



**THE DISCOURSE OF NON-CITIZENS EXPULSION REINVIGORATED:
EXAMINATION OF RACIAL UNDERTONES IN ASIANS EXPULSION FROM
UGANDA IN 1972**

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ABSTRACT: *The expulsion of non-citizens from countries around the globe is not a new phenomenon. In Africa, there have been numerous documented and undocumented cases after the continent acquired political independence in the 1960's. In the critical antiracist study, forceful expulsion of citizens of another country may constitute racism. However, our position in this paper is that expulsion of non-citizens for the interest of the host country is not necessarily a racial act. It is on this basis that we examine the expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972 and argue that the act, at the basic level of bigotry analysis may not have constituted racism. However, categorizing the Asians population in Uganda by then, the main argument in this paper justifies the expulsion for certain groups on one hand. But on the other hand, we admonish the Uganda government for collective expulsion of the Asians whose ancestors were brought in the country in the late 19th century to build the Uganda railway. Furthermore, the paper argues that as much as many of the Asians were second or third generations having been born in Uganda and were legal citizens, they do not fall within the category of indigenous population. Therefore, their expulsion based on indigeneity and correcting economic imbalance by then is racially unbiased and defensible.*

KEYWORDS: Non-citizens, Expulsion, Racism, Legal Citizens, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

According to Stuart Hall (1992 p. 56), “a discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a particular kind of knowledge”. In the contemporary society where unequal power relation is embedded, discourses become exceptionally powerful because they depict ways that society engage with and construct meaning in a particular way. Besides constructing meaning, discourses also control the alternative ways in which meaning can be produced, disseminated and sustained sometimes with bias. To illustrate how powerful a discourse can influence the ways society construct and develop biases, Swiney (2006) noted that polls conducted in the US prior to 9/11 reported over 80 percent of Americans objected to racial profiling. However, due to the Islamophobic discourses constructed after 9/11, the polls shifted. Close to 60% of the general US population were in favour of racial profiling post 9/11 especially when directed at Muslims and Arab minority. Racialized discourses embedded in national policies has a high potential of heightening discriminatory practices against people



from certain ethnic or faith groups. A 2001 US poll showed that close to 58% of Muslim Americans were victims of racial discrimination. Further, by January 2002, 1700 incidences of physical assault and discrimination against Muslim and Arabic people were reported to civil rights organizations across the US. Additionally, violence, torture, death threats, illegal and discriminatory removal of passengers from airplanes and employment discrimination aimed directly at those perceived to be either Muslim or Arabs increased since the 9/11 attacks (Swiney, 2006). Certainly, this degree of racial bias is in no way a positive representation often associated with the West where freedom of religion, associations, expressions are supposedly the pillars of democracy.

In Uganda, one such discourse which has received considerable attention in the social-political history over the past four decades is the 1972 expulsion of non-citizen Asians from Uganda. Expulsion of non-citizens by host governments is not a new concept. However, when racial label appears to guide it, it attracts considerable local and international attention and hence the need for careful examination. The term Asians in Uganda included people of India, Pakistan and Bangladeshi origins. They were a minority group, which was identified by their racial, religious and physical characteristics. The existence of a minority in society signifies the existence of a corresponding dominant group and for the purpose of this paper, the dominant group was the indigenous Black Africans with Uganda ancestry. The distinction between the indigenous and Asian immigrant communities were along the lines of economic class that was a direct legacy of British colonial administration policies. In the book "*Modes of British imperial control of Africa. A case study of Uganda, c. 1890-1990*", Adyanga (2011) argued that the colonial administration, by various means ensured that Africans developed as a cheap labour pool and Asians as the middle economic class. The disparity in wealth was visible in economic, social welfare and living standard. It created resentment and the need for redress in the post independence era. We should note that the redress was necessary though not an embracement of measures that President Amin executed against Asians, which was inhumane and unacceptable.

This paper argues that General Idi Amin was right in expelling exploitative non-citizens to safeguard the economic interests of Uganda. However, it recognizes that the very short time duration for the expulsion did not give the expelled non-citizens the opportunity to liquidate their businesses and assets in a humane manner without causing undue hardship. President Idi Amin's expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972 is examined for three reasons. First, the expulsion captured much international attention without a clear delimitation of the Asian groups that were expelled, that is, non-citizens. Second, because of the inhumane method of expulsion executed in just three months (August – November), about 80,000 (BBC World News, 1972) Asians were forcefully removed from Uganda. Third, there wasn't any compensation for the assets that were appropriated by the state. The asset was estimated to be of the value of Uganda shillings 40,500,996 (Uganda news bulletin, 1978).

This paper is divided into five main parts: the first part reviews literature on the expulsion/deportations of non-citizens by states from round the world. The second part anchors the preceding discussions within an antiracist theoretical framework. It briefly sheds lights on two forms of racism (old and new racism) as extensively espoused by Romm (2010). In dissecting the two types of racism, the paper situates the Asian expulsion from Uganda within the terrain of new racism. The third part provides the historical background of the Ugandan Asians, how they came to be in East Africa. It also examines colonial policy favoring Europeans and Asians at the expense of indigenous Ugandans and how this such policy led to



formation of the class system in Uganda. It argues that by favoring the two groups over native Africans, the British colonial administration laid the foundation of bigotry in Uganda that later culminated into animosity against Asians. The fourth part examines the expulsion of Asians from Uganda with the arguments that this act was amplified not only by colonial legacy, but also by the Asians abuse and exploitation of the very economy that earned them a living. And the last part offers a conclusion.

Documented Expulsion of Non-Citizens from a Global Perspective

Existing literature demonstrates that forceful expulsion of non-citizens by governments as a social, economic, and political redress is not new. In trying to understand this phenomenon, our analysis situates race and ethnicity at the center stage. Depending on the circumstance for the expulsion, the act of non-citizens' removal may or not amount to racialism by the expelling authority. There are numerous examples in history where non-citizens have been asked by the government hosting them to leave. For example, in 1492, Spain expelled minority Jews who had settled, intermarried and assimilated with Spaniards in the name of purifying Catholicism (Amor, 2003). The expulsion was morally flawed since it used religion as a justification to target minority Jews who imposed no economic, political or security threats to Spain. Taking advantage of the situation, some crafty Spanish ship captains overcharged the fleeing Jewish passengers only to dump them overboard in the middle of the ocean. Furthermore, rumors had spread throughout Spain in the last days of the expulsion that the fleeing refugees had swallowed gold and diamonds. As a result, many Jews were lacerated to death by criminals in search of treasures (Telushkin, 1991) believed to be hidden in victims' bellies. A catholic priest, Father Tomas de Torquemada was the chief architect of the Jewish expulsion from Spain. Driven by religious jealousy, Torquemada believed that Jewish continued presence in Spain would dilute Christianity by influencing many converts into practicing Judaism.

The expulsion order according to Telushkin (1991), issued on March 30th, 1492 by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, was to take effect in four months. The short timeframe forced the Jews to liquidate their homes and businesses at give away prices. And because it was chaotically done, thousands of the expelled Jews died in the commotion to reach safety. The expelled Jews fled to Turkey, Portugal, Italy, North Africa and some to the Arab world. Although executed under the pretext of religious purity, we argue that racial bias against the Jews also influenced the expulsion. This is because the expellees were not given the choice to willingly or forcefully convert to Christianity as was the case in Portugal where ten of thousands of Jews were converted to Christianity although at the threat of death.

According to US Immigration Services, over one million Mexican migrants were deported in 1954. The formal claim was that these migrants had entered the country illegally and their removal was in accordance with the US law. Using a process codenamed "Operation Wetback", tens of thousands of immigrants were forcefully removed from the US and deported to Mexico (Astor, 2009). In the deportation process, many deportees were crammed into boats which were compared to slave ships. Many others died of sunstroke, starvation and diseases in the process (Hernández, 2006; Maeve, 2016). It is argued that Operation Wetback was conducted with the cooperation of the Mexican government which sought the return of Mexican nationals to alleviate a labor shortage in Mexico. Human rights activists argued that the operation used widespread racial stereotypes to justify the brutal treatment of immigrants. This was coupled with anti-Mexican sentiments that were gaining ground in the US, and negative depictions of Mexicans as disease ridden and dirty. As one social critic told Cable News Network (CNN) in



2016, the operation was lawless and was arbitrary. It was based on xenophobia, and it resulted in sizable large-scale violations of people's rights. Although millions of Mexicans had legally entered the country through joint immigration programs in the first half of the 20th century, Operation Wetback was deliberately hatched to return them to Mexico (Maeve, 2016; Blakemore, 2019).

Equally in December 1969, Ghana expelled 1 million Nigerian citizens who had fled the Biafra war (Peil, 1974). This extradition took place at the height of the Nigerian civil war (1967-70) and political turmoil in other West African countries. The expulsion was unjustified, and we argue that it was either ethnically motivated or driven by nationalist interests, since it took place at a time when Nigeria was at the peak of a civil war and targeted mainly Nigerian refugees. Any government claiming to safeguard the interests of its citizens need not to act inhumanely to refugees even though they have a claimed justification of protecting national interest. Nigeria later expelled hundreds of Ghanaians immigrants in 1980 (Okere, 1983; Van Hear, Nicholas 1998). In our view, the Nigerian expulsion of Ghanaian citizens was an act of retribution. However, with detailed scrutiny of the expulsion, one finds good ground to defend Nigeria from claims of ethnic or nationalist bias because only illegal immigrants were expelled. Those with legal status were allowed to stay. What was, however, contentious were the methods used to carry out the expulsion which is not a subject of this paper. Elsewhere in the continent, Zaire expelled over 6,000 non-citizens who had settled and intermarried with the Zairian population (Gupta, 1974). They were ordered to leave by Zairian president Gen. Mobutu Sese Kuku.

In Uganda, Obote's first government expelled thousands of Kenyan immigrants after a debate over their contribution to the economy of Uganda. Later when Amin came to power, in the second republic of Uganda, he too expelled thousands of Asians. Our rendition of the expulsions is that every state has the legal authority to exercise its own laws regarding nationality and naturalization. Each state acts differently in implementing citizenship laws depending on the political and economic circumstance of the time.

The concept of citizenship refers to a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community, and those who possess this status are equal with respect to rights and duties with which they are endowed (Marshal, 1963). Practically, all citizens in Uganda have equal rights. But resident tourists have limited rights. This is because the laws of the republic of Uganda stipulates that resident non-citizens are given the right to earn a living under prescribed limitations whereas, tourists or visiting students are generally excluded from the right to earn a living but may have civil rights conferred upon them in terms of the ability to utilize due process of the law. While one may accept the theoretical equality offered by citizenship, in practice one must recognize that the variety of legal, administrative and customary laws that are offered in many, if not all societies, must protect civil rights. Within the citizenship category in Uganda, there are people who were indigenous to the land and hence became citizens automatically after independence in 1962, while the non-indigenous people either acquired citizenship through the legally established process or were born in the country by non-citizen parents and thus became citizens though not indigenous. In terms of rights, they enjoy equal rights with those who acquire citizenship by descent.



Anti Colonial and Antiracist Theory

In trying to understand the practice of racial (overt or covert) discrimination in a society, it's imperative that we use appropriate frameworks to theorize the socially discriminatory practices that construe groups within a society to be label racial. Hence for this study, we have chosen to use anticolonial and antiracist theoretical frameworks to critically examine the four decades' ago Asian expulsion from Uganda. Anticolonial theorizing is important for understanding our collective past in the pursuit of anti-colonial politics of resistance to make sense of the present (Dei and Kemp, 2006; Adyanga, 2014) predicament. By placing the political economy of Uganda within a colonial context, anticolonial theory enables us to understand the roots of the mistrust between the native Black Africans in Uganda and their Indian counterparts, many of whom had claimed indigeneity within the land by virtue of birth and long-term occupancy. Wane (2011) argues that anticolonial thought is a search for ways of dismantling colonialism and neo-colonialism—visible and invisible—as well as finding ways of dealing with psychological traumas occasioned by colonialism. She suggested that it is important for contemporary scholars to get back to the source and discover how colonialism as a theory, project, praxis, and discourse managed to produce and reproduce itself. It is this call for revisiting the initial contacts between the colonizer and the colonized that brings us to an appreciation of the roots of animosity towards Asian community by then. In a different piece, Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) engaged anticolonial theory as a dialogue. They argue that the power and discourse are not possessed by the colonizer only. Discursive agency and the power of resistance also reside among the marginalized and the colonized. Anti-colonial theory arises out of alternative, oppositional paradigms, which are in turn based on indigenous thoughts, analytical systems, and cultural frames of reference (cf. Adyanga, 2014). They further argued that the relevance of a theory should be seen in how it allows us to understand the complexity of human society and to offer social and political remedies. This implies the power of theories to bring about change and transformation in social life. Their positions however depart from Fanon's (1963) ideas on the significance of using force to confront colonial violence and injustices (cf. Adyanga, 2014). Inversely, much as we appreciate the context of Fanon's writing, we see sustainable remedies to social, political and economic problems vested in the power of dialogue.

Antiracist theory on the other hand grounds the discussion by unpacking the social-political trajectory of racial discrimination in society. In agreement with anticolonial scholars, Hall (1981 p.14) argues and states that racism “is grounded in the relations of slavery, colonial conquest, economic exploitation and imperialism, in which Europeans have stood in relation to the ‘native peoples’ of the colonized and exploited periphery”. Extending this line of thoughts, Dei (1996) states that:

“Anti-racism is a critical discourse of race and racism in society and of the continuing racializing of social groups for differential and unequal treatment. Anti-racism explicitly names the issues of race and social difference as an issue of power and equity... The historical processes of European colonization, culture and political imperialism, and enslavement of the worlds' indigenous and non-White people are juxtaposed to simplistic notions of racial domination and difference based on skin color and “natural” difference.” (p. 25).

As a social construct, Omi & Winant (1993) point out that race is a powerful “...fundamental principle of social organization and identity formation and in a racialized society, to be without



racial identity is to be in danger of having no identity” (p. 5). Articulated in terms of categories, Romm (2010) states with the South African context that old and new racism exists. Old racism is seen as manifested when White people blatantly make use of apartheid-styled racial labelling to denigrate and mark others as inferior. Other scholars view antiracist thoughts as a discourse and pedagogy that is not concerned merely with intellectualizing race, but it also incorporates political action and community building (Dei, 1999; Romm, 2010). With the regards to Asian expulsion, the action of President Idi Amin by then was welcomed by a wide section of Black Africans in Uganda and across Africa as nationalistic. These sections of Africans largely dismissed any claims to racial biases in the expulsion.

Again, Romm (2010) takes a gendered analytical lens to espouse on what she calls “new racism.” She constructively articulates the concept with reflective unpleasant (and of course discriminatory) practises and comments directed at the female bodies. Racial practices exist because society continues to produce, reproduce and sustain it in everyday life in different shapes. Our reading of antiracist scholars (Omi and Winant; 1993; Dei, 1999; Room, 2010) bolster the view that racial discrimination is indeed changing shape and transcending hitherto unexplored boundaries. The embryonic dimension of race has largely contributed to (racial) discrimination of formerly dominant groups. The evolving practise of racial segregation hence cannot be squarely tied to whiteness as the perpetuator. Essentially speaking, white identity is fluid and falls within the territory of both the perpetrator and victim as the evolution of society and time contribute to the changing dynamic of race. Based on a study on wage inequality in the US, Reich (1981) revealed that in cities and regions of the United States where the black/white wage difference is so entrenched, it is the case that the wages of white workers are the lowest and inequality among whites is greatest. With this backdrop, we argue that racial biases and related inequality are borderless, exist among dominant groups in society and can imbue practices such as politically motivated bigotry resulting in mass expulsion as discussed earlier in this paper.

Historical Background to the Expulsion of Asians from Uganda

Uganda was made a British sphere of influence by the Anglo-German accord of 1890. In order to implement the declaration of Britain over Uganda, Lord Lugard, an architect of the British Imperialism in Uganda employed Nubian mercenaries (from Nubia in South Sudan) who were abandoned by Emin Pasha to subdue African chieftaincies and kingdoms to colonial rule (Adyanga, 2011). By 1893, Uganda was declared a British protectorate and the indigenous Ugandans and Nubian Africans to be called protected persons (Ibingira, 1973). This however was suspicious for one wonder what these people were being protected from. Certainly, they were not being protected from their African neighbours who were under colonial administration of Britain and other European countries. The so-called protection, we argue was not for, and to the advantage of Ugandans or Nubians. It was the protection of British colonial interests in Uganda from other colonial countries involved in the Anglo-German agreement. To guarantee their interests, Britain did not only utilize the Anglo-German agreement or their physical presence, they evolved a socio-economic system that rested on Asians while the political system resting on the Westminster parliamentary model, would tie Uganda to Britain for many years even after colonial rule ended.



A brief history of the Ugandan Asians

In 1879, Nubian troops mutinied in Uganda and troops were brought from India to subdue them. After the mutiny was suppressed, some stayed in Uganda while others returned to India (Adyanga, 2011). The settled Sikhs were to mark the first batch of Asians to settle in Uganda. In order to link Uganda to Britain, a decision was made to build a railway line from the East African Coast to Uganda, and the construction work started in 1896 from Mombasa – a coastal town using indentured Indian coolies and some 32,000 were imported by 1900. According to Joanna (2009), the origins of the South Asian presence in Uganda have been traced back to the early twentieth century, when South Asians emigrated from the Punjab to the countries of East Africa to work as indentured labour on the Kenya-Uganda railway (Joanna, 2009). For the purpose of this paper, we use the term Asians for classification of people from South Asia. However, given the bias inherent in it, the use of this term has been contested by some scholars in the study of Race and Ethnicity. For instance, Banton (1988) argue that for the people of South Asian origin, “to call them Asians is to classify them according to their geographical origin; to call them Indians is to classify them by their presumed national origin; to call them coloured is to classify them by their appearance. Some individuals are not easily classified” (Banton, 1967 p. 2). However, for this paper, the classification is purposefully used to identify the group of people being examined. This leads us to the question: Why were the Asians given preferential treatment by the British colonial administration over indigenous Africans?

First, right from the onset, the Asians, in their social and economic ways of life were considered by British colonial administration as superior to the native Africans. This is visibly clear in a statement by Lord Lugard, a British imperialist and colonial administrator in Africa when he asserted that “from the overcrowded provinces of India especially, colonists might be drawn, and this would affect a relief to congested districts. From them we could draw labourers, both artisans and coolies, while they might also afford a recruiting ground for soldiers and police. The wants, moreover, of these more civilised settlers wouldvery greatly add to imports, and the products of their industry to the exports.... moreover, their method of agriculture would be imitated by the natives” (Twaddle 1975:91). Secondly, the British colonial administration argued that by opening the country to Indians and commerce, it would generate revenue which would emancipate it from a subservience state. Less urgently.....officials were motivated by the desire to prove that Uganda was an economic asset and not merely a strategic and evangelical acquisition” (Ehrlich, 1965 p. 396). Without trust in native Africans by then, the colonial administration needed a racial group whose loyalty to the establishment could not be questioned. With this, there was no better fit than the Indians, a group the British had colonized since the early 1800’s before colonization of Africa.

The arrival of the Shikh troops and the Indian coolies who later settled in Uganda, emphasized what became to be termed as empire citizenship. This was a substantial derivative of the idea that British Indians from India are part of British empire whereas Ugandans were protected persons based on the idea that they were in a colonial state. We would like to argue that Ugandans were empire citizens as well because of the following reasons; First, no state in the modern sense rests on subjects, but citizens. Ugandans, like the Asians, were subject to British colonial rule. Second, Ugandans knew that the local state (Uganda) was not sovereign that is why they were sending petitions to Britain. Third, the political community in the sense of the modern state we know today, is rooted in ideology of nationalism and patriotism, electioneering or some form of representation. All these were lacking in Uganda, making it part of British empire and its people, ‘empire citizens’.



Therefore, British categorization of their subjects by way of empire citizens and protected persons is analytically racist as well as morally and constitutionally indefensible. Ironically, this language of imperial citizenship which treated Indians as empire citizens did not recognize Indians as equal to British citizens. This is evident in white empire policy which can be illustrated by General Smuts (Patel, 1974). The key controversy was the position of Indians throughout British Empire. Whereas Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru (1875 - 1949) a prominent Indian freedom fighter, lawyer and politician, argued for equality between Indians and Britons, Smut's argument was for continuing segregation in which Britons were higher in ranking order to the non-white empire citizens (Asians). Smut's view was adopted in colonial policy with the consequence that Asians would look at the white Britons as superior to them and the Black Africans as inferior to them. This racist ideology created classes of citizens with respective attendant rights and privileges in the colonial economic policy in Uganda.

Racialization of Indigenous Africans Majority and Favouritism of Asian Minority

At the time of implementing colonial economic policy, the colonial authorities pursued a deliberate racial policy in the development of Uganda. By 1910, the scene in East Africa was set to the extent that the creation of class society started taking root in a once classless society. According to Parson (1973, p. 61), "Administrative and agricultural development were thought to be European occupation; trade and commerce, craftsmanship was relegated to Indians; and the Africans were encouraged to work in European agricultural system and to supply cheap labour in towns that were developing in response to European and individual activities. This form of categorization did not change substantially in the next forty years". As a result of this stratification, three important developments followed. First, it gave the Asians almost total control of commerce and trade with the result that after independence, they control 95 percent of commerce and trade. Second, it created a racially politicised view after independence that Asians were not Ugandans even though they were second or third generation in the country. Third, it gave the Nubians automatic acceptance to membership among indigenous Ugandans. Besides, by reinforcing the economic system of the Asians of dealing directly with the final consumers, the British, unleashed antipathy of the African populace which was to work to the disadvantage of the Asians in the subsequent years. The drawback came in the form of sporadic calls for Africanization of trade and commerce and the anti-Asian disturbances of 1945 and 1949, which resulted in the formation of Trade Development Sections (TDS) in 1952, to increase African participation in commerce (Hansard, 1959). Additionally, another disturbance in 1959, led to the boycott of Asian goods and it built resentment towards the British for sustaining Asians commercial monopoly.

After independence, in order to correct this imbalance, the government of Uganda made frantic attempts to increase African participation in commerce. For instance, in 1969, a Trade Licensing Act was passed with the purpose of preventing non-citizens trading in specific items as well as in specific geographical areas. Trade Licensing Act also restricted Asians to cities, municipalities, towns. In some urban centres, the Asians were restricted from trading on certain streets. All this was ostensibly to accelerate the "Ugandanization" of both wholesale and retail trade. Our rejoinder is that this policy was a blatant racialization against the minority Asians as they were the target of the Trade Licence Act. Our arguments feed into Li's (1990) postulation that the exploitation of racial minorities is grounded on racist ideologies that sanctions an intrinsic racial order in any given society. Superficial physical differences, characteristics or behavior provide justifications for the mistreatment of minority groups. For the Asians, their physical skin colour became a tool for effective identification and



implementation of this Licence Act. In many areas, the Asians were completely dominant because of the structure of diverse Asians businesses. Moderately interdependent family management over ownership often made Asians businesses peculiarly impervious to outside intervention and penetration. An entire economic transaction from the point of manufacture to retail sale might take place within one extended family. According to Parson (1973 p. 63), “competing with or participating in such a unified pattern of communication and interaction even with adequate capital and skills might become impossible”. In some cases, the Asians had to beat the system by registering businesses in areas prohibited to them through African friends and were able to operate unchecked. Arguably, all these different schemes by the Asians frustrated the Africanization of trade and bred feelings of economic nationalism later exploited by Amin to carry out the expulsion.

From the preceding argument, it should be clear that the expulsion policy was underpinned by consideration of economic nationalism. First, to repeat the point, what troubled Africans most was the control that Asians exercised over all forms of Ugandan commercial life, particularly, manufacture, import and retail – a control which prevented the rise of African middle class. Even the public service was not free of this racial practice promoted by the colonial government at the turn of the century. Instead of training Africans as administrative cadres, colonial authorities imported large numbers of Asians and injected them in the middle level grades of the civil service, the railways and postal systems. In addition to the manning of low and middle administrative positions by importees another irritant was added and this was the disparity between incomes earned by Africans and Asians for the same job. The salary practise was structured in a way that earnings were determined by race. The Europeans were at the top of the scale, Asians in the middle and Africans at the bottom. And this had not changed much even as late as 1969 as lauded by Tandon (1973, p. A4), “an average Asian male in private industry earned about six times what an average African earned”. Besides, the Asians commercial practices were also a constant source of friction. According to Dent Ochaya Lakidi, the Asians then had been described as a “crafty, money-making, cunning, someone with soul bound to his body by one laudable and religious concern to turn his coin to better advantage; the local Jew; unscrupulous and single minded in the pursuit of gain; a user of false weights and measures, a receiver of stolen goods, a Banyan, contemplating his account book” (quoted in Twaddle, 1975 p.85).

Visibly, the target of racial discrimination was the native Africans. For instance, native Africans who were qualified as Europeans were paid far less in salaries than their white counterparts for the same job. In some instances, qualified Africans were puzzled to discover that they were being placed to work under the supervision of whites who were less qualified for the job. Mulira presented the case of a native Ugandan who graduated with an honors degree in education from Cambridge University, while the son of a white European planter completed a diploma in education. When the two graduates returned to Uganda, the colonial government employed the white diploma holder in the position of education officer with a starting salary of £550 per annum, eventually increasing to £1,346. The native African Bachelor’s degree holder was placed on three years on the job probation with a starting salary of £ 330 per annum eventually increasing to a maximum of £456. After completion of the probation, the far more qualified African became the headmaster of a secondary school under direct supervision of the less qualified English man (Adyanga, 2011). With this state of affair, many young Africans resented formal education offered by the Europeans who preached that education was necessary to improve their social, economic wellbeing and contribute to national development.



Africans saw sharp contradictions in what the colonial regimes preached in comparison to their practices. In the economic arena, racialism also curtailed native Ugandans development. This is because, white European controlled marketing agencies like Uganda Company (cotton) and Baumann (coffee), while Asians controlled most of the retail outlets in trading centres, urban and rural areas (Adyanga, 2011). To make matters worse, economic racialism ensured that African producers could only sell their crops through white Europeans and Asian middlemen who were paying very low prices for African produce. This overt form of institutionalized racism across the economic spectrum sowed the seed of resentment among Africans who responded by agitating for independence and later, growing animosity against the Asian community in Uganda.

Close Examination of the Expulsion

Many scholars have labelled the expulsion of Asians from Uganda as racism. Our argument critically engages anti-racist frame of reference to re-examine the expulsion. To begin with, according to the 1962 constitutional provision, the Asians born in Uganda became Uganda citizens by birth and those who came when they were adults had a special provision lasting two years to apply for citizenship. However, most of them according to Adyanga (2011), did not apply to become citizens. These were the people asked to go back to their country. According to Ibingira (1973), the government of the day in Uganda went out all the way in a very good spirit of corporation and brotherhood to canvas these British citizens, appealing to them to register and become Uganda citizens and identify themselves with us, with our hopes and our fears, to share our fortunes and also our obligations. But they undeniably refused (UN Plenary Session, 204). It is unreasonable that any citizen of good will would hesitate to identify themselves with the cause of the country in which they live since identity constitutes the core relationship with the country and citizenship. This view is succinctly captured by Hall (1989 p.16) when he states that “identity is constituted in part by representation. Identity is a narrative of the self; it is the story we tell about the self in order to know who we are”. Against this background, the Ugandan government declared that Asians had not wanted Uganda citizenship because they hesitated at the beginning and rushed their applications as the specified period ran out.

Bearing this in mind, it is difficult to accuse the government of Idi Amin of racially inspired expulsion. Besides, the Ugandan government was incensed by the British’s reluctance to accept her citizens. Ugandan officials were also irritated by the widespread Asians practices of having members of the same family acquire different citizenships in a deliberate manoeuvre to defeat immigration objectives. When President Amin announced the expulsion, it was found out that some non-citizens of Asians background could not be kicked out because their spouses or relatives had acquired Ugandan citizenship in anticipation of such development. Against this background therefore, we argue that Uganda being a sovereign state had no obligation to retain non-citizens especially if doing so would jeopardise her wellbeing since the interests of a state is the protection of citizens’ welfare and guarding territorial integrity. In addition, Uganda had it within her power to revoke the citizenship of blood relations of non-Ugandans if the two parties were collaborating to abuse the law regarding immigration process and prevent non-citizens from legal deportation.

According to Carens (1989), claims to citizenship are underpinned by two democratic ideals, that is, participation and consent, and toleration and respect for diversity. He said that in ideal democratic society, to concede people to remain while denying them the right to join risks



creating a class of disenfranchised vulnerable members linked to direct exclusion from political process. In the application of these principles to the expulsion of Asians, we assert that the 1962 constitution gave the different category of Asians the equal liberty and equality of access to citizenship. It granted the liberty of conscience, freedom of thought and political freedom to make a choice of citizenship in Uganda society. The consideration for this is underpinned by the recognition of the legacy of colonialism in the social, economic and political life in Uganda. As such, the constitution opened itself to those who would willingly wish to acquire membership in its political community and be subject to its own laws or have the right to take part in political life and determine the outcome constitutionally. Unfortunately, for the Asians, they did not want to utilize this provision of the constitution indicating lack of interests in taking up Uganda's citizenship.

The expulsion of non-citizens by the government of the time for the sole reason of correcting economic imbalances was thus necessary and associating it to racism is, a social political discrimination meant to demonize the government. In this context, it was right for the government to expel those Asians who were exploiting and yet never wanted to become part of the community they lived in because of claims that membership must be voluntary. Since Asians refused to become members in the Uganda society, it meant two things: first, they did not have any obligation to the government of Uganda, and second, the Uganda Government did not have any obligations to them as well. Therefore, if the Uganda Government wanted to transfer control of the economy to those members to whom it is obligated and the members who are as well obligated to it, then the expulsion was justifiable for the distribution of social/economic benefits that accompany membership in that society. They nevertheless were obligated to protect the fundamental rights of the non-citizen Asians, such as the right to life, property, dignity or security of persons. Because they did not provide these rights, the non-citizen Asians suffered physical abuses and loss of property which is deplorable. However, in no way does it lessen the legality of the expulsion.

The Asians however, claimed that the deportation was hateful in all respects. That it was racist because it singled them by their racial extraction. To the Asians and their foreign sympathisers, the expulsion of Asians born in Uganda (citizens) was racism based on skin colour and other characteristics that distinguished them from their African counterparts. However, citizenship according to the Ugandan government as argued earlier in this paper could be revoked from anybody of foreign origin either born or registered in Uganda if the government deemed it necessary. Besides, by expelling all of them, the government wanted to give the economy to the indigenous Ugandans which automatically excluded Asians. Traditionally, indigenous people not only utilized the natural resources of their land for agriculture and profit maximization through commerce but also took efforts to increase the biodiversity of their land and preservation of the natural resources for future use/generations. The Asians on the contrary were said to simply exploit the economy with no considerations of the future. This was compounded by the repatriations of huge profits either to their home country or to Britain leaving indigenous Ugandans with barely anything to turn to in the future.

The above argument feeds into a reflective informal conversation that one of our colleagues (author) had with his Asian friend of Pakistani origin who by the time of the expulsion in 1973 was a young boy living in Kampala, Uganda's capital. He was by the time of the conversation (in 2009), a registered nurse in Edmonton, Alberta Canada. He explicitly disapproves the way the Asians were handling the economy. He stated that his father was a senior army officer in the second Uganda Republic and a prominent businessman at the same time getting government



contracts. He revealed how his father and business associates of Asian origin would transfer most of their profits and business investments to London due to lack of confidence in Uganda economy from which they were minting such proceeds. In his own words, President Amin's action of expulsion (though he claimed not to approve of it) was provoked by Asians' economic exploitative attitude and as a matter of fact, many of them saw it (the expulsion) coming.

On this basis, we contend that the government of President Idi Amin was largely concerned with mitigating conflicts arising from the dominance of commerce by the Asians or what we call in this paper, *holders of economic power* and those they dominate. We argue that the government took an affirmative step in expelling all non-citizen Asians who were simply milking the cow without feeding it — over exploiting the economy. It was, therefore, not surprising to note that one of the charges against the Asians during their expulsion was economic sabotage. Among other things this (economic sabotage) referred to: over invoicing in order to illegally transfer hard currency abroad, under invoicing for purposes of paying less than required income tax, tampering with weights and measures, and doing just everything to obtain unfair advantages at every turn (Twaddle, 1975). Although one could argue that the Asians were not the only ones slotted in such mal-practice since indigenous Ugandan traders have mismanaged the economy after the departure of Asian, we assert that the decision of the government of the day had no racial bias because tax evasion is a violation of the condition of welcome. To cement this view, Ruth and Anderson (2010) espoused that deportation enables the state to remove those who have entered illegally, those whose permission to reside has elapsed or been withdrawn and those who are legally resident but who are breaching conditions of entry.

However, in presenting a counter view, we argue that the deportation was inhuman because the time limit imposed was too short to allow an orderly departure; the expellees were harassed and intimidated as there were reports of physical torture, murder, rape, etc. And in any case, the amount of money allowed for each expellee was only 50 British Pounds, which was too little (Mamdani, 1973). We also think that it was illegal in making Ugandan Asians defenceless since they were not allowed legal representation against the evacuation order. The order was simply a decree issued by the Head of State.

Furthermore, we contend that the claim of economic sabotage was part of anti Asian sentiments which was racist and meant to mobilize hostility against the Asian community. Even the economic misconducts prevalent then were not monopolized by the Asians. In any case, the proper way to deal with it would have been to enact appropriate legislation, not to expel the Asians'. In brief, the expulsion failed to acknowledge Asians contributions to the economy of Uganda. The pragmatic predicament in the expulsion regards the conception of citizenship and its attendant rights and privileges to be accorded to people seeking membership in the Uganda community. Henceforth, we argue that President Amin was seeing citizenship only as involving membership in an inclusive indigenous community and that citizenship should be seen from solidarity and community identification. To make a case for our position, we quote President Amin.

“I am particularly disturbed that about 70 years have elapsed since the first Asians came to Uganda but despite that length of time, the Asian community has continued to live in a world of its own; for example, African males have hardly been able to marry Asian girls, a casual count of African males who are married to Asian girls reveal that there



are only six. And even then, all of the six married these women when they were abroad and not here in Uganda” (Henckaerts, 1995: 211).

Such conception of disparity denies cultural differences across political space and cements the legacy of racial compartmentalization policy of the British in the post colonial state. Meanwhile, the Asians community were seeing citizenship in the legalistic sense which allows them to develop according to their culture, religion, caste system and so on, because society should provide respect for diversity.

Finally, we also think that President Amin’s expulsion order saw citizenship from a racist perspective. The fact that he expelled the Asians and left the Nubians who were also non-citizens and engaged in commerce as well feeds into our argument. One could argue that even though British racial policy favoured the Asians at the expense of the Africans, Amin’s claims of Ugandanization of trade and commerce should have affected the Nubians as well, for all of them were non-indigenous people. As is well known, the Nubians were Sudanese left behind by Emim Pasha and were brought to Uganda as mercenaries in the colonial army by Lord Lugard who later turned mutineers and were subjugated by Sikh troops from India. Further to that Amin could conceive different tribes intermeshing their kinship field and other Black people as kinsmen in a single society, even though sometimes when Black empathy is under strain. However, his failure to look at the Asians as kinsmen in a shared polity called Uganda reinforces our argument. For Amin, Africanness should mean Blackness and his action would amount to building a uni-racial state instead of a multi-racial one, hence a speedy and easy equation between nation building and racial building (Patel, 1972) of which the former is ethically acceptable.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the expulsion of Asians from Uganda has captured the attention of scholars who produced extensive literature circulating in educational libraries and online archives. However, most of the published materials admonish the Ugandan government by then for being racially biased against the Asian community without scrutinizing the other side of the coin. To be impartial in analysing this issue, we have to examine the expulsion with two lenses; first, the fact that Uganda had suffered great injustices through the control of significant portion of her economic life by non-indigenous people does not mean that expelling the Asians in the manner President Amin did is permissible. This is because it amounted to correcting the British colonial racial policy by a much violent reaction which could be argued as an act of violent racism delivered at an appropriate time against a target group, the Asians. Further, because the Asians suffered great discrimination in the way the expulsion was handled does not mean that the misconduct for which they were expelled is now of lesser scale.

To ground our discussion, the expulsion of Asians from Uganda was by no mean an act of racism and we maintain that Uganda government acted in its the best interest to kick out economic exploiters who worked to satisfy the interests of their masters, the British but under the pretext that they were Ugandan citizens. This was explicitly captured by an African newspaper of the time, *The Liberian Age*, quoted in Adyanga, 2011:

“Racialism or economic security? If the first duty of a state is to those who constitute its soul, why should that state entrust the life blood of its existence into the hands of



expatriates? No European country tolerates this. The move of Ugandanization was being obscured by allegations of racialism because the Asians were being used by European investors as the tent access of the imperialist octopus feeding on the lifeblood of the Africans.”

In brief, the expulsion of the Asians, we emphasise, was an affirmative action taken by the government of Uganda (then) to break loose from the bequest of British neocolonial rule and claims of racial discrimination must be examined with lens of cynicism. Uganda, a sovereign state, had within her power to expel and or deport without question, citizens of another country for political, economic or security reasons. The deportation, however, ought to be conducted with respect of international law so that the rights of the victims are not violated.

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