

## **Immigrant Economies and ‘Economic War’:**

### **Literary Reflections on the Expulsion of Asians from East Africa**

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In August 1972, General Idi Amin Dada, President of the Second Republic of Uganda, in declaring ‘economic war’ against the Asian population in Uganda and demanding the exodus of approximately 80,000 people over a period of three months, took the world by storm. The Asian people, whose origins in Uganda can be traced back to both precolonial and colonial processes of migration, were held responsible for ‘sabotaging’ the economy of the newly independent state of Uganda. Such expulsions of Asian migrant community, however, were not novel in post-colonial East Africa, as evidenced by Kenya’s institutionalized expulsion of Asians a few years ago, for much the same reason – economic insecurity. This paper aims to situate the figure of the migrant as an economic threat within the postcolonial/post-colonial context. In analyzing these moments of exclusion and eviction of the Asian migrant community, through recourse to East African literature, this paper shall argue that the identity of the migrant emerges out of the larger interconnected processes of colonization and decolonization, the shifting terrain of which contributes to migrant vulnerability. The economic did not operate in a vacuum; rather, it was part of larger nexus constituted of the political, the social and the cultural as well. The paper shall also engage in an analysis of the methods of immigration control in relation to questions of migrant identity, the role of the migrant in the national economy, and the impact such methods incur on the national economy.