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# Uganda: Govt Cautioned Over Granting Federal Selectively

BY MOSES WALUBIRI, 21 JUNE 2012

Ugandans have cautioned government against granting selective quasi federal status to some regions in the country, saying that it could be a recipe for tension and possible full blown conflict.

The revelation is part of research findings by Makerere University Social Science don, Prof. Yasin Olum, about the federal question in Uganda disseminated at Protea Hotel on Tuesday.

Done under the auspices of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in the districts of Kampala, Masaka, Kayunga, Hoima, Arua, and Jinja, the research was tailored to answering fundamental questions about the usually polarizing question of Uganda reverting to a federal system of government.

Respondents said selective application of federalism in the country could spawn conditions that resulted in the Buganda crisis of 1966.

The findings also revealed that the role of political leaders and kings ought to be clearly defined if a federal system of government is to be implemented.

While proponents of federalism contend that a unitary system of government has fostered corruption and tyranny, those against federalism aver that it will foster economic imbalances and appointment of staff premised on ethnicity rather than competence.

Although 59 percent of the respondents believe a federal system of government is applicable in Uganda today, majority of Ugandans, according to the research, are against the country adopting it as a governance model.

On the question of whether Dr. Milton Obote was right to abolish kingdoms, 58 percent answered in the affirmative.

The respondents, especially in Kayunga, Arua, Jinja, and Hoima, said "Baganda had become too big headed for the then Prime Minister to execute his duties.

They also decried an iniquitous arrangement that had given Buganda too much "privilege and influence" at the expense of other regions in the country.

The report also revealed that many Ugandans don't know what model of federalism is suitable for Uganda.

Since the Odoki constitution commission report, which showed that over 80 percent of Ugandans were in support for a federal system of government, the Buganda kingdom has continued to clamor for its implementation.

During the 2005 constitutional review chaired by prof. Fredrick Ssempebwa, Buganda presented its position on federalism in which it advocated for federalism for all regions in the country.

However, the issue has continued being synonymous with Buganda, which Prof. Olum called a misnomer.

Prominent lawyer and reknown federal advocate, Peter Mulira, was critical of the report for the small sample of respondents.

"Its a travesty to think that the opinion of a few people from six districts can be taken to represent the perception of 33 million Ugandans on this issue," he said.

With the discovery of oil in Bunyoro, some politicians in the region have advocated for federalism as the most viable governance that can help

the region get a share of the 'black gold.'

At the dawn of independence, Buganda had a quasi-federal status, which was violently ended with the attack on Lubiri, the abrogation of the 1962 independence constitution, and abolition of kingdoms.

This followed some outstanding irreconcilable differences between Dr. Obote and the then president of Uganda and kabaka of Buganda, Sir Edward Mutesa.

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