Challenges to Policy Implementation in Uganda: Reflections on Politics and the State

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Abstract

Like many African countries, Uganda faces the problem of poor or failed implementation of state polices and government programmes. There is a big gulf between policymaking and actual implementation. This article locates the source of the problem in the nature of Uganda's contemporary politics under the regime of President Yoweri Museveni. The article argues that at the root of poor policy implementation is the failure to build robust institutional capacity through a merit-based public system. To understand Uganda's weak implementation capacity, we need to look at the politics of elite-inclusion and "broad-base" that started with the "Movement" no-party system. By prioritizing the politics of "broad-base," Museveni's regime opened up the Ugandan society to wider elite political participation and mass representation, and achieved modest progress in institutionalizing decision/policy-making power. However, simultaneously, the politics of "broad-base" also engendered patronage politics and endemic corruption, which have greatly compromised building the institutional capacity to implement policies and programs. Since 1986, the idea of "broad-base" as the founding approach of power-sharing became an entrenched strategy of keeping state power even after reverting to multiparty politics in 2005. The net outcome has been the continuation of deleterious patronage-politics at odds with the imperatives of a development-oriented state.

Key words: **Public Policy, Policy Implementation, the State, Politics of Elite-Inclusion, Politics of , Institutional Capacity Building, Uganda**

Introduction

For many poor countries, especially in Africa, decision-making and policy formulation appear to be the easier job. But moving from policy making to actual policy implementation and providing urgently needed public goods and services is the tougher task. This is a consequence of the nature of politics in most post-independence African states, especially since the early 1990s. Against the backdrop of what the eminent American political scientist Samuel Huntington termed the "Third Wave" of democratization, many African countries, including Uganda, have made modest but significant advances in establishing participatory politics and conducting regular elections (Huntington 1991, also Posner and Younger 2007, Young 2012). Across the continent, legislative and electoral institutions have taken root compared to the politics of coups and civil wars in the 1970s and 80s. This shift has provided the wider citizenry with a voice and representation in decision-making and policy formulation as power has become more institutionalized in quite important ways.

If personalized rule was the hallmark of African politics from independence in the 1960s through to the 1980s, the embrace of electoral politics during the "Third Wave" of democratization opened up African political systems more to the workings of institutions than ever before. But this has been largely at the procedural level, oversight, local and national political representation, and at the level of exercising making-decision power, more generally conceived. Put another way, procedural power has, to a considerable degree, been subjected to the routines and constraints of institutions. Yet, to be sure, that seems to be the best that the vast majority of the African continent has achieved.

In real substantive terms, and at the level of implementing policy, in attaining socioeconomic transformation, and improving the material conditions of the majority poor, there has been little progress. And this is across the continent. Uganda, for one, is officially reported to have significantly reduced the percentage of people living in absolute poverty from over 50% in the early 1990s to slightly under 20% in 2013, maintained impressive economic growth averaging about 7% since undertaking economic reforms at the end of the 1980s, and achieved universal basic education, among other over-emphasized successes. But many of the official economic indicators on display do not tally with the actual, lived conditions of the wider Ugandan society. The actual material conditions of most Ugandans, mostly in rural areas, remain utterly dire. Many observers have lamented the poor record of policy implementation in a robust and thorough manner as the key reason for the continued dire socioeconomic conditions of majority Ugandans.

Why has the modest progress in institutionalizing decision-making power through, for example, electoral and legislature institutions not been matched with the requisite institutional capacity to execute the much needed socioeconomic transformation? More specifically, why has Uganda done well in producing fairly impressive policy blue-prints but performed poorly at implementing them? One quick way to answer this question is to say that it is naturally easy to make a decision and formulate a policy than to implement or execute it. While policy formulation can be loosely characterized as a “theoretical” matter, implementation is a complexly practical and technical process. Perhaps we fail in implementing policies simply because we lack the necessary expertize and the requisite technocratic competences for moving from paper to practice, from plans and intentions to concrete provision of public goods and services. Be that as it may, this still begs the question of why we have not built the requisite human resource capacity and technical competences for successful execution of policies.

The approach taken in this article is one of a political scientist with a macro-political focus and not a policy analyst with an eye on the intricate details of specific policies. Thus, in tackling the question of why policy implementation in Uganda tends to fail, I have focused on specific form of Uganda’s politics over the last few decades and the nature of the Ugandan state. In a sense, I have deliberately gone for the big picture at the expense of the finer details of specific sectors and policies. Put another way, in trying to see the forest, I have had to overlook many trees. Also, to make sense of the Ugandan dilemma I will draw brief contrasts with a few other African countries like Ethiopia, Ghana, and Rwanda. I must state one caveat though. My knowledge of the politics, economy and society of these three countries is rather limited and by no means can I claim to be an expert on any.

This article proceeds in three parts. The next section outlines Uganda’s many policy blue-prints and provides an in-exhaustive list of the various failed policies and projects. The second section sketches my central argument by making two claims. First, that at the core of the crisis in implementing policies and realizing socioeconomic transformation is the failure to marshal the institutional capacity to implement political objectives. The sociologist Michael Mann calls this "infrastructural power" (Mann 1988; Slater 2003, 2010). At its core, infrastructural power entails the degree to which the state has built sufficient institutional capacity to implement its set objectives. Uganda is reputed to have good policies but implementation falls short. This, I argue, is a problem of weak state capacity or infrastructural power. Accounting for this institutional asymmetry is what I attempt to address in this article. Today's poor performance in the implementation of government policies can be traced to the politics of "broad-base," as fashioned by President Museveni and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) government right from 1986. The idea of "broad-base" as the founding approach of power-sharing became an entrenched strategy of maintaining a hold on state power. This approach engendered the old and deleterious patronage politics that greatly undermined building a development-oriented state.

Drawing some lessons from the experience of Ghana, the third and final section threads together disparate ideas and arguments made in the preceding sections as a way of looking into the future. This, I do in lieu of a conclusion, followed with a brief note of recommendations. I conclude that without breaking through the yoke of patronage politics and building a competent, merit-based public sector, Uganda will for long produce impressive policy blue-prints but with little to show in substantive terms. The best way forward is to push the country to full democratic and accountable government. Having experimented with different shades of nondemocratic rule for the last half-century of independence, Uganda's hope can only lie in a system of genuine democracy where those holding state power must fully account not through the flawed rituals of elections but through every day civic scrutiny and public ownership of public policies.

Our Many Good Policies and Programs

In the last two decades, the Ugandan government and its development partners have produced a long list of impressive policy blueprints, plans of action and project designs. At the broader level, we have had some good successes in the area of macroeconomic management and maintained a generally functioning economy with modest growth. The government of Uganda, under the guidance and propping of our foreign financiers, especially the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, successfully implemented a series of policy reforms. The reform efforts started around 1987 with Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) II, a continuation of SAP I undertaken during the government of Milton Obote in the early 1980s (Kafureeka 2000). Successful implementation of SAP II delivered impressive results. By the start of the 1990s, the NRM government had turned around an ailing economy and a collapsed state. Henceforth, Uganda started positing modest GDP growth rates that averaged 7% per year until around 2008. As the President has repeatedly highlighted, our economy has expanded significantly from a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of about $4 Billion in 1986 to about $22 Billion in 2013.[1] However, since 2008 growth dropped significantly to a record low of 3.2% in the 2011/2012 financial year, according to the World Bank.

Source: World Bank, 2012

1 These are the latest data available in the World Economy Outlook of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank's dataset. They contradict the President's assertion that that in 1986 Uganda's total wealth (Gross Domestic Product) was a paltry $1.5 billion but is now an impressive $24 billion, which would mean the economy has expanded a remarkable sixteen times. In reality the economy has expanded a modest five times just as have many developing economies. To be sure, Uganda's growth has been above the annual average for Sub-Saharan Africa.

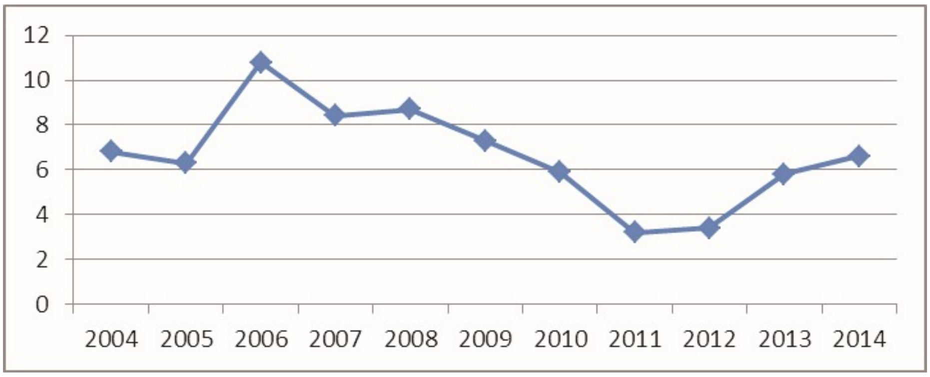

Figure 1 Annual GDP growth for the past decade, 2004-2014.

The Central Bank under the able leadership of Emmanuel Tumusiime-Mutebile and the Treasury have done impressively well, reigning in inflation, maintaining stability in the banking sector and assuring a healthy macroeconomic environment. The few glaring exceptions include the 1998/9 crisis when up to five commercial banks were closed and the 2011 runaway inflation following massive spending on elections (Kuteesa *et al* 2010, Kafureeka 2000). This macroeconomic stability has enabled growth of the private sector as well as increase in both local and foreign investment. Private sector-led growth and overall GDP expansion is attributable to successful implementation of reform policies that made Uganda one of Africa's most liberalized economies. Economic liberalization was pursued along with privatization of state owned enterprises (SOEs) and market deregulation in a tri-reform policy approach that became known as the Washington Consensus. Yet, to be sure, the privatization exercise was one of the early cases of poor policy implementation under the NRM government. Although most SOEs were disposed of, the manner in which it was done presaged the large scale corruption and malfeasance that would eat through all areas of the public sector and become as endemic as is observable today.

The new Washington Consensus driven economic reforms sought to entrench the neoliberal creed of "leaving everything to the market" through the tri-policy of deregulation, liberalization and privatization. The thrust of the neoliberal economic approach surmises that neither natural resource endowments nor human resource capabilities can propel growth in a poor country or transform society. Rather, so goes the argument, that what is critical is the right policy framework that enables the free market logic to operate. Yet, needless to say, the Ugandan government did not leave everything to the market. Instead, it simultaneously embarked on a wide range of policy initiatives aimed at fighting poverty and improving the well-being of the majority poor.

Under the auspices of the World Bank, throughout the 1990s and 2000s the Ugandan government embraced a series of anti-poverty programs but which were pursued in a technocratic manner. Among them included the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the Participatory Poverty Assessment Process (PPAP). In addition, over the last two decades we have had a long list of national development policies and programs, among which include:

- The Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA)
- The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS)
- The Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF)
- The Medium-Term Competitive Strategy for the Private Sector
- The National Development Plan (NDP)
- The Vision 2020, and the recently launched Vision 2040.

By pursuing developmentalist policies and programs, the Ugandan government was acutely aware of the need to combine the invisible hand of the market with the visible eye of the state to mobilize and channel resources towards rapid industrialization given, as Alexander Gerschenkron would say, our "relative backwardness" (Gerschenkron 1962). The above list of development policies and programs show that the Ugandan government did not fully buy into the "trickle-down economics" of neoclassical economics as recast under the Washington Consensus in the era of neoliberalism. These policies and programs suggest that the NRM government rejected the neoliberal stance that the state should be a night watchman and not an active player in driving economic performance. Bu what is the report card like?

Although we have some impressive official figures relating to substantial reduction in the levels of absolute poverty, the exponential growth in primary and secondary school enrolment, the significant increase in health facilities (mostly health centers as buildings and actual functioning facilities), attainment of near-total immunization of infants, increase in the amount of paved roads, etc., overall socioeconomic transformation remains elusive. The rosy picture painted by official statistics is a far cry from the actual lived conditions of the vast majority of Ugandans. Weak institutional capacity to direct transformation is at the core of the failure to attain the promise of prosperity and transformation that has continuously appeared in President Museveni's election-manifestoes since 1996. Why has policy implementation in Uganda not yielded the transformation that we crave for? It is to this question that I turn in the next section.

The Argument and Evidence

I make two arguments in this article. First, the poor record of policy implementation in Uganda is because the power to execute or implement decisions is weakly institutionalized. In other words, the Ugandan state's "infrastructural capacity" is weak. And because decision/ policy-implementation power is weakly institutionalized, it is more often than not open to particularistic interests of individual political players, civil servants and economic elites. The failure to institutionalize the power to execute decisions leaves fertile ground for grand corruption, rent-seeking and large-scale incompetence in the public sector. Weak institutional capacity exposes the public sector to systemic inefficiency and institutionalized incompetence. It also means that there is no incentive system that rewards performance and punishes non-performance.

More precisely, there is dearth of a merit and performance-based public sector. The absence of such a system is because for the most part the NRM government has tended to derive its political legitimacy to rule not from performance but from patronage; not from provision of critical public goods and services for the wider public, but from building a network of elite supporters and their followers who profiteer from the system either directly or otherwise. What we have then is typical of what political scholars have long characterized as patronage politics, or with a more specific reference to Africa as neo-patrimonial rule.

Now, this observation is neither new nor particularly novel, especially for one who has closely followed debates on the crises of the postcolonial African state since the 1960s. Africanist scholars have traced the deleterious politics of patronage to the colonial modes of rule that sought to achieve legitimacy and consolidate colonial rule by buying local notables and elite power brokers. The same modes of rule were replicated and reproduced by postcolonial rulers who tenuously held state power through buying off regional and ethnic power brokers who posed threats to the central government. With specific reference to Nigeria, political science scholar Richard Joseph referred to this mode of rule as "prebendalism," to denote the use of public offices to gain access to unbridled material benefits for oneself and for distribution to constituents and cronies. Relatedly, Donald Rothchild referred to the overall practice as "hegemonial exchange" whereby inter-ethnic and intra-elite bargains tramp formal institutional processes (Rothchild 1986). On his part, the anthropologist Jean François Bayart called it "reciprocal assimilation of elites" (Bayart 2009). But why has patronage politics and not performance-based rule persisted in postcolonial Africa even after decades of major changes of both a revolutionary and reform nature?

In the 1970s and 80s we had a group of African revolutionary groups and a crop of leaders who sought to turn around the bad politics of the immediate post-independence era and the corrupt state bequeathed by colonial rule. They announced revolutions. However, at best they superintended reform initiatives, many of which undoubtedly fundamentally impacted their respective states and societies. Among these groups, and leaders, included the National Resistance Movement (NRM) led by President Yoweri Museveni. But why did the NRM revolution that diminished into a package of externally dictated economic and political reforms fail in reconfiguring the Ugandan state away from the colonial and postcolonial politics of patronage? This brings me to the second argument of this article.

The current weak state capacity and the failure to build robust infrastructural power, thus making policy implementation largely unsuccessful, can be traced to the NRM coalition politics of "broad-base." The politics of "broad-base" inevitably reintroduced the old modes of rule where political legitimacy is achieved through elite political inclusion and cooptation at the expense of all-round socioeconomic transformation. Although the NRM had emerged militarily victorious in 1986, in part due to the internal meltdown in the Obote II government and the disintegration of the government army, it did not have a strong political base beyond its bases in the Luwero Triangle. By the time it captured Kampala in early 1986, the NRM had neither a strong military presence nor a vast political influence outside Buganda and the southwestern regions.

Little wonder, therefore, that before long the new government in Kampala faced insurgencies in the east, northeast (Teso), in most of the north and the West Nile regions. With a remarkable knack for military confrontation, the new Commander in Chief relished fighting these insurgencies. He perhaps believed he would easily defeat them. After all his

National Resistance Army (NRA) intrepid guerrilla fighters, and meticulous commanders, had defeated the entire coercive machinery of the Ugandan state under Milton Obote. They had also defeated the short-lived junta government of Tito Okello and Bazilio Okello. Indeed, the NRA and later UPDF defeated most insurgency groups by the end of the first decade of NRM rule with the painful exception of the Lord Resistance Army in the north and later the Allied Democratic Forces in the west.

However, defeating insurgencies was never going to be the end of political threats to NRM power and President Museveni's rule. If anything, the absence of armed conflict and consolidation of security of person and property would make it feasible to have credible civilian political contests given that electoral politics had become a globally accepted norm. This would possibly expose NRM's political vulnerability and lack of country-wide support especially in the greater north and northeast. Indeed, as we saw in successive elections, especially 1996 and 2001, without harkening to peace and security concerns and reminding Ugandans of past insecurity, justifying President Museveni's continued stay in power became increasingly difficult. Thus, his best bet remained the "broad-base" arrangement, of coopting as many influential elites as there was room and resources to accommodate them. This became the mainstay of NRM rule and President Museveni key strategy of holding onto state power.

The "broad-base" as the mainstay

The era of electoral politics presented a new slate and unfamiliar challenges to President Museveni. Not used to the vagaries of electoral politics, he now had to face a system where the formal rules governing a credible electoral process must be certain enough and clearly laid out to all stakeholders. Yet, as Adam Przeworski (1991) has argued, in a credible election the final outcome as to who emerges winner must have some degree of unpredictability and uncertainty. The first general elections in 1996 presented the first test to President Museveni. The elections flagged the likelihood of losing power if the "broad-base" was not maintained. The NRM lost part of its ruling coalition of politicians in Paul Ssemogerere, John Sebana Kizito and other members of the Democratic Party who teamed up with so called "multipartyists," including members of the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) like Darlington Sakwa, to form the Inter-Party Forces Cooperation (IPFC). Although Museveni won the 1996 elections with a landslide, the dent created by the departure of Ssemogerere and others was real. It was a wake-up call to the need for maintaining a "broad-base."

Some political analysts like US-based Ugandan political scientist Joshua Rubongoya, and political players like opposition leader Dr. Kiiza Besigye, have noted that along the way the NRM detracted from its original "broad base" arrangement. This was in fact one of the central arguments in Dr. Besigye's famous 1999 missive, the missive that thrust him in the national political limelight where he has remained, to-date, as the leading opponent to President Museveni. Professor Rubongoya on his part argues that the NRM gradually shifted from political "broad-base" to ethnic and regional broad-base. I wish to respectfully differ.

It is my contention that the NRM and President Museveni have held political power by maintaining a "broad-based" government, a system that's infinitely inclusive of individual political elites and coopts whoever yields to incessant courting, political cajoling and coercion tempered with material inducements. The ever growing size of Cabinet, the long list of RDCs, the countless numbers of Presidential Advisers, the stupendous size of Parliament, etc., all attest to the fact that the ruling strategy remains one of "broad-base." The cooptation is at once both ethno-regional and political; it carefully treads the religious divides and takes care of regional balancing. The strategy has been to appease ethno-regional power brokers while at the same time winning over prominent national leaders especially those in formal opposition. The 2010 defection, on the eve of the 2011 general elections, of three prominent members of the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), Henry Mayega, Osinde Wangwor and Badru Wegulo, is quite instructive.

Source: Compiled from Annual Volumes of Africa South of the Sahara, Europa Publications.

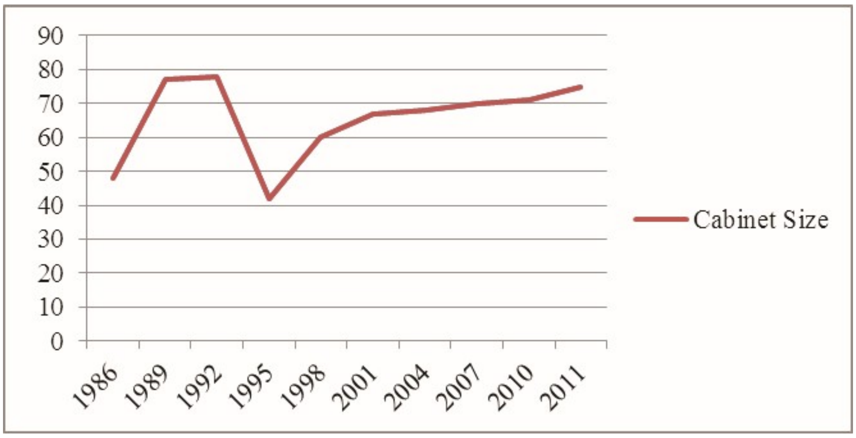

Figure2: *Size of Cabinet from 1986-2011*

The above graph shows that the NRM started out with a relatively lean government, of less than 50 ministers, in 1986. But the size of Cabinet soon bulged as President Museveni sought to coopt important political elites and appease different social constituencies. By 1989 the size of Cabinet had almost doubled. Note that this was also the time when the then interim national legislature, the National Resistance Council (NRC), was expanded after elections were held from the lowest (village) level to the national level. However, the size of Cabinet precipitously came down at the height of implementing economic policy reforms between 1988 and 1992. These reforms necessitated downsizing the civil service, divesting state parastatals and undertaking austerity measures in government which inevitably called for scaling down the size of Cabinet. Quite remarkably, at the time of making the 1995 constitution, the size of Cabinet had dropped below that of 1986. But this was short lived. Before long, the pressures of electoral politics soon produced a push factor for expanding not just the size of Cabinet but the entire public sector.

Thus, since 1996 it has been an upward movement all the way. Along with Cabinet has been the phenomenal growth of the number of other political appointees, most notably Resident District Commissioners as a result of the unprecedented proliferation of districts, Presidential Advisers and Assistants on just about everything. Titles of Presidential Advisers and Assistants are innovatively varied, to wit: Special Presidential Assistants on something, Senior Presidential Assistant, Senior or Special Presidential Adviser on this and the other… Local media recently reported that President Museveni has close to 100 advisers whose monthly wage bill amounts to about 3 billion shillings (Mwanguhya 2013, Kaaya 2014). When one considers other benefits and privileges like a car, armed security guards and office costs, the scale of resources spent on presidential advisers and assistants, many of whom have confessed they hardly advise the President, is unmistakable. But that is not all. Some estimates put the total number of Presidential "this and the other" – private secretaries, assistants, advisers – to well over 300. A 2009 policy research report by the respected Ugandan think tank ACODE noted, quite aptly, that "an over-size cabinet, and a growing Executive bureaucracy built around the Office of the President and State House, is the single most important threat to governance, and efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve economic transformation in Uganda today" (Tumushabe 2009: viii).

What is more, in the name of monitoring government programs, improving service delivery, fighting poverty and fighting graft, multiple agencies and taskforces have been created: the Medicine and Health Service Delivery Monitoring Unit, Presidential Initiative for Banana Industrial Development, the Land Desk in the President's Office, the "Model Farmer" initiative, Presidential donations of mainly cash handouts, etc. While these are formed using Presidential power and authority, we also have the myriad constitutional bodies established to curb corruption and assure accountability of public resources. These include the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets authority, the Inspectorate of Government, the Public and Local Government Accounts Committees of Parliament, and the Office of the Auditor General. Then we have other more general bodies like the Directorate of Public Prosecutions and the Criminal Investigations and Intelligence Directorate of the Uganda Police Force.

With all these bodies and agencies, both constitutional and quasi-legal, has Uganda built strong state capacity to execute critical government programs and transform the country? The answer is no. To the contrary, the more agencies and bodies the NRM government has created, the more inefficiency we have witnessed; the more anti-corruption institutions created, the more avenues of influence peddling and bribe solicitation we have created; the more red-tapes created, the more theft enabled. In this paradox we find some of the pathologies of our politics, and the contradictions of a political system that is neither full democratic nor wholly undemocratic. Aili Marie Tripp (2010) has called it the paradoxes of power in a hybrid regime.

I should like to note that perhaps the President is well-intentioned in overseeing the proliferation of these bodies, agencies, an army of advisers and the general ensemble of political appointees. Yet these, to my understanding, have produced negative and perhaps unintended consequences. But politicians do not necessarily behave out of good will and well-intentions; they respond to the challenges they face by deploying strategies that assure their hold to state power. They work with a calculus of costs and benefits. Therefore, the creation of numerous bodies, agencies and the bloated public administration network should be seen as a technology of rule or strategy of control.

What would be the alternative?

Rulers and regimes that fail to attain legitimacy through cooptation and patronage ultimately lose power. This was the case in many African countries in the 1970s and 80s. Africans who captured power in the 1980s had to learn from the perils of the previous decades. To retain power they had to resort to one strategy or the other. As alluded to above, by building a "broad base" coalition government the NRM and President Museveni did not have to worry about securing legitimacy through other means. By being inclusive and all-embracing, the NRM obviated serious political challenges to its power. But what could have been President Museven's option if he did not succeed in coopting and retaining key elite power brokers? He would have probably attempted a developmentalist route to winning legitimacy. Taking the path of securing legitimacy through implementing a robust development strategy would have meant that the NRM government had to construct a state akin to what was referred to as a "developmental state," in the mold of Asia's late developers/industrializers, the so called Asian Tigers. Thus, accelerated development and not patronage would be the source of legitimacy for the NRM and President Museveni.

At the core of a "Ugandan developmental state," if the NRM had built one, would be marshaling high capacity to effectively implement policy through ensuring a degree of state autonomy that shields the state from particularistic and selfish interests of individuals and groups of individuals. The counterpart to a developmental state, or whatever can approximate to it, is what Dani Rodrik referred to as the subordinate state (Rodrik 1992). While a developmental state is defined by its ability to make and effectively implement policy regardless of private sector interests and the views of competing societal interests, by contrast, the subordinate state manages a system that balances various interests and seeks to appeal and appease different sections of the private sector and society generally.

For many poor countries, relying on the neoclassical "trickle-down" economics to transform society is grossly ill-advised. This lesson was fully appreciated by the Asian late industrializers like Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore. The necessity to pursue rapid, catch-up growth and accelerated development is so paramount that the state cannot be relegated to the role of a night watchman as neoliberal thinking has prescribed. Thus the urgency of pursuing accelerated development requires systematic and targeted manipulation of the productive forces, especially financial resources, and deploying them for the sole purpose of propelling sustained growth and accelerated development. In other words, there has to be some sort of "social and political engineering." (Mkandawire, 2001). This rationale for a sort of "catch up" development strategy that relies on mobilizing productive resources for rapid growth was first highlighted by Gerschenkron (1962) in his seminal study of late industrialization in Europe.

More recently, in the case of Africa's endemically poor countries, Ethiopia's late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi (2012), one of the vocal advocates of constructing developmental states in poor countries, underscored four key characteristics that define a developmental state, of one variant or the other:

a) developmental states derive their legitimacy from the single-minded pursuit of accelerated development,
b) the idea of a developmental state is broadly shared in the country,
c) developmental states are relatively autonomous and make decisions and implement them regardless of the views of the private sector, and lastly,
d) developmental states can be democratic or undemocratic.

From his firm grasp of the theoretical underpinnings of a developmental state and owing to the internal threats to his power that Meles faced, he attempted social and political engineering to build a developmental state in Ethiopia. Because of Ethiopia’s multiethnic nature and given the need to politically deal with various competing social forces, success in constructing a developmental state in that country has been quite modest. But it’s much better than Uganda. The large infrastructural projects, including large and impressive road network in Addis Ababa, big highways, the ongoing construction of a city transit train in Addis Ababa and the Grand Renaissance Dam; the full implementation of the Maputo Declaration on agriculture; and the overall relatively low levels of corruption, all attest to Ethiopia’s capacity to execute policy (Plummer 2012, Kassahun 2012).

In Uganda, the NRM government has toyed with a developmentalist agenda while remaining firmly committed to the dictates of neoliberal economics whose cardinal principle is that the state has no business in directing the allocation of resources and distribution of rewards and punishments. Yet the very reasons for which the state was proscribed from engaging in economic activities are precisely the same ailments that afflict Ugandan politics and hurt the economy: corruption, rent-seeking, patronage, misallocation of resources and a warped prioritization of public expenditures. After the successive dismantling of State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and the downsizing of the civil service, the NRM government and President Museveni resorted to direct political appointments funded by donors who sought to reward Uganda for its satisfactory economic reform policies.

If in the pre-1986 era governments used SOEs as the primary source of generating rents and dispensing patronage, in the post-1986 era of “free market” economics (and no SEOs) political appointments were initially funded from external donations, grants and loans that came as rewards for Uganda’s commitment to being an excellent student of the Washington Consensus reform policies. In the recent past, however, funding the huge patronage network has been largely through the Treasury, from locally collected revenue as a result of Uganda’s modestly impressive economic growth. As the economy has grown at the macro level, so has the country’s revenue base and regime financiers from the private sector, which have oiled the patronage network in the face of dwindling funding from Western donors and international financial institutions. And with the passing of the anti-homosexual law, there’s now talk of turning to the East – to China, India and Russia, members of the so called BRICS group of emerging economic powers. Going forward, the current system can look to oil revenue for continued funding.

Impact on policy implementation

The extant patronage system and “broad-base” politics has deleteriously impacted on policy implementation in at least two respects. First, the monster that is corruption has pervaded the public sector and greatly undermined meritocratic award of contracts in the roads sector, in energy, in agriculture, education, health, and just about any other critical sector of public goods and services provisioning. Corruption perceptions indices have continuously ranked Uganda the most corrupt in the East African region. Some analysts, like the eminent journalist Andrew Mwenda, have suggested that corruption and patronage, in and of itself, may not be *the* problem. Rather, that it is the type of corruption and abuse of office that has either adverse effects or positive impact on a poor country like Uganda. China has been growing rapidly over the last many decades yet cases of cronyism and violation of basic precepts of the rule of law are commonplace. Closer home, although Rwanda is ranked the least corrupt country in the East African region, some observers have pointed out that corruption and patronage in Rwanda are not so much as absent as highly centralized and controlled.

Two analysts of Rwandan politics and economy, Golooba-Mutebi and David Booth (2012), have recently suggested that what we have in Rwanda (and to some extent Ethiopia, I would argue) is a departure from the old, African-wide trend of neo-patrimonial rule and rent seeking, to "developmental patrimonial." Accordingly, the ruling Rwandese Patriotic Front in Rwanda through its business conglomerate, Crystal Ventures, centrally controls economic rents and deploys them strategically for wider, long-term socioeconomic transformation of the country. The Rwandan type of patronage politics is highly centralized and potentially transformative. By contrast, the Ugandan patronage and rent seeking is particularistic, fragmented and invariably hurts societal public good but benefits individual material and political interests.

The second major consequence of the specific form of patronage politics under NRM rule is the fragmentation of the state in the face of competing social and economic interests (see Khisa 2013). As noted above, this fragmentation of the state manifests in the creation and proliferation of multiple state agencies and quasi-legal bodies, many of which parallel other constitutional and statutory bodies of government. Given that President Museveni is seen by some analysts as autocratic and his style of leadership bordering on being an imperial president, it is in order to briefly clarify my assertion that Uganda's patronage politics is particularistic and fragmented (Mwenda 2007). Although the 1995 constitution grants vast powers to the President, and even though President Museveni is the historically unrivaled leader of the NRM, his ability to exercise unfettered power and reproduce his legitimate claim to rule depends on sharing that enormous power that he wields while remaining the undisputed chief.

From the formal civil service and statutory bodies to security and intelligence agencies, the President has succeeded in creating parallel and multiple centers of power that are directly answerable to him or to many of his handlers, and in many cases paying strict personal loyalty. By superintending the creation of multiple agencies and organizations, but not necessarily institutions, the President is able to maintain quite an elaborate and elastic patronage machinery, which he astutely controls. The net impact is the spreading of layers of corruption, making cracking down on the corrupt impossible and deploying economic rents for socioeconomic transformation impracticable. I construe this as a technology of power or more precisely a strategy of rule, which has given Uganda a relatively stable political system and cemented NRM rule, but which has tremendously undermined the country's long-term development needs. If Uganda has avoided violent conflict that would come from elites denied access to patronage resources, the country has paid a heavy price of stagnated development. It is a case of "unproductive peace" (Lindemman 2011).

In Lieu of a Conclusion: Lessons from Ghana

Just to reiterate, all regimes which fall short of being fully democratic, whether they be out-rightly nondemocratic or hybrid (combining aspects of democratic practice and autocratic tendencies) face severe legitimacy problems. To legitimate their power they have to make some choices, primarily two: they either build robust institutions that implement developmental policies and win over the masses, or they liberalize their politics and economies so as to enable popular participation and elite cooptation. The former can be seen as a case where decision-making power is highly centralized and less institutionalized. By contrast, the latter is a case of regimes that display a good degree of well-established decision-making institutions. While the first case tends to evolve strong and robust capacity to implement policy, the second operates under weak state capacity when it comes to policy-implementation. In the language of ideal type categories, in the Weberian sense (Gerth and Mills 1948: 59), I would say the first category is performance-based legitimacy while the second is participatory legitimacy.

Now, I should point out that like all ideal typologies, these two categories do not have perfect examples of real world cases; rather we can find examples that approximate or come close to the theoretical description as outlined in this paper. I have identified four African cases that can help us decipher these two divergent paths. Ghana and Uganda both come close to being participatory legitimacy regimes. On the other hand, Ethiopia and Rwanda are examples of performance-based legitimacy. If there is something worth learning from Ghana, it is that at some point participation and performance can converge. In this final part of the paper I should like to draw on the case of Ghana to reflect on the future of policy implementation in Uganda.

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, Ghana walked the path that has been replicated in Uganda. After a decade of corrupt and inefficient military rule in 1970s under General Ignatius Acheampong, that paralleled the rule of Uganda's General Idi Amin, a new group of young Marxist radicals took power in a coup on 31st December 1981. They formed a government called the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). The PNDC immediately banned political parties, dissolved parliament and sought to pursue a social revolution to change the status quo in politics and the economy.

What is more, political structures were put in place to enable popular participation in politics and decision-making. These structures were initially called the People's Defense Committees (PDCs) and Workers Defense Committees (WDCs). They were subsequently abolished and replaced with the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs), which later became District Assemblies and were used to implement the country's decentralization policy. Uganda's practice of popular participation, the grass-roots Resistance Council system and the no-party Movement politics were replicas of Ghanaian political development under the PNDC rule throughout the 1980s. Little wonder therefore that there are significant similarities between Ghana's 1992 Constitution and Uganda's 1995 Constitution, one glaring difference being that the former lifted a ban on party politics after ten years while the latter carried forward the same ban for another ten years.

In addition, much like Uganda, economic reform programs in Ghana led to sweeping privatization, deregulation and liberalization. But these economic reform policies also engendered corruption and patronage politics. President Jerry Rawlings ran a system of not only popular people's participation but also democratized corruption. In effect, the promise of revolution, of development and of socioeconomic transformation remained a distant dream. However, even after walking relatively the same path of political development in the 1980s and 90s, when it was time for the test of government turn-over, a key yardstick for consolidating democracy, Ghana and Uganda diverged.

In 2001, twenty years after Jerry Rawlings took power in a coup, Ghana transitioned to full democracy when the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) was squarely defeated by the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) led by John Kuffuor in a free and fair election. Then in 2008 Ghana had a second government turnover when the ruling NPP lost to Rawlings' NDC. Ghana has thus achieved irreversible democratic consolidation. On the other hand, in 2005, twenty years after the NRM captured power, the 1995 Ugandan constitution was amended to remove presidential term limits. The incumbent President Museveni retained power after the highly contested 2006 presidential race that many observers believe was rigged. Thus, Uganda's democratic trajectory floundered. Since then we have not made much progress on the major global democracy and freedom indices like those of Freedom House, Polity and Transparence International.

In the realm of the economy and social transformation, Ghana has not performed spectacularly just because it is a consolidated democracy. Success has been modest, but no doubt better than Uganda's. For one, the size of the Ghanaian economy is almost twice Uganda's yet the reverse is almost true on the total populations of the two countries. Although partisan politics remains quite inhibiting of policy implementation and enforcement of the rule of law, Ghana ranks much better than Uganda on a wide range of measures by the Mo Ibrahim governance index. The swift move from oil discovery to oil production, compared to the slow pace and secrecy characterizing Uganda's oil sector, attest to the growing capacity of the Ghanaian state to overcome political gridlock and execute government policy. Also, overall physical infrastructure in Ghana is bigger and better than Uganda's.

During the 8 years of the NPP administration (2001-2008) under President John Kuffuor, large road-projects were completed and several presidential initiatives in education, agriculture and public transport implemented. The 2013 Ibrahim Index for African Governance (IIAG) offers some telling findings in the area of infrastructural development. In measuring infrastructure, the IIAG is a composite index that includes electricity, rail network, air transport, telephone and IT infrastructure and digital connectivity. The infrastructure measure gives Ghana 34.1/100 and Uganda gets 26.9/100. On the measure of public management, whose indicators include statistical capacity, revenue collection, public administration, fiscal policy, budget management, etc., Ghana gets 58/100 while Uganda scores 56.8/100.

Finally, on the overall measure of "Sustainable Economic Opportunity," which combines infrastructure, business environment, rural sector and public management, Ghana scores 54.4/100 while Uganda has 51.8/100. Needless to say, Uganda scores above the continental average of 47%. These modestly better scores for Ghana, compared to Uganda, may suggest that as a liberal democratic state that embodies stiff and credible competition for power, a critical citizenry that asks tough questions and demands substantive performance from government, Ghana has been making slow but sustainable socioeconomic progress. The same cannot be said about Uganda, especially with respect to the sustainability of our policy implementation and economic performance.

It seems plausible, therefore, to conclude that the path of popular, participatory and ultimately patronage politics we took in 1986 will continue to yield little socioeconomic progress unless the country moves from the current semi-democratic/semi-authoritarian regime to a fully democratic polity where citizens can engage in sustained demand for value for money and assure accountability in the public sector. But without time-limitation in the tenure of the incumbent president, and without a real possibility of the ruling party losing elections, public debate and demands for accountability, of the type that we have in Uganda today, cannot yield substantive results in policy implementation.

Lastly, two sets of recommendations are in order. First, if the current NRM leadership is serious about crackdown on the corrupt, corruption must be shifted from being a low-risk, high-reward activity to a high-risk, low-reward activity. This can only be attained through deploying a sophisticated state agency with the capacity to go after the "big fish." It has to start with the legal framework. But even more importantly, we need something akin to Singapore's Corrupt Practices Investigations Bureau, totally shielded from politicians and economic lobbyists.

Second, the myriad policy monitoring agencies, anti-corruption bodies, government commissions, parliamentary committees and presidential initiatives should be consolidated into few and focused robust institutions founded on meritocracy and not ethno-regional balancing or short-term political calculations. The fewer the agencies and bodies that impose undue red-tape, the fewer there will be opportunities of using public office for personal gain.

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