

A nation cannot be sovereign while its economy is foreign-controlled



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In 1962, Uganda got its independence. The country reclaimed political power from colonial rule.

However, more than 60 years later, the shadow of economic dependence still hangs heavily over the nation. Uganda remains politically independent while large sections of its economy continue to be controlled by external forces.

At independence, Uganda's economy worked. Coffee, cotton, tea, copper, and agriculture sustained millions of people. Cooperative unions gave ordinary farmers power. A peasant could produce coffee or cotton and still feel connected to the national economy.

The cooperative movement was an African economic organization. It was local ownership. Then came the politics of upheaval and economic sabotage.

In 1972, Idi Amin expelled Asians from Uganda, accusing them of sabotaging the economy and refusing to integrate. Many Ugandans celebrated. To a population emerging from colonial rule, the expulsion looked like economic liberation. Indian-owned businesses were suddenly handed to indigenous Ugandans.

The expulsion destroyed an entire commercial system overnight. Factories collapsed, distribution networks disappeared, industrial production shrank and confidence in Uganda evaporated. The economy tanked, and herein lies the tragedy many refuse to admit: Amin correctly identified the problem of foreign dominance in the economy but catastrophically mishandled the solution. You cannot build economic sovereignty through anger alone.

A country does not achieve economic freedom by removing a certain group. Real economic liberation requires preparation, strong institutions, education, capital, industrialization, discipline, and a long-term

national vision. Uganda had the emotion of liberation but lacked the structure to sustain it.

The collapse that followed eroded trust in indigenous economic systems. Cooperative unions weakened, rural production declined, smuggling grew, and inflation surged. By the end of that era, the economy was in tatters.

When Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986, he inherited a broken state with weak institutions, destroyed infrastructure, and little investor confidence. The government stabilized the country and reopened it to the global economy. International lenders and investors returned, structural reforms were introduced, and parts of the economy recovered.

Manufacturing rebounded, while inflation reduced. Foreign capital rebuilt sectors the state could no longer sustain but slowly, another reality emerged. Uganda had survived military collapse only to enter a new form of economic dependency.

Today, many Ugandans buy imported food in a fertile country and wear imported clothes while local industries decline. They consume foreign media, rely on foreign technology, borrow foreign capital, and depend on external companies for jobs. Large parts of the economy are financed and owned from abroad.

Even the promise of oil wealth carries anxiety, with fears that major benefits may flow to multinational interests while ordinary citizens remain spectators in their own resources. The deepest pain is not poverty alone, but exclusion.

Ugandan youth are educated but unemployed, energetic but disconnected from ownership, talented but trapped in survival. A generation promised prosperity now survives through hustling economies while watching wealth discovered far beyond their reach. This is why the sovereignty debate has become

emotional again. Because sovereignty is not only about borders.

Sovereignty loses meaning when farmers cannot control the prices of what they produce. It weakens when local industries collapse under imported competition. It becomes fragile when national budgets depend heavily on loans and external financing. It is deeply wounded when the brightest youth no longer dream of building Uganda but instead dream of leaving it. A nation can possess political power and still remain economically vulnerable. That is Uganda's contradiction.

The colonial pattern persists; raw materials leave the country and return as expensive finished goods. Coffee is exported cheaply and comes back packaged at a premium, while minerals leave unprocessed and return as luxury products beyond the reach of ordinary people. The flag changed, but much of the structure remained the same.

The country still holds vast potential: fertile land, a young population, strategic geography, natural resources, and strong entrepreneurial energy. But potential without economic ownership carries little weight.

The next liberation struggle will not be fought in the bush but in factories, technology, agriculture, industrial parks, financial systems, and in the minds of young Africans choosing between consumption and creation.

Real sovereignty begins when a nation can feed itself, employ its youth, finance its ambitions, process its resources, and control its economic direction without dependence.

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