdom as it did not convene to pronounce itself on them.<sup>90</sup> Yet, it was the same region which hosted most of media – electronic, print media, satellite, mobile phones, SMS, internet, etc. This was because it is where Kampala City is located.

***Baganda Grieving and Mourning for Burning Royal Tombs***

The night of March 16, 2010 witnessed a dramatic reversal when the Buganda royal tombs at Kasubi caught fire. Fire caught and burnt to ashes the largest grass-thatched building in the world. It had been in existence for 128 years. They had been the source of revenue for Buganda from tourism.<sup>91</sup> These tombs were listed as UNESCO world heritage site in

2001. The building that burnt down housed the mausoleums of *Kabakas* Muteesa I, Daudi Chwa III, Mwanga II and Edward Muteesa II.<sup>92</sup> It was the largest grass-thatched building in the world. It epitomised traditional *Baganda's* architecture and was evidence of the living *Baganda's* traditions. It symbolised Buganda's history, culture and heritage as it kept the regalia of Buganda, gifts from the different parts of the world to the *kabakas*, artefacts, engravings on the building with authentic designs. It contained Buganda's 52 engravings in the floor and the 52 pillars that supported the building represented the 52 Buganda clans.

### ***Dying Defending Dead Kabakas***

When fire caught this building, hundreds of Baganda rushed to the scene, sobbing, wailing, crying, screaming and prostrating in disbelief and anger. It made the youth agitated and riotous. Their belligerency tended to suggest that they had formed a conclusion that this fire was the work of NRM. It is this which could explain why they blocked the five fire trucks from reaching the burning building and kill the fire in time. Police had despatched the fire fighters immediately to extinguish the fire. In this confrontation, they attacked the fire fighters, injured one of them, shattered a wind screen of one of the trucks and damaged the other trucks. Security operatives had to shoot in the air so as to save the situation. They refused to heed appeals by the *katikkiro* and Buganda's Minister of Information to allow in the fire fighters and extinguish the fire. The state sent Mambas to open the barricaded entrance but they failed to do so. It had to take a UPDF general hailing from Buganda to convince them to allow the fire fighters in.

The youth' opinion was informed by the last scuffles in which they engaged the state and got defeated. To them, this was a continuation of that contestation instead of being a problem for Buganda. They failed to understand the love-hate relationship between Buganda and Uganda. Kasubi Tombs were of great significance to Uganda and the world historically and culturally. They never evaluated the historical relationship between Buganda and Museveni, and Buganda's contribution to NRM since the bush war and Museveni held Buganda very dearly. These issues do explain why Museveni had to rush to the scene instead of waiting to come ceremoniously the way the Mengo Establishment was proposing. To the government, this was a big loss to the nation, which was following the tragic death of students at Makerere University and the hundreds of deaths by the mass mudslide killer in Bududa and other parts of Uganda.

The youth were trying to transform Kasubi into a battleground with the state and non-Baganda people. They listed NRM, all people sympathetic to



the ruling NRM and non-Baganda people as unwanted there. The victims of this ethnicised exclusionism and violence included Rubaga LC III Division Chairperson, NRM MPs, the newly elected UPC President and his entourage. The crowd accused UPC of abolishing the monarchy, exiling *Kabaka* Muteesa II and causing his death.<sup>93</sup> The IGP had to force his way under heavy escort. This was followed by Museveni's visit.

On learning that Museveni was coming to the scene, a group of youth moved first to block his entry by placing huge logs and rocks at the entrance of the site. This demonstrated the increasing intolerance, violence and hooliganism in the region. They argued that they could not allow the military into the tombs because it had not done anything to extinguish the fire. Faced with this blockade and hostilities, the military police had to use force to open up and entrance at the back as the youth pelted it with stones. In the *mêlée* that ensued that morning, three people died, four others were injured while eight wind screens were smashed.<sup>94</sup> The military police gained control of the tombs and they forced the crowds out. The message from this was that Buganda was part of Uganda and that the president could not be blocked from visiting any place. It further emphasised how force would be used if dialogue failed. They would have to guarantee security. That was why the security forces maintained their presence there after Museveni's visit.

Museveni came with his son, a Colonel in the UPDF to visit the site. He held discussions with the Kingdom officials and senior security officers on this fire, the behaviour of the crowd towards the fire fighters, and the tampering with the scene before investigations were carried out, etc. His visit received mixed reactions. While some people heckled him, others watched on while others seemed to appreciate his coming. He held a press conference on this tragedy that included the destruction of the invaluable royal.

The *Kabaka's* visit to the tombs hours later contrasted very greatly with Museveni's earlier visit. Whereas Museveni's visit was characterised with heckling, violence, shooting, scampering, death and forceful entry, *Kabaka's* coming was majestic. Large crowds of *Baganda* lined up on both sides of the roads to Kasubi Tombs, sombrely singing Buganda anthem and shouting Buganda's praises. Mutebi wept in public and decried the desecration of the royal tombs by the security forces.<sup>95</sup> The different reactions to the two big persons stemmed from ethnicity. Museveni was not accorded the respect that he deserved because he was not a *Muganda*. That ethnicised exclusionism has been a threat to the national project in Uganda. As the events at Kasubi showed before security forces took control of the situation, all non-*Baganda* Ugandans were not wanted on the scene.

Government ordered security organs to investigate the causes of the fire. It also set up a special committee to do the same. It was supposed to liaise with *katikkiro* and his government. On its part, the Buganda Kingdom wanted to institute its own investigation. It wanted an open-ended probe of all the fires.<sup>96</sup> On its part, parliament condemned the fire and the shooting of the civilians.<sup>97</sup> On its part, the *Lukiiko* declared the dead three as kingdom's heroes.<sup>98</sup> It also declared a week of mourning for the burnt structure. It would start on March 22, 2010 and end on Friday. Nakulabye Market had to be closed during the mourning. The Buganda Cabinet specified the dressing code during the week of the mourning.<sup>99</sup> Royalists from different parts of Uganda brought condolences.

Religious leaders of the four main religions in Buganda, plus leaders of the Pentecostal movement and Islamic Faith based at Kibuli paid their condolences over the burning of the royal tombs. They called for calm in Buganda, made pledges towards the reconstruction of the tombs and arranged prayers. These prayers would be held at Kasubi Royal Tombs to mark the end of the week of mourning for the burnt building.<sup>100</sup>

This service was led by the leading Catholic Bishop in Buganda plus other *Baganda* religious leaders and it was attended by between 50,000 to 100,000 people. One person died there while 250 people were hurt.<sup>101</sup> As the mourning was going on, one medium was shown at the same site performing to call Buganda's gods to strike down whoever had burnt the shrine.<sup>102</sup>

### Significance of Kasubi Tombs

While Kasubi Tombs is a famous world heritage site and a tourist attraction to the outside world, it is an active place and it makes very important contributions to the Buganda Kingdom. It constitutes a crucial religious centre for the royal family. It is the sphere where the *Kabaka* and his representatives carry out important rituals, and where he has to visit, seek and receive blessings from his ancestors before travelling outside the country. It is a sacred place where traditional rituals are performed out of the public gaze throughout the year. Examples include new moon ceremony and the regular consultation of mediums. It is a sphere for African medicine people and where they consult the kings' spirits.<sup>103</sup> It is a site for rituals like spirit invocation, pipe smoking, ancestral possession, fire altars, ancestral worship, etc.<sup>104</sup> All these resonate with the *Kabaka's* lamentation that the place had been desecrated by the security forces.

One writer questioned how Christian leaders could go to hold prayers in such a place full of devil worship.<sup>105</sup> A pastor from Buganda answered



back defending the act.<sup>106</sup> Beyond this contestation on the domains of spirituality, righteousness and devilishness emerges new questions. Were those Friday prayers religious and spiritual or they were ethnically defined, politically motivated and directed? Were they for the long-dead *kabakas*, for their spirits, for the burnt building or for cursing the one who could have burnt it? Did this fire create occasion for uniting traditional religions and western religions or it created room for the western religions to encroach on the reserved spheres for the traditional and ancestral religions. Or was it a demonstration of how a people can regroup or reunite in times of externally created crises or threats – whether real or perceived?

Considering the human and material destruction by natural disasters in Bududa and other regions, the tragic incident at Makerere University with the Kasubi fire, where should efforts have been put, mourning, soothing, material assistance, trekking and reconstruction? Who actually needed assistance – the living or the long dead? How could a kingdom within a larger state declare a week of mourning when nothing had been dedicated to the human tragedy in Bududa? On what ground could a cultural institution declare a week of mourning without consulting the central government? Did it signify a move towards forceful implementation of *federo*? Was Museveni's forceful entry of the Kasubi Tombs intended to demonstrate government's direct rejection of *federo* and Buganda's efforts to appear to be above the state?

Different theories were advanced about the origins of the fire. One of them pointed at on the rivalry amongst the royal family over the custodianship of the royal tombs. Another theory attributed the fire to negligence of custodians. It cited cases of smoking bangi and cigarettes at the burial site. Another theory revolved around political sabotage. One strand pointed at the opposition politicians and foreign funding. It held that the opposition would do whatever it could to discredit NRM government and create irreconcilable differences between government and Buganda. Another strand posited that NRM would have wanted to punish Buganda for its ingratitude and hobnobbing with the opposition and the foreign enemies of the state. It opined that NRM wanted to deprive Buganda of the sources of revenue in order to impoverish it. Another strand argued that NRM could have done it to deprive Buganda of what it treasured most and prided in so as to break Buganda's back. On its part, the kingdom linked the destruction of the tombs to the kingdom's enemies. These hypothesizations did not leave room for mistakes, negligence or unintended actions by lunatics.

Whatever the cause of the fire was, the Buganda Cabinet resolved on March 17, 2010 to restore the tombs.<sup>107</sup> From then, supporters of the

monarchy trekked to Kasubi daily, bringing building materials. Baganda in the US pledged US \$ 1,000,000= to rebuild the tombs<sup>108</sup> and the UN promised to rebuild them.

The rumour that linked the fire to NRM seemed more attractive and it gained currency in the region. Museveni could not stand the rumours any more. He therefore warned the country against the wicked intentions by people who were carrying out a whispering and slanderous campaign that linked government to the burning of the tombs. He ordered arrest of whoever would be found smearing government with such calculated malicious rumours. He questioned how NRM could be the one to burn the royal tombs while it was the one which had restored the kingdoms.<sup>109</sup>

Not long after, one Sheikh was arrested in Masaka over similar allegations. While people were still pointing accusing fingers at the NRM, a man named Joseph Musoke reported to Police on March 30, 2010 claiming that he was responsible for burning the tombs. He claimed that he had been sent by the holy spirits to burn the tombs because these tombs were involved in devilish practices.<sup>110</sup> Realising the grave consequences of these alleged confessions, the family came forward and tried to explain to the public of his mental instability.<sup>111</sup> These revelations raised new problems. Did he actually burn them as he was claiming? If he did, could it have been due to his enthusiasm, given that he was originally a traditionalist who later got saved and burnt his shrines and appliances? Could he have actually burnt the tombs due to hatred for shrines? Could they have been trying to fool the world and make history through this claim? Could they have been hallucinations that made him make false claims?

These contradictions notwithstanding, one royalist *Muganda* termed the shooting of people at Kasubi as a conflict between brothers and he expected positive results. This view tended to confirm Museveni's approach to the problems in Buganda. He stressed that Buganda would have to operate within the regional tier as it was the only framework for Buganda to operate in without interfering with the basic aims of both dissolution of power, national integration and regional integration.<sup>112</sup>

Whatever claims, Buganda wailings and the mourning for a week over the tomb and the attacks by Buganda Youth on the President of Uganda, on the security forces on the NRM sympathisers and non-Baganda were sending a message of suspicion to NRM. The whole thing appeared to be a continuation of the unfinished contestation over Kayunga. They reflected the inward looking of Buganda within Uganda. No tear was shed in Buganda for the horrific Bududa tragedy that shocked the world. No mourning or even talking about fellow Ugandans, East African students who were shot dead. This was a profound lesson for Ugandans. It opened their eyes as to



how they would have to relate with Buganda and the expectations in any future dealings. It put nationalism into abeyance as it brought ethnicity to the fore.

### End Notes

1. Karugire (1971, 1980); Mamdani, (1976); Mukherjee, (1984); Roscoe J. (1911, 1922), Murindwa Rutanga (2010).
2. Thorston's Diary. He was commanding the allied forces that fought and wiped out Bunyoro Kingdom.
3. The most interesting among these was Mpöroro Kingdom. It was split among Belgians, English and Germans. One part became part of Belgian Congo, another part became part of Uganda while another part became part of German East Africa. This process decimated Mpororo Kingdom.
4. Mamdani (1996).
5. *Daily Monitor*, September 10, 2009; *New Vision*, September 10, 2009.
6. Mahmood Mamdani (1976), Mukherjee (1984).
7. Mamdani (1976).
8. Ibid.
9. Article 118 of the 1967 Constitution of Uganda. Also see Mamdani, (1976).
10. Livio Sansone, (2003:2).
11. The *New Vision* of March 30, 2004 disclosed that the Ankore Crown prince John Barigwe was suing the Government seeking Shs. 200m balance for 4,501.811 hectares of land that he sold to the state at the cost of Shs. 2,032,904,122 but that Shs. 232,904,122/= was still unpaid. This land was in five counties in the Ankore Region. He wanted this money plus interest of 24% from 2001 till full payment. This is an interesting arrangement that needs to be cast in light of the government denying him his claim to power.
12. This was confirmed by UPDF Generals Otafiire and Salim Saleh. *Daily Monitor* and *New Vision*, September 10, 2009.
13. *The Monitor*, February 1, 1994.
14. *The Monitor*, January 7, 1994.
15. *The Monitor*, September 16, 1994 quoted Museveni asking Mutebi about those matters which were political. Mutebi denied, claiming that he had been misquoted by the press. The *Monitor* then accused the NRM of violating Mutebi's human rights through the law of cultural institutions. It accused the NRM of applying double standards as it kept quiet wherever Mutebi spoke on political issues in favour of the NRM, and calling Baganda to support Museveni. It pointed out the dangers of hurrying to restore *Kabakaship* without broad and exhaustive discussion of the matter.
16. *New Vision*, September 13, 1994.
17. *The Monitor*, July 20, 1993.
18. *New Vision*, September 29, 1994.
19. *The Monitor*, November 2, 1994.
20. *New Vision*, November 10, 1994.
21. *New Vision*, October 5, 1994.
22. *New Vision*, August 4, 2003.
23. *Red Pepper*, November 19, 2007.
24. Niccolli Machiavelli in *Discourse on the First Decade of Livy*.
25. *New Vision*, July 20, 2009.
26. *Sunday Vision*, February 2, 2010.
27. *New Vision*, June 30, 2009.
28. *Sunday Vision*, July 19, 2009.
29. *New Vision*, July 20, 2009.
30. *New Vision*, June 30, 2009.
31. Bidandi Ssali to the Buganda *Katikkiro*, *New Vision*, February 2, 2010.
32. *Red Pepper*, March 8, 2010.
33. *Sunday Pepper*, April 26, 2009.
34. *Daily Monitor* and *New Vision*, September 10, 2009.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid
37. *Daily Monitor*, September 11, 2009.
38. *Sunday Vision*, September 12, 2009.
39. *Daily Monitor*, September 15, 2009, *New Vision*, September 11, 2009.
40. *Daily Monitor*, September 11, 2009.
41. *Red Pepper*, October 2, 2009.
42. *New Vision*, September 11, 2009; *Daily Monitor*, September 11, 2009; *Red Pepper*, October 2, 2009 and *Sunday Vision*, September 20, 2009.
43. Ibid; *New Vision*, September 14, 2009. Punishment for rioting was three years imprisonment while conviction for destruction of property led to lifetime imprisonment.
44. *New Vision*, September 15, 2009.
45. *Saturday Vision*, September 12, 2009.
46. *Daily Monitor*, September 15, 2009.
47. *Sunday Monitor*, September 13, 2009.
48. *New Vision*, September 12, 2009.
49. *Saturday Vision*, September 12, 2009.
50. *Daily Monitor*, September 11, 2009.
51. *Daily Monitor*, September 11, 2009.
52. Hezron Ndunde (2008) 'From Cyberspace to the Public Sphere: Rumor, Gossip and Hearsay in the Paradoxes of the 2007 General Election in Kenya.' CODESRIA General Assembly at Yaoundé.  
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53. Sansone Livio (2003) *Blackness without Ethnicity: Constructing Race in Brazil*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
  54. *New Vision*, September 14, 2009 and September 29, 2009. *Red Pepper*, September 15, 2009.
  55. *Sunday Vision*, September 20, 2009.
  56. Ibid.
  57. *Sunday Vision*, September 20, 2009.
  58. Ibid.
  59. *New Vision*, September 16, 2009; *Observer*, September 17, 2009; and *Sunday Vision*, September 20, 2009.
  60. *New Vision*, September 14, 2009; *Sunday Monitor*, September 13, 2009.
  61. Bidandi Ssali to the Buganda Katikkiro, *New Vision*, February 2, 2010.
  62. *New Vision*, September 12, 2009.
  63. *Saturday Vision*, September 12, 2009.
  64. *New Vision*, September 21, 2009.
  65. *Daily Monitor*, September 16, 2009; *Red Pepper* 24, 2009.
  66. Ibid.
  67. *Sunday Vision*, September 20, 2009.
  68. *New Vision*, September 15, 2009.
  69. *Red Pepper* September 15, 2009.
  70. *Observer*, September 17, 2009.
  71. *New Vision*, September 14, 2009.
  72. *New Vision*, September 16, 2009.
  73. Ibid.
  74. Ibid.
  75. *Daily Monitor*, September 16, 2009; *Red Pepper*, September 24, 2009.
  76. *Red Pepper*, September 24, 2009.
  77. *Daily Monitor*, September 29, 2009.
  78. *New Vision*, September 29, 2009; *Red Pepper*, September 29, 2009.
  79. *Red Pepper*, September 28, 2009.
  80. Ibid.
  81. *Observer*, September 28, 2009.
  82. *Red Pepper*, October 2, 2009.
  83. *Red Pepper*, September 29, 2009.
  84. *Red Pepper*, March 3, 2010.
  85. *Sunday Pepper*, September 27, 2009.
  86. *Red Pepper*, March 4, 2010.
  87. Ibid. This was revealed by the Minister of Information in the Buganda Kingdom government.
  88. *The Observer*, March 11-14, 2010.
  89. See *New Vision*, *Red Pepper*, *Monitor* and *Observer* starting from March 3, 2010 to April 10, 2010.
  90. These are covered in *New Vision* and *Red Pepper*, *Observer* and *Monitor*

- Newspapers starting from March 15 to 30, 2010.
91. *New Vision*, March 17, 2010.
  92. *Daily Monitor*, March 17, 2010.
  93. *New Vision*, March 19, 2010; *Red Pepper*, March 19, 2010; *Daily Monitor*, March 19, 2010.
  94. *New Vision*, March 18, 2010; *Red Pepper*, March 18, 2010.
  95. *Daily Monitor*, March 18, 2010.
  96. *Daily Monitor*, March 18, 2010.
  97. *Red Pepper*, March 18, 2010; *Daily Monitor*, March 24, 2010.
  98. *Daily Monitor*, March 23, 2010.
  99. *New Vision*, March 22, 2010.
  100. *Daily Monitor*, March 18, 19, & 24, 2010; *Saturday Vision*, March 20, 2010.
  101. *Red Pepper*, March 27, 2010.
  102. *New Vision*, March 22, 2010.
  103. *New Vision*, March 17 and 18, 2010; and *Red Pepper*, March 18, 2010.
  104. *New Vision*, April 5, 2010.
  105. *New Vision*, April 5, 2010.
  106. *New Vision*, April 8, 2010.
  107. *Daily Monitor*, March 18, 2010.
  108. *Red Pepper*, March 22, 2010.
  109. *New Vision* of March 22 and 23, 2010; *Daily Monitor*, March 22, 2010; *Red Pepper* of March 22 and 23, 2010; *Observer* of March 22-24, 2010.
  110. *New Vision*, March 31, 2010; *Daily Monitor*, April 1, 2010.
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