

## **ETHNOCENTRIC TENDENCIES IN THE FORMATION OF THE EAST AFRICAN FEDERATION ON UGANDA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study hinged on the investigation of ethnicity and the East African political, social, and economic unity. The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design, with qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study used 385 respondents, selected using random and purposive sampling techniques in the study selected areas in Masaka, Katuna, Nimule, Kampala, Malaba and Mutukula. The study discovered that, ethnicity has negatively influenced the formation of the East African political, social and economic unity of Ugandans. The study concluded, that the different and contrasting interpretation of cultures, norms, customs and traditions of the Ugandan people cannot allow the idea of the East African federation to be successful as it is projected in the political, social, and economic spheres on Ugandans. The study recommended for the establishment of a cultural model federation that is widely open politically, socially and economically to all groups of people in the region.*

**KEYWORDS:** Ethnicity, Politics, Socio-Economic, East African Federation, Uganda.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This study aimed at finding out the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of Ugandans with regard to the projected East African Federation. The study thereafter, predicted an alternative model of Federation that would better suit Ugandans if they are to join the projected East African Federation. East African region has a multiplicity of ethnic composition. It is comprised of Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania; Rwanda, Burundi, and of recent Southern Sudan and Somalia have expressed interest in joining the East African federation, (Ssekamwa, 1994; Baregu, 2005). These states have struggled to unite into one political, social and economic unit, however their contrasting ethnic and cultural background has made the idea of a federation nearly impossible, (Mangachi, 2011). This study examined the different factors which have influenced the formation of the East African federation; citing ethnicity as a salient feature to the realisation of political, social and economic federation of East Africa.

### **Background**

Ethnicity is one of the concepts around which personal relationships are potentially built, thereby affecting identity, trust, cooperation, conflict, political mobilization, legitimacy and political authority, (Lemarchand, 1972; Young, 1976; Rothchild, 1999; Collier et al., 2008). For the purpose of this research; ethnicity is conceptualized as the employment or mobilization of people's identity and their differences to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict or cooperation (Osoghae, 1995: 11). At individual level, ethnicity is a social psychological process which gives an individual a sense of belonging and identity, and

this sense of belonging in political, social and economic structure is evidenced in the struggle to unify East Africa.

Literally, federalism refers to a principle of government that defines the relationship between the central government at the national level and its constituent units at the regional, state, or local levels. Under this principle of government, power and authority is allocated between the national and local government units, such that each unit is delegated a sphere of power and authority only it can exercise, while other powers must be shared. Federalism is also used to describe a system of government in which sovereignty is constitutionally divided between a central governing authority and constituent political units, such as states, or provinces (Hoffman, 1996). However, for this study, a federation was conceptualized as a philosophy that underlies a system of government in which sovereignty is constitutionally divided between the central governing authority and constituent political units, such as states. A political Federation therefore, is a union of groups united by one, or more common objectives but retaining their distinct group, character, or other purposes. A political federation requires a certain degree of direct surrender of political jurisdiction to a federation unity, (Kasaija, 2006). On the other hand, economic unity is an arrangement between two or more countries that allows the free movement of capital, labour and all goods and services and values the harmonization and unification of social, fiscal and monetary policies.

Attempts have been made by successive leaders, one after another, to unite the social, political and economies of East Africa into a common force, first by the British colonialists, and later by the post independent presidents of the East African states, but in vain. The East African states especially Uganda, leaders one after another, have been acquiring power through conquest; using the barrel of the gun, plunder and aggression by soldiers and opportunists, and adopted policies to satisfy their desires and those of their tribesmen while neglecting those of other ethnic groups (Karugire, 1980; Karugire, 1985). This state of affairs has gradually become more and more intolerable as different ethnic groups have begun to injure each other over desirable national resources. A case in point was that of the republic of Rwanda when she experienced a genocide in 1994, and is continuing to experience ethnic political struggles with Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda. This has created war involving individuals to acquire complete dominance over others, (Bacharach, and Lawler, 1998).

In Uganda, ethnic struggles have been witnessed since the 1966 Kabaka crisis, and since then, there has been both interstate conflicts between Uganda and her neighboring East African states, and also internal ethnic resentment in running the affairs of Uganda. Prominent among them is the Uganda Kisangani war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has persisted with changing faces. The Joseph Kony war in northern Uganda which has created divisions between the north-south ethnic tribes since 1986, the unsettled disputes between Buganda Kingdom and the Central government of Uganda; the recent being in 2009, when the Kabaka of Buganda Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II was barred by the central government to travel and attend the Baganda – Youth celebration day in Bugerere, one of Buganda's counties. The political sentiments taking place in Uganda are some of the classical examples that hinder the idea of the East African Federation. Although the Sectarian Law was enacted in the Uganda's constitution, it has not helped the situation either.

East Africa is a region with the most significant and oldest pale anthropological finds in the world that has been inhabited by human-like beings for millions of years (Odhiambo, 1971). According to a record document called, "Periplus of the Erythrean Sea", contained in

Heidelberg University collections (CPG 398: 40v-54v), a Greek trading guide dating to the First Century B.C, it is believed that the first kingdom to develop in the region was the Nubia, with its people known as the Karmah and Kush in the First Century (Karugire, 1980). These were followed by Aksum in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century, Buganda Kingdom from 14<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries B.C. Meanwhile, Rwanda developed between 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, and then the Swahili Coastal City states.

For the case of Uganda, the first state to develop in the region was Bunyoro in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium AD. According to oral traditions, at the height of the empire, Bunyoro covered the present day Bunyoro, Buganda, Ankole and some parts of Busoga, North Eastern Tanzania and parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, with its first dynasty known as Abatembuzi (Odhiambo, 1971: 24). The Abatembuzi were replaced by Bachwezi, who are said to have come from Ethiopia, (Karugire, 1980). They were pastoralists; however they set up a loose empire that came to an end in the close of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century by the Luo invasion of the area. Although the Luo ended the Chwezi rule, they were few in number as they could not take over the whole of Kitara Empire, instead Bunyoro and Toro. The two regions (Bunyoro and Toro) formed one kingdom until the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when Toro broke away from Bunyoro under Prince Kaboyo I. This followed the secession of other Kitara versal states, especially Buganda.

Buganda was a versal state of Bunyoro Kitara Empire, covering a radius of 25miles around Kampala; that is to say, Mawokota, Busiro and Kyaddondo (Kiwanuka, 1971). However, during the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Buganda expanded to its current boundaries. Although she started as a small chiefdom under the appendage of Bunyoro, it soon became very powerful at the expense of Bunyoro, which began to decline. This dramatic rise introduced ethnic competition in the region especially during the colonial and post-colonial Uganda.

Between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, East Africa became a theatre of competition between European major imperialist nations and all East African societies became part of the European colonial empire (Karugire, 1980). The Portuguese were the first Europeans to explore the East African region in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when Vasco Dagma visited Mombasa in 1498 (Karugire, 1980). However, their influence was clipped by the British, Dutch and Omani Arab incursions into the region in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The advent of Arab rule brought the city states of Tanzania and Kenya under closer foreign scrutiny and domination, especially under the reign of Seyyid Said in 1839. The Arab dominance was curtailed by the British and Germany influence, with missionary influence both at the interior and the coast of East Africa (Haas, 1966).

East Africa, then, experienced direct foreign rule by major European nations of the time; Britain in Uganda and Kenya, while Germany took over Tanganyika and after 1945, the United Nations Organisation authorized Belgium to take over Rwanda and Burundi for exploitation of mineral resources and sources of markets for their collapsing capitalism in Europe, (Collins, 1990). European intervention in the region disrupted the pre-colonial East African trade and antagonized the society set up. The British for example, sided with some societies against others, for example, in colonial Uganda the British sided with Buganda kingdom against Bunyoro kingdom during the reign of Omukama Kabarega, the British did the same with Buganda against the societies of Eastern Uganda, and in Kenya the Kikuyu against other ethnic groups, while the Belgians did the same in Rwanda between the Hutu and the Tutsi, among others (Mazrui, 1972).

The colonial powers also in their pursuit of control in the region weakened African societies by putting together different ethnic groups under one ethnic leadership; for example, “Bukedi”; - a term that by then used to describe Bukedi, Bugisu, Teso and Lango regions, under Buganda leadership (Karugire, 1985; Mamdani, 1991). In Kenya, the British favoured Kikuyu over other groups; and in Rwanda, the Belgians left power in the hands of the Hutu against the Tutsi. The colonial economic policies also caused uneven development in the region, as there was one commodity production in one region and other regions were used as reservoirs for the recruitment of labourers and soldiers. In Uganda for example, the Northern region was reserved for army, police while the Western part was reserved for manual labour recruitment, whereas the Central and Eastern regions were meant for administrative work and cash crop agriculture, (Karugire, 1985). These colonial policies created jealousy, envy and competition among ethnic groups in the region, which transcended into ethnic conflicts.

Ethnic conflicts were precipitated by colonial rule and entrenchment which was enhanced by the introduction of formal education by Christian Missionaries in Uganda in 1877 and 1879 by the Anglicans and Catholic missionaries respectively (Munakukaama, 1997). The colonialists placed most of their social overheads in areas of proximity to the colonial political capital. This colonial education structure created and enhanced class struggles and conflicts (Mamdani, 1991), which transcended into ethnic conflicts. This argument is more evident in post independent Uganda and Kenya since 1966. Classical examples of this are shown in the Mengo-Kabaka-Obote crisis of 1966, Amin’s seizure of power from Obote in 1971, the post-election violence since 1980, in both Uganda and Kenya. This clearly illustrates, that colonialism was built on an already existing disintegrated society demeaned by slave trade, tribal wars, as the colonialists played tribe versus tribe politics commonly known as “divide and rule” by social anthropologists today, which seem to have resurfaced today in form of ethnicity.

The integration of East Africa began with economic unity in 1895 with the construction of the Uganda railway, and then proceeded with the creation of the East African common market in 1900 and a customs arrangement between Uganda and Kenya on one side, (then British East Africa) and Tanganyika (then Germany East Africa) on the other (Kasaija, 2006). This saw an increasing measure to integrate and interlink the three states. This was followed by the introduction of a common currency, a joint income tax board, a joint economic council and over forty different institutions of research, social service, education, defence and communications. These were established to explore the possibilities of the East Africa federation in 1924, 1927 and 1931, and this proved to be the golden age of co-operation (Kasaija, 2006: 5). In spite of the above good measure right at its inception, the East African federation had its intrinsic and extrinsic factors which diminished its future operation; for example in the field of education, there existed few uniform policies, or systems among the East African societies of the region to create the awareness, prepare and interlink their socio-economic and political unity in which citizens’ human rights were to be respected, the individual’s dignity and worth acknowledged, in which the rule of law was to be observed, in which people willingly fulfill their responsibilities and in which, where the common good is the concern of all.

In the political sector for example, in Uganda, it was the colonial state with its policy of divide and rule which allowed Buganda to nurture the behaviour of conservatism by largely maintaining her identity (Karugire, 1980). This was also the case between Tanganyika and Zanzibar, and in Kenya between the Kikuyu and the Nilotes, or non Bantu tribes. Throughout

history, individual tribal groups aimed at recognition of their identity and position within the protectorate government. Their kingdoms or societies, institutions and norms became the primary form of identity and the issue of Uganda-ness, Kenya-ness, Tanzania-ness, or even the East African Federation was, or is, secondary. For the case of Uganda, it is not surprising that when the colonial government issued the idea to federate East Africa, it was rejected by all kingdoms, but Buganda's response was strongest and the Kabaka responded by asking for Buganda's independence from Uganda, leading to his deportation on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1953, a crisis that altered the formation of the East Africa Federation (Karugire, 1980).

In 1961, the idea of the East African Federation was further considered with the formation of the East Africa Common Services Organization (EACSO), and the three states met to discuss the establishment of a federation. The already established common market, a Central Legislative Assembly and Executive made the idea of a federation achievable superficially. However, there were other unanswerable questions, for example, the site for the federal capital, who was to head the federation; there were also disagreements on the division of state and federal power, land, citizenship and borrowing powers (Nabudere, 1982). At this time, there was internal cohesion in East Africa which the colonialist had laid way back, centered on ethnicity in managing state affairs, most especially in Uganda and Tanzania. In the field of education, colonial education had divided Africans along religious lines, as you hardly found a protestant African in a Catholic school, a Christian African in a Moslem school, or either. This clearly indicates that colonial education was intended to train Africans for religious purposes and to foster colonial intentions.

Politically, Buganda and the Central government were fighting for political power and ownership. Uganda People's Congress party president, Dr. Apollo Milton Obote was no more enthusiastic than Kabaka Sir Edward Muteesa II when he asserted, that it was futile to try to think outside Uganda before solving internal problems (Mamdani, 1994). Where as in 1964, Tanganyika and Zanzibar united as an independent state and this smaller union opened the eyes of this region as a whole to the difficulties involved in such a venture, as Tanzania's socialism destroyed the bond of relationship which had been forged over the last years to establish the federation (Kasaija, 2006).

The post-colonial East Africa has had its own share of political, social and economic challenges which many politicians and the European Union believe can best get addressed through the East African Federation, putting much emphasis on a political and economic unity. For this, president Museveni acknowledged, that for the revived East African Community to make sense, it has to evolve away from a political fragmentation as there is lack of a superstructure necessary for the integration process, (Museveni, 1998). For the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the idea of the East African Federation is presumed mainly to remedy trade and economic imbalances between member states through economic planning under one East African federal government. Politically, the idea of the East African Federation is intended to maintain peace, security and stability among member states, the issues of tribalism, and social structure problems, including illiteracy might tend to disappear, and people would then begin to identify themselves as East Africans. It is also believed that a federation could be a solution to any real or potential problem of internal security. This would therefore, remove any possibility of regional societies, or partner states fighting each other and this may strengthen the political stability in the region (Kasaija, 2006: 6).

However, even then, there are unanswered questions, such as the issue of kingdoms, personal or group interests, dictatorship and ethnicity where groups dictate political terms only accepted to themselves to overthrow the existing order (Mudoola, 1993: 1). A case in point is that of Uganda when president Museveni changed the constitution to run for a third term. This was not welcomed in some partner states as this issue came on the floor of Tanzanian parliament when Hon. Phileman Ndesamburo argued, that Tanzania should withdraw from the East Africa Federation to protect her credibility, as Tanzania was not ready to co-operate with an undemocratic country that wants to have a life president (The New Vision, 2006: 8, 9, 37).

This study hypothesizes that, these differences in ideology between member states might be the major impediments of the East African Federation, which in this research are attributed to ethnicity. This confirms that the East African states that seek to federate seem to have not achieved the level of understanding and acceptance of the rights and responsibilities among the totality of its citizens that is required for the maintenance and improvement of any constitutional democracy. This seems to have occurred because of ethnic sentiments and misconceptualisation of the prospects of the East African Federation in Uganda and East Africa in general by the citizens. For this reason even today, we can borrow the late Dr. Milton Obote's remarks made in 1963 when he said, "there are still points which must be settled before and not after the East African Federation is formed, and which could explain why the federation will not come into being this year...".

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was utilized as revealed by (Amin, 2005: Creswell, 2003: Amin, 2004: and Gray et al., 1996) concerning the nature of such studies. The study parent population was East Africa with 141.8 million, (United Nations Fund for Population Activities report 2013). The target population was Uganda which has an approximate population of 34.5 million people, (United Nations Fund for Population Activities report, 2013). The study was carried out in Kampala, Masaka, Mutukula, Nimule, Malaba and Katuna, and focused on politicians, civil servants, businessmen and women, cultural leaders, and border communities within the region, and according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) study, 384 respondents were sampled using purposive, simple random and convenience sampling techniques, and analysis was done descriptively.

**RESULTS****Ethnicity and Political Unity****Table 1: Participants' understanding of East African Federation in relation to Political Unity**

	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. dev</b>
1.	It is possible to have an East African Political Federation.	106 (39.1%)	74 (27.3%)	22 (8.1%)	51 (18.8%)	18 (6.6%)	2.27	1.326
2.	Ethnicity / tribe has influenced the inception and formation of the East African Political Federation.	52 (19.3)	88 (32.6%)	31 (11.5%)	83 (30.7%)	16 (5.9%)	2.71	1.251
3.	The political situation of Uganda can lead to the East African Federation.	98 (36.8%)	95 (35.7%)	33 (12.4%)	26 (9.8%)	14 (5.3%)	2.11	1.162
4.	The president of Uganda is willing to surrender power to the central authority.	160 (59.5%)	61 (22.7%)	26 (9.7%)	17 (6.3%)	5 (1.9%)	1.68	1.008
5.	It is very possible for the Ugandan people who share different cultures to unite under a federation.	85 (32.0%)	73 (27.4%)	24 (9.0%)	59 (22.2%)	25 (9.4%)	2.50	1.380
6.	In the East African Federation, the people of Uganda will forget their cultures and adapt to one central unit.	104 (38.7%)	82 (30.5%)	29 (10.8%)	42 (15.6%)	12 (4.5%)	2.17	1.224
7.	People of Uganda are ready for the East African Federation by 2012.	102 (38.1%)	66 (24.6%)	67 (25.0%)	24 (9.0%)	9 (3.4%)	2.15	1.129
8.	Ugandans have tribal differences within themselves but when they join the East African Federation, all that will be forgotten.	105 (39.0%)	81 (30.1%)	38 (14.1%)	35 (13.0%)	10 (3.7%)	2.12	1.173
9.	The political problems of Uganda can be solved if they join the federation.	84 (31.7%)	55 (20.8%)	38 (14.3%)	67 (25.3%)	21 (7.9%)	2.57	1.366
10	All people's political interests in the region will be fulfilled when they join the federation.	94 (35.5%)	77 (29.1%)	40 (15.1%)	38 (14.3%)	16 (6.0%)	2.26	1.248

The findings in Table 1, illustrate that a big number of respondents on different items were negative about the possible political unity of East African States. This is because of their

different interpretations of cultures, traditions, norms, customs and origin of their peoples. In the first item when the respondents were asked whether it was true that the East African states can unite and be ruled by one president, 180 (66.4%) respondents disagreed, while 69 (2.54%) respondents agreed. This means that the impossibility of a political unity to these states is a result of the difference in ethnic and cultural background of the people in the region. The above quantitative findings are also in agreement with the qualitative findings in which some respondents were not comfortable with issues of the East African Federation. For example, one academician in a Ugandan public university, in the age bracket of 80 and above years replied:

*We don't seem to have the political federation of East Africa soon. Look, we Ugandans ourselves are not united, for me I love my Kabaka and my kingdom (Buganda). So let those so-called intelligent politicians first give us federal, then we can think about a larger federation.*

*(Interviewed on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2012)*

While the other female respondent in the age bracket of 40-59 years when asked whether Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda can unite into one political federation, she replied:

*You see people forget that we are all human beings but we are of different origins and backgrounds. How do you expect me a Munyoro and my fellow Banyoro to forget what Baganda did to us while in a federation? You simply do not know what you are talking about! We have suffered because of you Buganda and these Bazungu (the British) and now you want us to forget that you are bad people to us, it is impossible!*

*(Interviewed on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2012).*

In the second and third items when respondents were asked whether the political situation of Uganda can lead to the East African political unity, and whether the East African states have much in common thus ease of federating, 140 (51.9%) and 193 (72.5%) respondents disagreed while 42 (14.8%) and 99 (36.6%) agreed. This implies that the interpretation of the East African federation by the citizens is ethnic ridden, and ethnicity to a big extent influences the formation of the East African Federation.

From the interview guides, different respondents noted that ethnicity has a big influence on the formation of the East African Federation. For example, they noted that, in almost all elections in the country, be it presidential, Parliamentary, District level, or below, ethnicity plays a crucial role. A case in point was that of the just concluded elections of the speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly that was overshadowed by ethnicity, which Hon. Margaret Zziwa won, one Muganda civil servant replied, "Zziwa, the newly elected speaker of East African Legislative Assembly is a win for Buganda Kingdom in the battle for tribal dominance" (Monitor Newspaper of 10<sup>th</sup> June 2012). While a cabinet Minister on the same incidence commented with concern that, "East African Legislative Assembly speaker election exposed the deep seated tribalism, nepotism, arrogance and greed among some Ugandans who want to grab every big office and resources for themselves..." (Monitor News of 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012).

In item six when the respondents were asked whether they can forget their cultures and adapt to one central unity in the East African Federation, 186 (69.2%) disagreed while only 54 (20.1%) agreed. In addition, on item seven when the respondents were asked whether they were ready for the East African Federation by 2013, 168 (62.7%) disagreed while 33 (12.4%) agreed. This implies that the people of Uganda feel so much as East Africans but they do not feel that they are part of the East African Federation. This is because of their different contrasting interpretations of cultures and tribes. The essence of the above argument was supported by the oral interview guide when respondents were asked whether the people of Uganda can forget their cultural differences, cultures, norms, customs and traditions and embark on the unity of the East African Federation, one female respondent hailing from Northern region replied;

*I think people should stop fantacising, you people in central and western Uganda have imposed war on us close to twenty-five years and now after retarding our region, then you want us to join you in a funny federation, and then you continue exploiting us, never.*

*(Interviewed on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2012).*

While another respondent from western Uganda replied;

*Let the people who want us to join the federation, first install and recognize our Omugabe and our kingdom, or else their projected federation will be a lost cause in our region. I have heard some of my colleagues promoting it for reasons that we shall enjoy the political offices of the federation because Museveni will be in power, but many of us we do not want, because he has been in power still and our Omugabe is still suffering with his people.*

*(Interviewed on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2012)*

In addition, another respondent from central region replied;

*“It is clear that you cannot mix oranges and tomatoes simply because oranges are fruits and tomatoes are vegetables. This is my position about the East African Federation. I want to know the position of king (Kabaka Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II) and the position of my kingdom while in your fake federation. I say it is fake because it is very artificial and superficial.”*

*(Interview one 18<sup>th</sup> March 2012)*

In item eight, when the respondents were asked whether Ugandans can forget their tribal differences when they join the East African Federation, 186 (69.1%) disagreed while 45 (13.31%) agreed. The results were supported by interview when, one respondent from Eastern region replied, “tribe and culture are a natural phenomenon, whether national or international, it is unquestionable. My culture and king are above your so-called federation” (Interviewed on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2012).

In addition, another respondent replied;

*I think the East African Federation is not well conceptualized to us and all the people of Uganda. In my region, we don't understand its objectives and we*

*don't even want policies that will continue to divide us. It will only benefit you people in central and western Uganda, who think this country, is yours alone.*

*(Interviewed on 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2012)*

The implication here is that the East African Political Federation is a misconception to many Ugandans especially at the grassroots. Its objectives are totally not understood and people think the elements that define their tribes, customs, cultures and traditions will be diluted or delete when join the political federation of East Africa.

In items nine and ten when the respondents were asked whether the political problems of Uganda can be solved if they join the federation, 139 (35.1%) disagreed, while 88 (33.2%) agreed, while on item nine when the respondents were asked whether all people's political interests in the region will be fulfilled when they join the federation, 171 (64.6%) disagreed and 54 (20.3%) agreed. This implied that a political federation was possible to those groups in power and not to in power. This belief was supported by reactions from the interview guides when respondents reacted as follows:

*No, our political problems stem from our tribal regions, so unless that federation begins within our regions, then can apply for international standards, but if the unitary system has almost failed, how do you expect our political problems to be solved by this East African Federation? It is a naked lie.*

*(Interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2012)*

While another respondent replied;

*Am sorry, I cannot see our problems being solved in a federation. Personally, I am not a fan of it because it does not clearly stipulate the position of cultural leaders and their institutions. Why hide that from us, it clearly shows its weaknesses..."*

*(Interviewed on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012)*

In addition, another respondent from central region replied;

*You see, Museveni (President of the Republic of Uganda) has disorganized all kingdoms in Uganda and cultural relations, apart from, of course my kingdom (Buganda). Ours is an institution and not a system. Now he waits people to forget their belongings and then subscribe to their senseless federation. I do not think it is possible. It will exist by force because our leaders want to achieve some hidden agenda, but will eventually collapse.*

*(Interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2012).*

Asked a Muganda member of the Uganda Unite group in the Diaspora replied with the same sentiments as follows;

*We have just witnessed the fast tracking of the EAC when most people in Uganda do not understand the benefits and objectives of EAC. As we speak 70% of Land in Kenya is still owned by white settlers. Without land reforms, it*

*means people will be free to move and buy land anywhere in East Africa, Uganda inclusive. A muzungu from Naivasha will have a right to purchase entire Ssingoo county or Ssesse islands in Buganda. This is a sellout. It seems this organisation is being imposed by orders from above, for selfish gains.*

*(Interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2012).*

Thus ethnicity can explain why the East African Political Federation may not yield success in the region. The perceptions of people do not believe that the political federation is intended to develop their regions, but instead to ruin their traditional and cultural institutions. Thus, the idea of the East African political federation is a kaleidoscope of perceptions and positions with ethnic conflicting interests constantly tumbling over one another and rearranging themselves. The above findings imply that ethnic background plays a crucial role, because of the nature of socialization most Africans undergo and this has a significant impact on the formation of the East African Federation.

### **Ethnicity and Social Unity**

#### **How has ethnicity influenced the formation of the East Africa Social Unity?**

**Table 2: Participants' understanding of East African Federation in relation to Social Unity**

	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev</b>
1.	It is very possible that the people of Uganda will forget their affiliated cultural languages and adapt to Swahili as a major medium of communication.	88 (32.6%)	92 (34.1%)	26 (9.6%)	42 (15.6%)	22 (8.1%)	2.33	1.295
2.	It is very possible for Uganda to adopt a common education system with member states with the same curriculum when they join the federation.	23 (8.5%)	49 (18.1%)	44 (16.3%)	110 (40.7%)	44 (16.3%)	3.38	1.201
3.	The religious differences of the people of Uganda will not overlap the objectives of the East African Federation when they join the federation.	30 (11.3%)	61 (22.9%)	57 (21.4%)	94 (35.3%)	24 (9.0%)	3.08	1.181
4.	All cultural leaders in Uganda and their groups are working towards the success of the East African Federation.	70 (26.6%)	69 (26.2%)	62 (23.6%)	48 (18.3%)	14 (5.3%)	2.49	1.213
5.	While in the federation, people will forget their cultural differences and work towards the success of the East African Federation.	69 (25.6%)	98 (36.3%)	38 (14.1%)	53 (19.6%)	12 (4.4%)	2.41	1.191
6.	The cultures of the people of Uganda are liberal that can	64 (24.1%)	79 (29.7%)	60 (22.6%)	47 (17.7%)	16 (6.0%)	2.52	1.204

	easily be assimilated to suit the East African Federation interests.							
7.	People of Uganda that seek to join the East African Federation are united within their state.	79 (29.5%)	85 (31.7%)	43 (16.0%)	46 (17.2%)	15 (5.6%)	2.38	1.228
8.	The people of Uganda know the importance of joining their states into a federation and are aware of the federation progress.	63 (23.6%)	81 (30.3%)	58 (21.7%)	50 (18.7%)	15 (5.6%)	2.52	1.199
9.	The cultural leaders in Uganda have been catered for in a federation and thus know their role and position when they join the federation.	63 (23.3%)	72 (26.7%)	82 (30.4%)	37 (13.7%)	16 (5.9%)	2.52	1.162
10.	The education system of the Uganda caters for the preparation of its people for the East African federation.	70 (26.1%)	66 (24.6%)	34 (12.7%)	64 (23.9%)	34 (12.7%)	2.72	1.403

The findings in Table 2, illustrate the perceptions of respondents towards different items on the formation of the East African social unity. In item one when the respondents were asked whether it is possible for the people of Uganda to forget their affiliated cultural languages and embrace Swahili as a major means of communication, 180 (66.7%) respondents disagreed while 64 (23.7%) respondents agreed. This implies that ethnicity is a function of culture and it will be one's choice and actions that will lead to the failure of the East African social unity. In culture, a group's language is apparent for communication than a foreign, thus a group's language creates a concept of identity and its application as an instrument in achieving social influence cannot be left out. The results were backed by the respondents on the interview as they replied as follows: One female Member of Parliament in central region remarked;

*Baganda are the most influential tribe with their language in the region to be sincere. Do you think you can convince the Baganda to abandon their Luganda for Swahili? I doubt! Those who have been around know that Swahili was a language used for robbers, it cannot certainly be the main regional language, it will be there by law but in Uganda am sure it will completely be ignored."*

*(Interviewed on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2012)*

Another female respondent argued that;

*I wonder why people are bothered with the language at the expense of actual unity! You cannot impose a language on people but it can be adopted by the needs. So, let us unite and the most influential language will take its course, but am sure according to my experience, that Luganda will surface.*

*(Interviewed on 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2012)*

While another 87-year-old village woman after one hour of interrogation in the Northern region said;

*You are the nicest student I have ever known. No other so-called educationist has ever cared to know my thoughts on so many things, yet my experience can help. We do not want the East African Federation of Museveni type; it will continue to divide our cultures instead of uniting us.*

*(Interviewed on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2012)*

While item on five, when respondents were asked whether they can forget their cultural differences and work towards the success of the East African Federation, one respondent from a centralized tribe in western region replied;

*I do not want to think about any other place in East Africa, because I love Ankole and would rather die than live somewhere else than Mbarara. This federation they want us to embrace is a misfortune to our cultures. Where shall we keep our animals; in Mombasa, Dodoma, or Mbuya, where my relatives stay?*

*(Interviewed on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2012).*

The implication here is that respondents exhibit one common trait they can more easily imagine destroying the self than making the effort of project it beyond the familiar world into a strange. This emphasizes that ethnicity and social unity relations are a psychological trait which appears whenever a constructive personality is found, even when the personality belongs to elite group, in a fair social-economic circumstances, the incapacity to take questions casually to project “impersonally” into the situations of their traditional societies they define, is marked in the social setting where traditions are the rule.

In item six when the respondents were asked whether their cultures are liberal that can easily be assimilated to suit the East African Federation interests, 143 (53.8%) disagreed while 63 (23.7%) agreed. This implies that, much as the cultures of people in Uganda and East Africa is general are related, the fact is that they are not the same and cannot be compatible to another. These cultural differences will be a roadblock to the formation of the East African social unity. This view was also supported by the respondents on the interview guide when they were asked the same item, one male respondent in the Southern region replied;

*Maawe!! How can a Mukonzo be the same to Bamba? How can a Muhima be equal to a Muiro? Can Baganda reconcile with Banyoro? Look at the tribal conflicts in Tororo District today. Can these our intelligent so called leaders spearheading the East African federation answer these questions? If not, the*

*federation will collapse again, we even do not want it, because we are not the same and not equal, and we cannot be. We must live in a class society.*

Another respondent replied;

*I wish they first carry out a referendum on this matter! We have continued to waste time and tax payers' money under the guide of the East African Federation. Sincerely speaking, can we forget our traditions? That is a big no and a big lie.*

*(Interviewed on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2012)*

However, there was a contradiction in the respondents' views and perceptions when asked in item three whether the religious differences of the people in Uganda would not overlap the objectives of the federation, 118 (44.35) agreed while 91 (34.2%) disagreed. This implies that culture is more important to defend than foreign religions. Despite the fact that most Ugandans are affiliated to different foreign religions, they do not regard them as a stumbling block to unity, although it may be otherwise – as the 34.2% respondents believe. The value of this argument was expressed by the respondents in an interview. One female Member of Parliament from western region said;

*We can all be in a federation- irrespective of our religious differences, if at all we were of the same origin, but the way I see in Uganda, we may be a stumbling block to the East African federation. If we are not united within ourselves, then how can we be united in East African/the federation is a joke!*

*(Interviewed on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2012)*

Another male respondent in Eastern Uganda stated the case for constriction very concisely;

*I do not like the idea, although it's a good one, but rushed, because our leaders have a hidden agenda. Look, what do you expect and think of the person attacked by jiggers and are a problem to him. Can he be part of a fully developmental so called East African federation? So unless we settle scores at the grassroots by providing services, the idea will not be successful."*

*(Interviewed on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2012).*

While a 39-year old horse wagon driver echoed these sentiments on the question;

*Am not so much of a politician but I am a concerned citizen I have seen here how tribalism coupled with religious differences destroying Uganda, and now what about the federation? Perhaps we even do not know much about it, we only know one thing, East African federation and nothing beyond.*

*(Interviewed on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2012).*

Another cultural leader in central region asked whether his people would accept the East African Federation, replied,

*It is possible, but it must interest the whole region. It is good to have a region's central unity with no national boarder barriers, except traditional ones because the traditional ones define our identity and this can adjust the taxes according to social justice that these people impose my subjects.*

*(Interviewed on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2012)*

And another respondent, who said he is a royal supplemented,

*It is better to base the East African Federation on traditional doctrines, and government to do things private enterprise cannot do in order to have safety from aggression, and create friendlier relations with people of all different tribes, because no one single person has ever applied to God to access his/her tribe. So why do you mistreat them? It is the reason why their federation will be a lost cause.*

*(Interviewed on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2012).*

These attitudes are found mainly among the older and youthful citizens but here against, the responses were selected to show that high empathy is essentially a personal characteristic that occurs among groups that are sociologically diversified. To this, an educated youth is equally pained of the East African social unity for the reasons;

*Most of the leaders in East Africa (presidents) do not even know of our existence, and some who know think we are living in the days of our ancestors. They say we (Baganda) are conservative, but that is part of civilization. This is the basis of society development, look at unity kingdom, Germany is now restoring kingship, Holland, and the list is endless. So, the common sensitivity to public attitudes of our political leaders about the East African Federation in the region, including use of modernism as a standard of judgment must stop.*

*(Interviewed on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2012).*

Preference for this argument is a modern nation limited even in the most centralized areas like central region (Kampala) to a relatively small segment of the population. A valuable set of experiments has shown that the East African federation cannot attain social unity of their citizens and thus the idea of the East African social unity is a condition of persuasion by political leaders. The idea is constructive but it is exacerbated by the traditional beliefs among Ugandans. The implication here is that if these societies politically join into a federation, the multi social interaction is likely to cause more ethnic divisions and hatred among groups, and the end result will be collapse of the East African Federation since each groups' culture will want to topple another while in the federation.

**Ethnicity and Economic Unity****How has ethnicity influenced the formation of the East African economic unity?****Table 3: Participants' understanding of East African Federation on relation to Economic Unity**

	ITEM	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	Std. dev.
1.	Is it very possible for the five East African countries to have one common currency?	35 (12.9%)	36 (13.3%)	18 (6.6%)	90 (33.2%)	92 (33.9%)	3.62	1.401
2.	Do you agree that in the East African Federation, Uganda will not be affected by trade restrictions in the region?	26 (9.6%)	58 (21.5%)	44 (16.3%)	76 (28.1%)	66 (24.4%)	3.36	1.317
3.	Uganda is at the same level of economic development with the member states that seek to federate.	105 (39.2%)	115 (42.9%)	17 (6.3%)	25 (9.3%)	6 (2.2%)	1.93	1.014
4.	Ugandan ethnic groups have the same economic interests with other member states that seek to federate.	61 (22.8%)	91 (34.0%)	48 (17.9%)	53 (19.8%)	15 (5.6%)	2.51	1.201
5.	The people of Uganda can better realize and satisfy their economic development goals easily if they join the federation. Why?	46 (17.2%)	67 (25.0%)	46 (17.2%)	83 (31.0%)	26 (9.7%)	2.91	1.278
6.	Before joining the federation, Ugandans are sure they are not indebted to the world bank, or have no foreign debts.	89 (33.5%)	75 (28.2%)	59 (22.2%)	28 (10.5%)	15 (5.6%)	2.27	1.191
7.	Ugandans will be part of the group that will fully achieve the East African Federation by 2013.	71 (27.0%)	76 (28.9%)	61 (23.2%)	41 (15.6%)	14 (5.3%)	2.43	1.193
8.	The people of Uganda can only solve their economic problems by uniting into the East African Federation.	61 (22.8%)	93 (34.8%)	36 (13.5%)	58 (21.7%)	19 (7.1%)	2.55	1.254
9.	Uganda has no internal tribal problems related to economic struggles before joining the federation.	133 (50.0%)	90 (33.8%)	24 (9.0%)	14 (5.3%)	5 (1.9%)	1.75	.955

The findings in Table 3, represent different perceptions on several items about the relationship between ethnicity and economic unity. In item one 182 (67.1%) respondents agreed that East African states can have one common currency while 71 (26.2%) disagreed,

and in item two, when respondents were asked whether Uganda will not be affected by trade restrictions while in the federation, 142 (52.5%) agreed while 81 (31.1%) respondents disagreed. The implication of this is that people are willing to join the East African economic federation, where they think have benefits over others. This view was also expressed by the respondents on the interview guide when asked the same items, a male business entrepreneur in Kampala but coming from western region responded: “It is a good idea, but our government officials may fail us. There is nothing that has destroyed this state like ethnopolitics related to economic diversity! Many Ugandans will suffer as ofcourse; others enjoy....” (Interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012).

While another Member of Parliament from central region replied;

*We Ugandans are the most feared and respected in terms of economic potential. In Uganda, we (Baganda) are the most skilled tribe and I know when they open up their fee markets, free movement of labour, and other economic programs, do not get surprised that we shall expand out influence in the region, but of course strengthening our stronghold.*

*(Interviewed on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2012).*

However, in the rest of the items, the participants responded in disagreement with the first two items. In item four and five when the respondents were asked whether Uganda has the same economic interests with other member states that seek to federate, 152 (56.8%) disagreed while 68 (25.4%) agreed, and in item five when respondents were asked whether the people of Uganda can better realize and satisfy their economic development goals easily if they join the federation, 113 (42.2%) disagreed, while 109 (40.7%) agreed. The disagreement and agreement here is two-fold; the first one is that those societies that have advanced economically and conservative with their traditions disagreed to join the East African federation in order to maintain the status quo. Second, while those societies especially acephalous and feel have been excluded in matters concerning national economic life, agreed to join the federation simply because they do feel the united federation can boost their economic prosperity. This was reflected by the respondents on the interview guide. One respondent in northern region, particularly in Karamoja when asked replied;

*The East African Federation idea will be good for us in Karamoja, since now we shall be in one region without stained boundary conflicts. Hope it will give us a wide range of economic benefits to expand on our cattle ranches, hunt those cattle, wrestlers deep in their hiding, and expand on our market in the region.*

*(Interviewed on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2012).*

While another male entrepreneur who originates in the southern region responded;

*Yes, let us join it and put an end to these endless boundary conflicts in our region, and reduce on inequality, but let me warn the planners that if their programme is intended to demolish our identity then the idea will collapse.*

*(Interviewed on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2012).*

On the other hand, respondents in centralized and conservative societies responded differently from the above. When asked, one traditional royalist and businessman in central region replied;

*What will confuse this country more is this idea of the East African federation. For example, compare our national currency to all other national currency in the region, the politics and government social relations, my friend there is another agenda these leaders want to achieve but hiding under the auspices of the East African Federation.*

*(Interviewed on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2012).*

For this reason, it was not surprising that in item seven when the respondents were asked whether Ugandans will be part of the group that will fully achieve the East African federation by 2013, 147 (55.9%) disagreed, while 55 (20.9%) agreed. This shows that, the ethnocentric beliefs among Ugandans will have negative implication to the East African Federation. When asked in the interview guide, the following were the reactions;

One respondent in Nimule, Northern Uganda, replied;

*The problem with our government is skipping development stages. You can really imagine how one thinks of regional unity before national unity. We can to a certain extent achieve economic unity but even then, it will be influential by political unity, and the result will be collapse.*

*(Interviewed on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2012).*

While a grocer in the Southern region replied; “When you make people suffer so much, your government segregates them, deny them right to economic prosperity and freedoms they end up hating all your programmes. For me, the East African Federation is circus as you will witness” (Interviewed on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2012).

On items eight and nine, when respondents were asked whether the people of Uganda can only solve their economic problems by uniting into a federation, 154 (57.6%) disagreed while 77 (28.8%) agreed. On item nine when asked whether Uganda has no internal problems related to economic struggles before joining the federation 223 (83.8%) respondents disagreed while 23 (7.2%) agreed. The meaning of this is that Ugandans need some time to settle some scores within their economic development before joining the federation. These scores are ethnic related between tribes neighboring one another, and also ethnic forces in government jobs especially in the civil service. In addition, Ugandans feel that no one should intervene in the solving their internal problems themselves. These economic problems that they face were cited as poor road infrastructure, poor education system and facilitation in different schools located in the research studied regions, segregation in accessing government jobs, awarding government tenders, among others as indicated by respondents on the interview guide as follows;

One female respondent in Amuria district in northern Uganda expressed her view;

*Now for us we only talk about our maama Mabira (referring to the District woman member of parliament in the region Honorable Beatrice Atim Anywar) and at the rate we see and hear names from central and western Uganda in*

*the government! You killed us and you want us now to join you and now continue to destroy our property?*

*(Interviewed on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2012).*

Another member of parliament in western Uganda belonging to the ruling national resistance movement replied;

*For me I find the idea good but hard to achieve. It is the people power who accept, not the leaders. My people I represent in parliament do not know anything about the East African Federation. Now even many of us, legislators cannot explain the idea in details on television or radio. It is a waste of time and tax payers' money!*

*(Interviewed on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2012).*

While a female member of parliament in the central region responded; “We need to do the right things first before we think of the East African economic unity and the whole federation. We shall mix many programmes without consultations from the people and the end result will be chaos” (Interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012).

And a business tycoon in central region replied;

*For us who have been here before Museveni's government have seen how and why the first attempted east African economic organization collapsed in 1967. On the basis of that experience, I do not know why this one will survive, simply because it is faced with similar challenges.*

*(Interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012).*

The economic federation that Uganda wants to achieve with its member states in the region will so much be influenced by people's origins and perceptions like in the past.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the above analysis, to a large extent, ethnicity influences the formation of East African Political, social and economic unity in Uganda. This is because of the different and contrasting interpretation of cultures, norms, customs and traditions of Ugandan people cannot allow the idea of the East African Political Federation to be successful, as it is projected. The rigid divide in the methodological application of cultural and rational accounts among Ugandan ethnic groups, the strategic policies linking individuals to ethnic violence and violent ethnic behavior reflect specific social processes in Ugandan society and this has influenced the formation of the East African Federation negatively. The specification of what their processes are, the precise mechanisms by which they lead to ethnically based violence, and to the testing of these specifications within the predicted East African Federation, will pose a great challenge to the realization of a fruitful East African political, social and economic Unity of Ugandans.

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