

Coups In Uganda – A timeline

Colonization

Buganda: 19th century

Before Uganda, the fiction creation of the British, the land was filled with different communities and organized under kingdoms, chiefdoms, cultures, Agriculture roots.

First came the Arab traders in search of slaves and ivory arrive in the 1840s, soon followed by two British explorers/ colonizers John [Speke](#) in 1862. Henry Morton [Stanley](#) followed him in 1875, they claimed to have come in search of the source of the Nile following the tales of the big lake.

They arrived in Buganda visiting Kabaka Mutesa 1as Buganda was one of the Kingdoms established in the mid-nineteenth century alongside others such as Ankole, Toro and Bunyoro.

The Kingdoms existence had a profound influence on the development of what we now call Uganda. But when the [scramble for Africa](#) begins, in the 1880s, this remote interior region is not immediately in the sights of any of the colonial predators.

It is seen at the time merely as a distant place lying beyond the territories of the sultan of Zanzibar, which are in dispute between Britain and Germany.

Enter the Economy hitman- British East Africa Company: 1888-1895

The British government being reluctant to take active 'responsibility' for the region of east Africa which is now its acknowledged sphere of interest. Instead it assigns to a commercial company the right to administer and develop the territory. The Imperial British East Africa Company is set up for the purpose in 1888, a year ahead of [Rhodes](#)'s British South Africa Company.

The region given into the company's care stretches all the way from the east coast to the kingdom of Buganda, on the northwest shore of Lake Victoria.

It is evident to all that the development of this region depends on the construction of a railway from the coast to Lake Victoria, but circumstances conspire to make this task far beyond the abilities of the East Africa Company. The running sore which saps their energy and their funds is Buganda.

Meanwhile the East Africa Company faces further problems in Buganda, where civil war breaks out between factions led by British Protestant missionaries and their French Catholic rivals.

In January 1892 there is heavy gunfire between and among the four hills which form Kampala. On the top of one hill is the palace of the Kabaka. On another the French have completed a Catholic cathedral of wooden poles and reeds. On a third the Protestants are building their church. On the fourth is the fort established for the company by Frederick Lugard, who is the only combatant with the advantage of a Maxim machine gun.

Lugard prevails. But the loss of life and destruction of property in this unseemly European squabble makes it plain that the East Africa Company is incapable of fulfilling its duties.

In 1894 the British government declares a protectorate over Buganda. Two years later British control is extended to cover the western kingdoms of Ankole, Toro and Bunyoro - to form, together with Buganda, the Uganda Protectorate.

The Uganda Protectorate: 1896-1962

The British government in 1899 appointed a seasoned administrator, [Harry Johnston](#), as special commissioner to Uganda. His brief is to recommend the most effective form of administration, and his policy became effective with the Buganda Agreement of 1900.

Johnston subsequently makes similar agreements with the rulers of Toro (in 1900) and of Ankole (in 1901). With this much achieved, and a clear pattern set for the Uganda Protectorate, Johnston returns to Britain.

Uganda played a key role in the British economy as it grew cotton, introduced by the British.

After World War II, many African colonies moved towards independence.

Milton Obote

By the early 1960s Uganda's leading politician was Milton Obote, founder of the UPC (Uganda People's Congress), main political platform in opposition to Buganda Kingdom and the King.

At independence in 1962 Obote was elected prime minister. It is he who negotiated the terms of the constitution under which Uganda becomes independent in October 1962.

Confronted by the problem of Buganda, Obote accepts a constitution which gives federal status and a degree of autonomy to four traditional kingdoms, of which Buganda is by far the most powerful. In the same spirit Obote approves the election in 1963 of the kabaka, Mutesa II, to the largely ceremonial role of president and head of state. It proves to be a short-lived collaboration.

Obote and Amin: 1962-1985

By 1966 the worsening relationship between Obote and Mutesa comes to an end. Obote sends a force, led by his newly appointed army commander Idi Amin, to attack the kabaka's palace. Mutesa flees to exile in Britain.

Obote immediately introduces a new constitution. This abolishes the hereditary kingdoms, ends the nation's federal structure and provides for an executive president - a post taken by Obote himself in addition to his role as prime minister. With the help of army and police he terrorizes any remaining political opponents.

In 1971, when Obote is abroad, his regime is toppled in a coup led by Idi Amin. Obote settles just over the border from Uganda in neighbouring Tanzania, where he maintains a small army of Ugandan exiles under the command of Tito Okello.

Here Obote bides his time while Idi Amin subjects Uganda to a regime of pure military rule.

Amin expels in 1972 all Uganda's Asians, reasoning that the Uganda economy needed to be in the hands of Black Ugandans.

Amin Invading Tanzania

In 1978 Amin invades Tanzania. Julius Nyerere, the Tanzanian president, takes the opportunity not only to repel Amin's army but also to topple Amin's government. Tanzanian troops, joining forces with Obote's private army, reach Kampala in April 1979. Amin flees (and lives on, to the century's end and beyond, as an exile in Saudi Arabia).

After Idi Amin: the Moshi Conference and Yusuf Lule

During the following twelve months there are two interim governments led by returning Ugandan exiles.

Twenty-two Ugandan civilian and military groups were hastily called together at Moshi, Tanzania, to try to agree on an interim civilian government once Amin was removed. The unity conference at Moshi established the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) as political representative of the UNLA. Yusuf Lule, former principal of Makerere University, became head of the UNLF executive committee.

Shortly after Amin's removal, Lule and the UNLF, established an interim government. Lule became president, advised by a temporary parliament, the National Consultative Council (NCC). The NCC, in turn, was composed of representatives from the Unity Conference.

Staying true to the colonial roots conflict surfaced between Lule and some of the more radical of the council members who saw him as too conservative, too

autocratic, and too willing as a Muganda to listen to advice from other Baganda.

After only three months, with the apparent approval of Julius Nyerere, whose troops still controlled Kampala, Lule was forcibly removed from office and exiled.

Enter Godfrey Binaisa

He was replaced by Godfrey Binaisa, but one who had previously served as a high-ranking member of Milton Obote's UPC.

Binaisa enlarged the NCC to 127 members, revealed that many rival and would-be politicians who had returned from exile were resuming their self-interested operating styles. Binaisa managed to stay in office longer than Lule, but his inability to gain control over a burgeoning new military presence proved to be his downfall.

1979, in an attempt to consolidate support for the future, leaders such as Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and Major General (later Chief of Staff) David Oyite Ojok began to enrol thousands of recruits grew to 8,000; Ojok's original 600 became 24,000. When Binaisa sought to curb the use of these militias, which were harassing and detaining political opponents, he was overthrown in a military coup on 10 May 1980.

The coup was engineered by Ojok, Museveni, and others acting under the general direction of Paulo Muwanga, Obote's right-hand man and chair of the Military Commission. The TPDF was still providing necessary security while Uganda's police force, which had been all but destroyed by Amin, was rebuilt, but Nyerere refused to help Binaisa retain power. In any case, the Military Commission headed by Muwanga effectively governed Uganda during the six months leading up to the national elections of December 1980.

Tito Okello

By May 1980 a Ugandan general, Tito Okello, organized a coup which brings Obote back into power. Obote is then confirmed president in a general election six months later.

During the 1980s Obote uses violent means to reimpose his rule.

In 1985 Tito Okello intervenes once more, driving Obote back into exile (eventually in Zambia).

But both Obote and Okello are already peripheral figures. The only well organized faction in these years of chaos is a guerrilla army led by Yoweri Museveni.

Conflict Phase (February 6, 1981-January 26, 1986): The National Resistance Army (NRA) led by General Yoweri Museveni rebelled against the government of President Obote beginning on February 6, 1981. The UFM initiated a campaign of political violence against the Ugandan government in

April 1981. Former Presidents Godfrey Binaisa and Yusuf Lule established the Uganda Popular Front (UPF) in opposition to the government on January 7, 1982. The London-based human rights NGO, Amnesty International, condemned the government for “extra-legal executions, torture, killings of people in detention, and abductions” on April 15, 1982. The CON provided military assistance (36 military advisers from Australia, Britain, Canada, Guyana, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania, commanded by Colonel J. H. Clavering of Britain) to the government between March 15, 1982 and March 15, 1984. NRA rebels killed 81 civilians near Kikyusa on May 30, 1983. Government troops killed some 90 individuals in Namugongo on May 25, 1984. The British government agreed to provide military assistance (military training) to the government on August 17, 1984. Some 200 North Korean troops were deployed in support of the government on November 16, 1984. President Obote was overthrown in a military rebellion led by General Bajilio Olara Okello on July 27, 1985, resulting in the deaths of ten individuals. President Obote fled to Kenya on July 28, 1985. A nine-member military council headed by General Tito Okello Lutwa took control of the government and suspended the constitution on July 29, 1985. President Daniel Moi of Kenya mediated negotiations between representatives of the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) and the NRA from August 26 to December 17, 1985. General Okello and General Yoweri Museveni, leader of the NRA, signed the *Nairobi Peace Accord* on December 17, 1985. Under the terms of the accord, the UNLA and NRA agreed to a ceasefire and to share government power. The NRA violated the ceasefire agreement on January 17, 1986, and NRA rebels took control of the government on January 26, 1986. Some 250,000 individuals, including some 9,000 NRA rebels and 40,000 government soldiers, were killed during the conflict. At least 750,000 individuals were displaced during the conflict.

Post-Conflict Phase (January 27, 1986-February 28, 1994): General Yoweri Museveni was sworn in as president on January 29, 1986.

Yoweri Museveni was briefly Uganda's minister of defence during the interim government after the fall of Amin. When Obote returns to power as president in 1980, and his party (the UPC) wins a majority in elections widely regarded as fraudulent, Museveni refuses to accept this turning back of the clock. He withdraws into the bush and forms a guerrilla group, subsequently known as the National Resistance Army (NRA).

During the 1980s the NRA steadily extends the area of southern and western Uganda under its control. And Okello, after toppling Obote in 1985, proves no match for Museveni.

By January 1986 the NRA is in control of the capital, Kampala. Museveni proclaims a government of national unity, with himself as President.

The Timeline

A chronology of key events:

- 1500—Bito dynasties of Buganda, Bunyoro and Ankole founded by Nilotic-speaking immigrants from present-day southeastern Sudan.
- 1700—Buganda begins to expand at the expense of Bunyoro.
- 1800—Buganda controls territory bordering Lake Victoria from the Victoria Nile to the Kagera river.
- 1840s—Muslim traders from the Indian Ocean coast exchange firearms, cloth and beads for the ivory and slaves of Buganda.

British Colonisation

- 1862—British explorer John Hanning Speke becomes the first European to visit Buganda.
- 1875—Bugandan King Mutesa I allows Christian missionaries to enter his realm.
- 1877—Members of the British Missionary Society arrive in Buganda.
- 1879—Members of the French Roman Catholic White Fathers arrive.
- 1890—Britain and Germany sign treaty giving Britain rights to what was to become Uganda.
- 1892—British East India Company agent Frederick Lugard extends the company's control to southern Uganda and helps the Protestant missionaries defeat their Catholic counterparts, who had been competing with them, in Buganda.
- 1894—Uganda becomes a British protectorate.
- 1900—Britain signs agreement with Buganda giving it autonomy and turning it into a constitutional monarchy controlled mainly by Protestant chiefs.
- 1902—The Eastern province of Uganda transferred to the Kenya.
- 1904—Commercial cultivation of cotton begins.
- 1921—Uganda given a legislative council, but its first African member not admitted till 1945.
- 1958—Uganda given internal self-government.
- 1962—Uganda becomes independent with Milton Obote as prime minister and with Buganda enjoying considerable autonomy.
- 1963—Uganda becomes a republic with Mutesa as president.
- 1966—Milton Obote ends Buganda's autonomy.
- 1967—New constitution vests considerable power in the president and divides Buganda into four districts.
- 1971—Milton Obote toppled in coup led by Idi Amin.
- 1972—Amin orders Asians who were not Ugandan citizens—around 60,000 people—to leave the country.
- 1972-73—Uganda engages in border clashes with Tanzania.

- 1976—Idi Amin declares himself president for life and claims parts of Kenya.
- 1978—Uganda invades Tanzania with a view to annexing Kagera region.
- 1979—Tanzania invades Uganda, unifying the various anti-Amin forces under the Uganda National Liberation Front and forcing Amin to flee the country; Yusufu Lule installed as president, but is quickly replaced by Godfrey Binaisa.
- 1980—Binaisa overthrown by the army and is succeeded by Milton Obote.
- 1985—Obote deposed in military coup and is replaced by Tito Okello.
- 1986—National Resistance Army rebels take Kampala and install Yoweri Museveni as president.

(Source: BBC News Online, Tuesday 20 March 2001)

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