

FEDERO

By Joseph Senyonjo

Federalism, known locally as Federo, is the only remaining lifeline for Buganda's and Uganda's salvation. Indeed, without federo, all our economic initiatives and investments can be frustrated by the central government.

What is federalism, or Federo? I will define it here through its implications for Buganda, and for Uganda. For a more detailed, academic description, please visit Fednet, an internet Federalism resource for Uganda, found at www.federo.com. In short, federalism is a binding constitutional arrangement that would empower regions such as Buganda, Acholi, West Nile, and others in Uganda to administer their own affairs without undue interference of the central government, or the President. It explicitly limits the reach of the central government in regional and local matters.

In practical terms Federalism would grant Buganda :

- Control over its land.
- Internal administration and provision of security via such institutions as a Buganda police force.
- Control over local immigration, and settlement of migrants.
- Taxation powers to enable the kingdom to build roads, water systems, schools, and health clinics throughout Buganda without waiting for favors from the central government.
- Control over key region sectors such as Agriculture, Education, Investment, Economic development, and the Environment through substantive ministries funded by tax collections.
- Control over local elections, and locally elected officials, eliminating the requirement for local officials to report to the central government, or the President.

All the above, would be true for all other federal regions in Uganda.

Key Non-Negotiable items for true Federalism

- Direct Taxation Powers.
- Percentage share in local revenues from natural resources located within Buganda.
- One Lukiiko, perhaps with two chambers, with directly elected representatives, clan leaders, and technocrats specially elected to represent professional bodies and to provide specialized expert input in bills under consideration by the Lukiiko.
- The supremacy of the Kabaka as a Constitutional head of Buganda.
- The Katikkiro and any other Mengo officials would only be accountable to the people of Buganda and the Kabaka, and would not report to the central

government, or the President, even though they could give testimonies in Parliament to advance Buganda's interests.

- Buganda would take care of the well being of the Kabaka through its own tax revenues. The Kabaka would not be paid by the Central government.

Negotiable Items:

The Election of the Katikkiro:

We should not be afraid of the election of the Katikkiro, provided we have a federo system for three reasons:

- 1- We can design a process that ensures that the Katikkiro remains accountable to Buganda and the Kabaka.
- 2- The election of the Katikkiro is the best way to insulate the Kabaka from politics of intrigue in Buganda.
- 3- Buganda's enemies are not likely to succeed in imposing a candidate for Katikkiro that is not acceptable to Baganda, the Kabaka, or clan leaders under the envisioned process.

Incidentally, the case of Kampala elections where the government has tried to impose its candidates but has failed is a case in point even though there are almost no safeguards to prevent the government from doing so.

Proposed Process for the election of the Katikkiro

Political Parties and Civil Society would nominate and submit names of Katikkiro candidates to a balanced pre-screening committee appointed by the Kabaka. The committee would interview the candidates and recommend at least four names to the Lukiiko's screening committee that would comprise of both elected members and clan leaders. This committee would recommend at least two names to the Kabaka and his advisors for final screening. If the Kabaka and his advisory board have no objections, the final two candidates would campaign throughout Buganda, selling their vision for Buganda in all Buganda's counties. Finally, all legal, registered residents of Buganda would elect one of the two candidates as Katikkiro.

The elected Katikkiro would pledge to pay allegiance to, and protect Buganda's institutions including the Kabaka. Failure to adhere to that pledge would be grounds for impeachment. The Katikkiro would have weekly meetings with the Kabaka to update him on any pressing issues and seek his advice just as the British Prime Minister does with the Queen. In addition, the Katikkiro, or the Speaker of the Lukiiko, would have to submit any legislative bills passed by the Lukiiko for the Kabaka to sign before they become law.

Selling Federalism:

An outsider may ask, if federalism is so good why has Buganda and Uganda failed to get it? To a Ugandan, the answer would at first glance seem obvious: Museveni and his cronies do not want it because it would force them to share power. But in reality that is just an obstacle that can be overcome.

My outsider's view is that Buganda, in particular, has been outmaneuvered, and outplayed by both the government and the universally hostile Ugandan press. Why do I say so? For several reasons: the Acholi now genuinely want federalism. Cecilia Ogwal of Lango was said to have favored federalism during the Constituent Assembly debates. Bunyoro, Toro and Busoga are tentative but can easily be persuaded to jump fully on the federal bandwagon. Yet when the issue of federalism heats up in Uganda as a whole, the government and the press successfully refocus it as a Buganda issue, thus isolating Buganda. The best approach, which Mengo seems to have considered at one point, though intermittently, is to sidestep Museveni and the central government and launch an aggressive, quiet sensitization campaign throughout all regions of Uganda, especially targeting key stakeholders including MPs, LC officials, traditional chiefs and youth at universities to show them how federalism would bring their regions benefits in terms of jobs, investment, and opportunities far superior to what they can ever hope to get if they leave their destiny at the whims of the central government's goodwill. Once a minimum common understanding is reached, all Uganda's regions, speaking as one can march to parliament or to the central government to demand for the implementation of federalism. Once confronted with the critical mass of all Uganda's regions demanding federalism, the central government would have no choice but to relent. And with that Buganda and Uganda would be reborn.

Ssabasajja Kabaka, Awangale.