State and Society Relations in Uganda's Politico-economic Transitions: Structures, Processes and Outcomes of Governance Since 1986

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Abstracts

The article discusses the nature and dynamics of structures and processes of state and society relations in Uganda and the political and economic outcomes in the country. Empirical data from the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)/Expert Opinion Survey (EOS) and Focus Group Discussions in Uganda that was compiled in 2011 are among those analyzed. In addition, literature on these state structures (executive, legislature and judiciary) and on elections as spaces, processes and institutions for defining, arbitrating and determining outcomes of structure and processes of governance, with emphases on the 18 February 2011 and prior to the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections are also used to triangulate the findings and enrich the discussion. In addition, the results from a recent study on 'Uganda @ 50' conducted by the Centre for Basic Research (CBR) are used to fore ground the opinions of Ugandans on the contemporary social structures and political trends in the country. The conclusion is that in spite of the considerable politico-administrative reforms in Uganda especially from 1986 to 2005, there are strong indications of regressions in the quality of governance since then that warrant concern for the future democratization in Uganda. Some notable reforms during the pre-2006 period included significant trends towards decentralization, the return to multiparty political systems, and the development of a progressive constitution with pronounced frameworks for pursuing democratic governance through accountable and transparent institutions of governance. Most of these constitutional provisions are now being reversed. Uganda today demonstrates the trappings of a post-colonial non-democratic state in which state structures serve partisan interests. The army takes centre stage in politics and in turn enables the authoritarian character of the state where elections have become mere pretences and a mockery of substantive democratization. The independence of the three arms of the state is simply pretentious and highly circumscribed by the NRM to be used at will in legitimizing its hold onto power. Unless these trends change, the country could revert to its tyrannical past.

Key Words: **Corruption, State, Society, Political Transitions, Democracy, Elections, Civil Society, Culture, Power, Paternalism, Economic Commission for Africa (Eca)/Expert Opinion Survey (Eos), 2011[1].**

Introduction

This article discusses the nature and dynamics of structures and processes of state and society relations in Uganda and the attendant political transitions in the country. The specific aspects we attempt to address in our analysis include the major cultural, economic and political institutions of current governmental process of the country; forms and types of state structures, their dynamics and implications; rules of political succession; the character, structure and process of the interface between state, society, economy and politics; implications of diversity/homogeneity for the emergence of 'sub-national' identities; linkages between political elite and the 'masses'; the nature of differentiation of the country's civil society; the role of the state in mediating political competition and allocation of public resources and social surplus; and, above all, the character of the state in concrete terms. Empirical data from the Expert Opinion Survey (EOS) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and Focus Group Discussions compiled in 2011 are used in the analyses of these elements of the chapter. Literature on these elements and on elections as spaces, processes and institutions for defining, arbitrating and determining outcomes of structure and processes of governance, with emphases on the 18 February 2011 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections is also used to triangulate the findings and enrich the discussion. Additional findings from a recent study on 'Uganda @ 50' are used to draw in contemporary opinion on these issues.

Conceptual framework

Few scholars have at once grappled with a mix of issues on state structures, society and politics that are as related as they are diverse as those handled in this article. This warrants a brief conceptual elaboration. According to Mbaku (2000), many scholars have examined the causes of poverty and underdevelopment in Africa and several variables have been identified as major contributors. Among these are political opportunism, which includes such behaviours as corruption and rent seeking; excessive population growth; political violence, including destructive ethnic conflict; racial intolerance; poorly developed and non-sustainable economic infrastructures; high debt levels; military intervention in politics and governance; a global economy that places African producers at a competitive disadvantage; an international financial system that discriminates against African traders; and the economic policies of the developed market economies (see, for instance, Ergas, 1986; World Ban, 1981; Mbaku, 1997; 1998, 1999, 2000; and Kimenyi, and Mbaku, 1999.

Some researchers have argued that the critical determinant of poor macroeconomic performance in Africa and, hence, continued poverty and underdevelopment has been policy mistakes made by incompetent, ill-informed and poorly educated but well-meaning policy makers (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012). This latter argument has informed the movement to recruit and bring to the public services more competent, better educated, honest, and well-disciplined individuals. Recent studies by public choice scholars, however, have uncovered evidence that points to political opportunism as the major determinant of underdevelopment on the continent (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012; Tullock, 1987; Shughart and William, 2008; Buchnan, 1990). Many of the so-called policy mistakes are actually deliberate and purposeful programmes promoted by opportunistic, but not necessarily incompetent, civil servants and politicians seeking ways to enrich them. The institutional arrangements that African countries

adopted at independence endowed the ruling elites with significant regulatory and redistributive powers. These laws and institutions enhanced the ability of the post-independence leaders to engage in inefficient income and wealth redistribution in their favour. Although the perverse economic policies implemented by these elites imposed significant economic, human and social costs on the rest of society, they generated enormous benefits for civil servants and politicians who sought to adhere to the status quo (see, among others, Mbaku, 1998; Ihonvbere, 1994).

Poorly designed, weak, and inappropriate institutional arrangements are the critical determinants of poverty and underdevelopment in the continent. These laws and institutions promote opportunism (e.g., corruption and rent seeking); restrict economic freedoms and, subsequently, the ability of individuals to engage freely in exchange; impedes entrepreneurial activities and, consequently, wealth creation; and generally endangers sustainable development. The institutional arrangements that the African countries adopted at independence enhanced the ability of those who had captured the evacuated structures of colonial hegemony to misuse the positions entrusted to them. In the process, they stunted the emergence of an indigenous entrepreneurial class and, subsequently, the creation of the wealth that the post-independence society needed to deal with massive and pervasive poverty (Mbaku, 2000).

Similarly, Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) noted that it is man-made political and economic institutions that underlie economic success (or the lack of it). Reviewing various economies they, for example, observe that North Korea is one fascinating example. It is a remarkably homogeneous nation, yet the people of North Korea are among the poorest on earth while their brothers and sisters in South Korea are among the richest. In their opinion, the logic is that the south forged a society that created incentives, rewarded innovation, and allowed everyone to participate in economic opportunities. The economic success thus spurred was sustained because the government became accountable and responsive to citizens and the great mass of people. On the other hand, the people of the north have endured decades of famine, political repression, and very different economic but largely ineffectual institutions. The difference between the two Koreas is due to the politics that created these completely different institutional trajectories.

Hence, our premise is that the real obstacles to development in Africa, among others, are the absence of forward-looking institutional arrangements that can effectively restrain the state and its agents (army, civil servants and politicians) from engaging in opportunism. What is needed are institutional frameworks for enhancing indigenous entrepreneurship and the creation of wealth and improving the ability of all individuals within each country to participate fully and effectively in national development. In order to prepare each African country for sustainable development in the new century, citizens must engage in reconstruction of the state through proper constitution-making to provide governance and resource allocation systems that minimize political opportunism; enhance indigenous entrepreneurship; maximize wealth creation; promote peaceful coexistence of population groups; and generally increase national welfare (Mbaku, 2000; Wagner and Gwartney, 1988). In the following sections, we take a more detailed look at parts of this transition programme with post-1986 Uganda as our case study.

Major cultural, economic and political institutions of governmental processes in Uganda

In the pre-colonial times, traditional communities in what is now Uganda were closely knit units. Their social, political and economic organization revolved around the family, clan and/ or the institution of traditional leader. According to the National Culture Policy of Uganda, "the daily activities of men, women and children, whether as individuals or as groups, were intrinsically linked to and determined by their cultures however, the exposure to various influences, cultures as well as foreign rule at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century led to weakening of traditional socio-political set-ups (National Culture Policy, 2006). One common characteristic of the post-colonial state is that it was dictatorial, centralized and left no room for citizen participation as we know it today – sharing of decision-making powers (Bazaara, 2003). In this dispensation, the state was based on the manipulation of cultural diversities like religion, tribes and ethnicity which characterized British 'divide and rule' colonial government structures for segmenting society and weakening the growth of democratic processes; and this has changed only slightly in post-colonial state structures in Uganda.

It is therefore not surprising that at the centre of cultural, economic and political institutional frameworks of the current governmental process in Uganda is the historical question of the role of traditional kingdoms (Ahikire, Opolot & Madanda, 2013). Not only do they define the embedded ethnic orientations of its politics in terms of processes of seeking power and allocating political positions but, in addition, ways of accessing socioeconomic and cultural opportunities. The administrative system is structured along the geographical and ethnic contours of these traditional kingdoms and their varied histories of development, which still reflect the sense of nationality and citizenship of the people of Uganda. In short, the formal and informal governance structures and processes are defined by this traditional political trajectory. Government recognizes and supports some of the traditional/cultural institutions. Communities look up to the traditional/cultural institutions for their identity. This facilitates these institutions to support culture and use it to mobilize people for development (National Culture Policy, 2006).

The Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) for the February 2011 Presidential and Parliamentary elections state that for centuries, the regional kingdoms of Buganda, Toro, Bunyoro and Ankole constituted the apex of the political organization in Uganda. Among these, the Buganda Kingdom was considered the strongest and most influential. The political power of the kingdoms was, however, removed when the institution of kingship was abolished in the 1960s. Soon after, consistent demands were raised by the population in Buganda, the Baganda, to restore their traditional ruler and reinstate the kingdom's political power. Their demands were, to some extent, upheld in 1993 when the incumbent National Resistance Movement (NRM) government decided to restore traditional rulers. Hence, the Buganda Kingdom was the first kingdom to be restored (Johanessen, 2005). In coming sections we use the Buganda question to illustrate the significance of traditional kingdoms in the cultural, economic and political institutions of governmental processes in Uganda.

Since the restoration of kingdoms, Buganda has re-built itself as a quasi-state implying that the restored cultural kingdom has established effective institutions, financing mechanisms and policy tools (Englebert, 2002). Shortly after the restoration in 1993 the restored Buganda king appointed a parliament (Lukiiko) consisting of clan leaders and representatives from each district. A government that resembles a modern cabinet with a chief minister and ministers was set up. The local administrative system has also been re-established with a network of county and sub-county chiefs. This system, to a large extent, overlaps the official state structure based on districts, sub counties and the respective local councils (Ebglebert, 2002). Altogether the institutional reconstruction leaves the impression of a modern state institution, raising eyebrows in circles opposed to a political monarch. Most of the other kingdoms followed suit.

In an attempt to curb their powers, the 1995 Constitution of Uganda prevents the traditional rulers from levying taxes and there are currently no regular transfers from the central government. Thus these traditional-cum-cultural institutions to a large extent depend on internal 'popular' fundraising and external donations. The Buganda Kingdom in particular relies on rental income from properties, donations from companies, and people are encouraged to buy certificates in order to fund the expenditures of the kingdom. The unstable economy of the kingdom is one of the primary reasons why the proponents of the institution have made demands for a federal status for the restored kingship, hoping that the institution will be granted fiscal powers (Kayunga, 2000). Opposed to the political character of the Buganda institution in the past, the restored institution of kingship was confined to cultural functions. This implied that the institution changed from being a functioning state within the Ugandan state, to an institution located outside the political sphere and the formal state structure (Kayunga, 2001). Nevertheless, the kingdom's demand for a federal state structure with executive powers has continued to dominate the political debate in Uganda.

Nevertheless, the place of the Buganda Kingdom in contemporary Ugandan politics has influenced political debates in Uganda since its restoration in 1993 (Johanessen, 2003). The consent of the Buganda Kingdom still serves as an important support-base for politicians running for office as evidenced in the 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011 presidential elections. The issues debated prior to all the above elections related to Buganda's quest for self-determination through a federal state structure. In this sense, the Buganda Kingdom has managed to influence national politics despite its cultural character, and has re-entered the political arena as a significant pressure group more than thirty years after its abolition (Oloka-Oyango, 1997; Barya, 1998; Kayunga, 2001; Commonwealth Observer Group, 2011).

Currently, the bulk of Buganda Kingdom government is more or less openly sympathetic to the opposition and in fact its top figures like the former Prime Minister Mr. Mulwanyamuli Ssemwogerere campaigned for Rtd. Dr. Kiiza Besigye the lead opposition candidate in the 2011 Presidential campaigns. This has further strained relations between President Museveni, the NRM in general and the Buganda Kingdom. The Commonwealth Observer Team 2011 highlights the following indications of the growing animosity between the two: in September 2009 the government's decision to prevent the Buganda King, Kabaka Ronald Mutebi, from attending a youth ceremony in one of the Counties of the Kingdom (now Kayunga District) caused a riot, which left at least 28 people dead. This incident exposed the tension between the state and Kabaka Ronald Mutebi who had been increasingly forceful in calling for the

reintroduction of Federo – a quasi-federal system of government that existed before the kingdoms were abolished in 1966. The culmination of all this animosity between the Kabaka and the Government of Uganda was the event of the 31 January 2011, when the Parliaments enacted the Institution of Traditional and Cultural Leaders Bill that became an Act.

The Act bans traditional leaders from promoting or providing direct support to a political party or to its activities and bars traditional leaders from 1) recommending to the public support for individual politician; 2) promoting a party manifesto; and 3) making statements against government partisan politics. Many opposition parties, including several Baganda MPs, and other traditional leaders objected to the bill on the grounds that it was unconstitutional. As it stands, democratic forces in the country have accused the Government of eroding the reverence and respect accorded to traditional or cultural leaders in Uganda (Commonwealth Observer Group, Uganda Parliamentary and Presidential Elections, 18 February 2011).

Forms and types of state structures: dynamics and implications for political competition

According to Mugaju (2000) on attainment of independence in 1962, the future of democracy in Uganda looked quite promising. On the face of it, the country has a functioning multi-party democratic 'Westminster' system of government. Under the Westminster model of government which was based on the concept of majority rule, the separation of powers (between executive, the legislature and the judiciary) and the rule of law, the country had an official opposition party, an impartial and incorruptible civil service and an independent judiciary. The independence constitution not only enshrined fundamental human rights and freedoms but it also provided varying degrees of federal relationships between the central government and the kingdoms in Uganda. In fact, unlike the government of the day, the independence Constitution co-opted some Kings of these Kingdoms into government positions; King Edward Mutesa of Buganda became the first independence President of Uganda; The Kyabazinga 'Chief of Busoga' became the Vice President under Mutesa, with Obote as the first Prime Minister.

Unfortunately, this experiment in constitutionalism was a fragile one mostly because of the preferential treatment given some monarchs over others, notably Buganda Kingdom dominating over the rest, and by appointing their King to the Presidency shortly after independence in 1962. Not long after, this bred tension between President Mutesa's monarchical interests, who was in actual terms ceremonial, and the Republican interests of the Prime Minister Milton Obote who actually held the executive powers. In attempt to wriggle out of this impasse, the latter sought the support of the military. Subsequent events demonstrate that the Prime Minister made several nepotistic changes in the armed forces rankings, which were aimed at sidelining pro-President Mutesa officers such as the then Army Commander, Brig. Shaban O. Opolot and promoting his own allies such as Iddi Amin Dada, who soon became the Army Commander replacing Brig. Shaban Opolot who was jailed. This paved the way for the attack on the *Lubiri* "the palace of the King of Buganda" and the President, Sir Edward Mutesa in 1966, which forced him into exile.

The period 1966 – 1969 witnessed an unsteady alliance between an increasingly partisan – northern Uganda orientated armed forces under the machinations of the Prime Minister and his

ally the newly appointed Army Commander Iddi Amin Dada, which culminated in the military coup of 1970 that deposed Milton Obote into exile in Tanzania. What followed under Gen. Amin's presidency was an incremental state of tyranny, chaos, violence, recurrent upheavals, economic and political isolation resulting in economic collapse and moral degeneration. In short, multiparty democracy, constitutionalism and rule of law ceased to exist and Uganda had become a land of terror, anarchy and warlord-ism (Mugaju, 2003: p.2-3).

The successful Tanzanian armed forces supported war of liberation that deposed Iddi Amin in 1979 saw a resumption of a weak and short lived political stability that witnessed three presidencies comprising that of His Excellency Prof. Yusuf Lule, that of His Excellency Godfrey Lukongwa Binaisa, which was followed by the intrinsically pro-Milton Obote's Uganda People' Congress (UPC) 1980 elections – popularly known as the Obote II Regime. This too ended in the military coup by two disgruntled Acoli Generals in the names of Tito Okello Lutwa and Gen. Bazillio Olara Okello in 1985 that were ostensibly unhappy with the predominantly pro-Langi leanings of the Obote II Regime. Theirs was an equally short lived government and the National Resistance Army (NRA) of Yoweri Museveni assumed power, thereafter in 1986.

On assuming power in 1986 the National Resistance Army (NRA) banned political parties, actively crippled the opposition, and ruled the country under a one-party movement system. Under the movement system the NRA exploited the negative history of the country to craft a no-party political system in which they forged strategic alliances with the diverse political opinions that mattered but would facilitate the suffocation of multi-party identities, which centered around Yoweri Museveni's interested and transformed themselves into the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government.

During the early NRM period (1996-2006), any elections had to be held on individual merit basis (Mujaju, 1994). Mujaju (1994) noted that NRM Government had used massive public resources to mount political education courses the principal purpose of which was to destroy political parties. Besides, the government placed virtually a ban on parties. There was limited room for expression of diverse and alternative political opinion and elections advocated by the NRM at the time were seen by the opposition as a recipe for perpetual dictatorship (Kagenda-Atwoki, 1991). Multi-party elections re-emerged onto the political platform in the 2006 Presidential elections. However, this saw the reawakening of old political parties, legitimizing a weak multi-party system of political competition as the formal pattern of political contestation in Uganda. The parties in question, notably Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC), Democratic Party (DP) and Conservative Party (CP), are hangovers of the immediate post-colonial hybrid of federal unitary demands and presidential/parliamentary interests, which have failed to provide constructive opposition against the incumbent NRM regime.

This intrinsically ethnic and nepotistic orientation of these traditional parties continues to provide fertile ground for the NRM to manipulate them. President Yoweri Museveni has skillfully exploited Uganda's chaotic past and the refractions there from that reproduce cleavages in the traditional political parties notably the Uganda People's Congress and the Democratic Party to consolidate his grip on power. Well known to the NRM is the fact that embedded in the traditional political party actors is a deep seated history of sympathies or animosity

with kingdoms, religions, regionalisms, and ethnicities, which still determine interests and outcomes of Presidential elections. With skill, these differences can be manipulated by the incumbent to undermine democratic political transition. This is evidenced by the longevity of the NRM regime to today.

However, in 2006 the NRM acceded to demands for a return to multi-party politics well knowing that it had prepared itself for overriding the weak opposition while also retaining some modicum of legitimacy. Data on Table One below was derived from results of the Expert Opinion Survey (EOS) conducted in 2011 and reveals that the majority of Ugandans agree that under the NRM, political parties operate under restricted environment manifested in lack of level playing ground, among others.

Table 1: Perceptions of Citizens on the State of Multi-Party Politics in Uganda

Characterization	Frequency	%
Uganda consists of a single party system whereby candidates can effectively compete for offices within the system	1	.8
Uganda consists of a multiparty system whereby the ruling party allows other parties to register but it does not allow them to compete freely for political power	43	34.4
Consists of a multiparty democracy with two or more independent political parties where the ruling party is dominant and dictates all national policies and programmes	42	33.6
Consists of a stable multiparty democracy with two or more strong political parties each with an independent nation-wide political programme	39	31.2
TOTAL		100

Source: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Expert Opinion Survey (EOS), 2011

The findings show that most Ugandans see the multi-party political system as comprising parties that are not allowed to compete freely (34.4%) followed by those (33.6%) who see political parties dominated by the ruling party that also dictates all national electoral policies, procedures and programmes. In spite of the low percentage response rates on these issues (in that over 65% non-responses arose), these findings rhyme with those of the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) for the February 2011 Presidential elections, which observed that the "legal framework provides the basic conditions for a competitive election, however, in some ways it still reflects the pre-multi-party era. For instance, Electoral Commission and senior District officials are directly appointed by the President." In view of the above, the COG concluded that this has raised questions about their ability to be independent. In addition, the reality is that the ruling party in Uganda is by far the largest and best-resourced party and following many years in power, elements of state structures, such as the domination of the parliament, the excessive powers of the executive in appointing critical officials like the head of the electoral commission and judges, among others, are synonymous with the ruling party. Further, reports regarding the "commercialisation of politics" by the distribution of vast amounts of money and gifts were most disturbing (Commonwealth Observer Team, 2011) and this practice continues to grow in the manner of NRM mobilizations for even more or

unlimited terms in office for the president.

Rules of political succession and linkages with debates on electoral governance

Combinations of popular grassroots, parliamentary and presidential elections have formed the rules of political succession in Uganda since 1997. However, the rules of political succession are continuously becoming contentious mostly over issues like the erosion of constitutionalism, especially after the removal of presidential term limits, limited independence of the electoral commission (EC), partisan regulations over the financing of political parties, particularly in terms of restrictions on opposition parties accessing donations and their limited funding from government abounds. In addition, there is a growing tendency to use extra-judicial force during the conduct of campaigns and in response to dissent. Consequently, in a recent study, Ugandans reasserted their receding faith in Uganda's democratic transitions by singling out the negative implications of the NRM's lifting of the mandatory constitutional two-term limits for the President (Ahikire, Opolot &Madanda, 2013).

The 2001 Presidential elections

Commenting on the 2001 Presidential elections Makara noted that, first and foremost, those elections were not free and fair, that is to say, there had never been a 'level ground' in Uganda's political electioneering history and never under the NRM government. The incumbency issue has always played in favour of NRM leaders' interest; increased highhanded use of state fiat through charged formal and informal military organs; money for vote buying has always been a key factor in NRM elections right from the executive down to local level politics; the many years of no-party politics and an entrenched local council structure at grassroots worked for the NRM at the expense of other political parties. During the no-party era, the individual merit system undermined the legitimacy of traditional political parties and laid the ground for the politics of the rich, who could afford to finance expensive campaigns (Makara, 2003, p.24).

The 2006 Presidential elections

General Yoweri Museveni was declared the winner of the first multi-party presidential elections in February 2006 under the NRM. In fact, this was the first multi-party poll in 25 years. He took 59% of the vote versus the 37% share of his main rival, Rtd. Col. Dr. Kiiza Besigye. The Commonwealth Group observed these elections and concluded that while the results reflected the wishes of those able to vote, there were serious irregularities and shortfalls. In particular, the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) noted the lack of a level playing field and the failure to ensure a distinction between the ruling party and the state. The COG also noted harassment of Dr Besigye, lack of balance in media coverage and the use of financial and material inducements. On a positive note, when compared to the 2001 elections, 2006 saw a slight improvement in the area of media freedom (Commonwealth Observer Group, 2011,p. 4-5).

The 2011 Presidential elections

Comments on the February 2011 Presidential and Parliamentary elections share similar critical opinion. The Commonwealth Observer Team for these elections observed that the Electoral

Commission (EC) coordinated the campaign schedules to make sure party rallies did not overlap and thereby help to ensure the generally peaceful conduct of the campaign. The main concern regarding the campaign, and indeed regarding the overall character of the election, was the lack of a level playing field, the use of money and abuse of incumbency in the process. They categorically made these observations:

> The magnitude of resources that was deployed by the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM), its huge level of funding and overwhelming advantage of incumbency, once again, challenged the notion of a level playing field in the entire process. … Media monitoring reports also indicated that the ruling party enjoyed a large advantage in coverage by state-owned radio and TV. The ruling party in Uganda is by far the largest and best-resourced party and following many years in power, elements of the state structure are synonymous with the party. Further, reports regarding the "commercialisation of politics" by the distribution of vast amounts of money and gifts were most disturbing (Commonwealth Observer Group, Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, 18 February 2011:15-20).

The partisan Electoral Commission

Most Ugandans do not think the Electoral Commission is independent. These concerns corroborate recent empirical data from the ECA Expert Opinion Survey (EOS) of elite Ugandans in government, civil society and the private sector conducted in 2011. The EOS data in Table 2 below reveal that most Ugandans (36%) do not think the EC is independent and was merely 'fairly' capable of conducting credible elections in the past.

Table 2: Citizens on the Independence of Electoral Commission (EC)

Citizen views on the Independence of the EC in Uganda	Frequency	Per cent
1=The electoral commission is not independent but rarely competent to conduct credible elections	28	22.4
2=The electoral commission is neither independent nor competent to conduct credible elections	11	8.8
3=The electoral commission is not independent but fairly competent to conduct credible elections	45	36.0
4=The electoral commission is independent and fairly competent to conduct credible elections	28	22.4
5=The electoral commission is independent and fully competent to conduct credible elections	13	10.4
Total	**125**	**100.0**

Source: ECA/EOS, 2011

In addition, the same survey asked respondents about their thinking on national elections in Uganda. Findings revealed that most of the political elite think national elections are rarely free and fair (28%), sometimes free and fair (25%) or not free and fair at all (25%).

Table 3: Citizens on whether Elections in Uganda are free and fair

Are elections in Uganda free and fair?	Frequency	Per cent
1=Not at all	31	24.8
2=Rarely	35	28.0
3=Sometimes	31	24.8
4=Mostly	22	17.6
5=Always	6	4.8
Total	125	100.0

Source: ECA/EOS, 2011

Comments on what undermines the Democratic content of Electoral Outcomes?

The Commonwealth Observer Group report for the February 2011 elections provides some key reasons behind the declining respect for the outcomes of national elections in Uganda as rules for political succession. Notable is the lack of clear regulation in the areas of state resources and campaign financing and expenditure, resulting in a lack of transparency and accountability. It was observed during these elections that in addition to the issue or misuse of state resources there is a "commercialisation of politics" in Uganda, with numerous reports of candidates giving vast amounts of financial inducements and/or gifts to voters.

Among others, the on-going creation of new districts is significant because it creates jobs, provides funding for the area given that status and thereby can act as a form of patronage on behalf of the incumbent. The COG noted that "critics pointed out that to the fact that a USHs 20 million payment was made to each MP at the time parliament was debating a Shs 600 billion supplementary budget. The legal framework provides the basic conditions for a competitive election. However, in some ways it still reflects the pre-multi-party era. For instance, the Electoral Commission and senior District officials are directly appointed by the President. This has raised questions about their ability to be independent. Overall, there is serious concern at the EC's poor preparation for and management of the polls, with a poor level of organization in the delivery of materials and many polling station officials seemingly ill-prepared for their duties (Commonwealth Observer Team Uganda Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, 18 February 2011).

The Character, Structure and Interfacing between State, Society, Economy and Politics

Once could confidently argues that right from the days of liberation struggle, the National Resistance Movement formerly the NRA can be credited for providing opportunity for diversities in religion, ethnicity, economic classes and even race, as seen by the proactive efforts to attract Indian and other Asians that Iddi Amin had exiled and their properties nationalized to return to Uganda after 1986. Subsequently, in most cases properties of these exiled Indians and Asians were returned to them, as long as there was evidence or title to such claims.

Ugandans have divergent views as to why the NRM took such as stance in the first place. For example, for most experts interviewed, the inclusiveness was done mainly because it was the most rational basis for creating legitimacy against contending regional, ethnic and political forces threatening the NRMs grasp of political, economic socio-cultural and military power in the country. In revising the 1992 Constitution of Uganda, the amended 2005 Constitution of Uganda demonstrated that to substantial degree the National Resistance Movement government institutionalized these identities and uses them for superimposing ethnic, religious and regional balancing, homogenization or the 'divide and rule politics' in the allocation of resources and positions of power whenever it was in their interest, to today. Figure 1 shows the opinions of citizens from the ECA survey on this question.
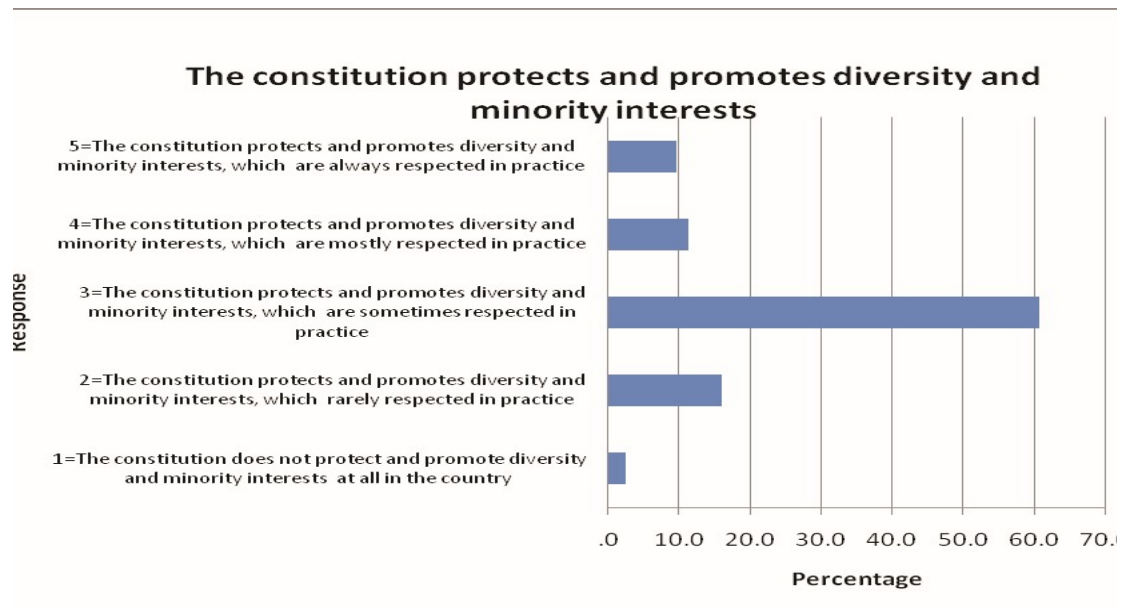
Source: ECA/EOS 2011

Figure 1: Citizen's views on the Protection and Promotion of Diversities in Uganda

The findings reveal that most of the respondents find that the inclusion of diversities and minority rights into the amended in Uganda Constitution of 2005 was not done in good standing but for strengthening NRMs political muscle. These diversities are therefore not respected in or for themselves or objectively, for that matter but for subjective social engineering terms that serve the incumbent during elections, for example. Among others, Makara (2003) observed that while the NRM has allowed a free press, the revival of cultural institutions, helped socially disadvantaged groups as well as the less privileged to organize freely, it disallowed the freedom to organize on the basis of political parties until 2006. Increasingly, resources, lucrative deals, high-paying jobs and positions in the armed forces are being dominated by people who hail from Mr. Museveni and other NRM leadership's ethnic group, often defined as the Bahima, but also broadly conceived as 'westerners', because they hail from western Uganda. However, some sections of the Ugandan elite have sought to discount this perception. A case in point is Prof. Elijah Mushemeza, an NRM cadre in the NRM Secretariat took such a position while debating the draft ECA/EOS report at Centre for Basic Research premises in Kololo, in 2011.

Source: ECA/EOS 2011

Figure 2: Ethnic Composition of Government Leadership

In Figure 2 above, opinion from the EOS survey was split on whether the composition of government and leadership represents all segments of the Ugandan population. However, in Figure 3, the majority of the respondents were clear on the view that, in Uganda, access to public goods is largely determined by non-official identities notably ethnicity other than merit. This mainly concerns key public positions in authorities, commissions and the forces and senior public offices.

Source: ECA/EOS 2011

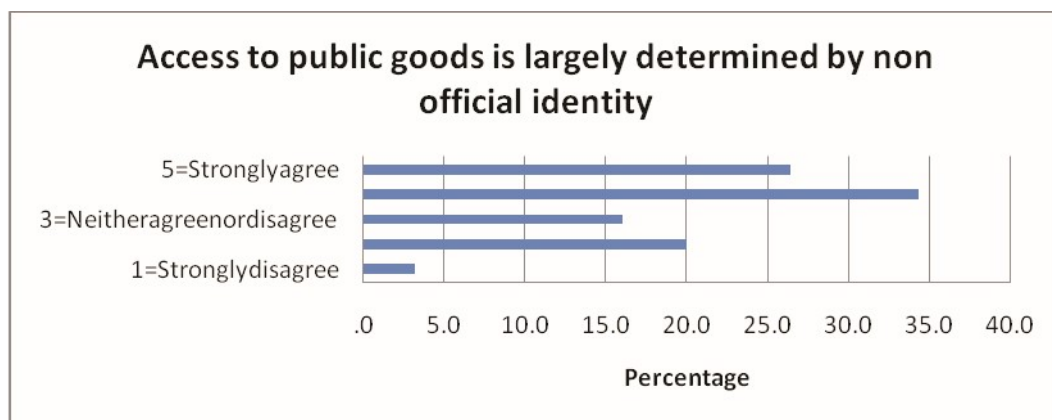**Access to public goods is largely determined by non official identity**

Figure 3: Perceptions on determinants of access to public goods

Part of this mixed opinion arises because the NRM performs differently in managing the tapestry of diversities in the country which we assess by specific elements below.

Religion

There is substantial religious tolerance in Uganda where several religions thrive including Islam, Catholicism, Protestant, Pentecostal, Orthodox, Seventh Day Adventist, Animist and Atheist. However, lately, the inclination of the top leadership of the NRM government seems to be most aligned with the Pentecostal or Born Again churches; and in recent times the occasion of each New Year's Eve is celebrated with attendance of the First Family and other political notables of the mass prayers conducted by all the well-known Pentecost Pastors in the country, which is most often conducted in the biggest amphitheatre, the Nelson Mandela National Stadium.

When the NRM government came to power in 1986, both the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church of Uganda were regarded with some suspicion by NRM leaders whose secular ideology viewed these religious institutions as divisive and as potential opponents (Fr. Rodrigues, undated). As the rebellion started in Acholi land in August 1986, religious leaders of the Catholic and Anglican churches were branded as 'rebel collaborators' and were subjected to harassment and threats. This occurred within the context of a residual historical rivalry and mistrust between the two religious bodies, which made it difficult for them to undertake common initiatives. Furthermore, the churches in the north had little concrete

support or sympathy from their counterparts elsewhere in the country, most of whom tended to support the government and tacitly viewed the war as remote and not of concern (Fr. Carlos Rodrigues, undated). However, the President categorically prohibits religious leaders from interfering with politics. However, this should not be essentialized but rather taken in view of what opinions are aired out by the religious leaders on a case-by-case basis; that is to say matters get critical or abrasive only when they say what displeases the president.

Perhaps the most remarkable moment for state relations with religious leaders was during the early years of the war in Acholi land. The role of religious leaders in the region focused primarily on providing moral and practical support to their parishioners, and Church institutions became centres of support for thousands seeking shelter from the violence. Over time, greater consensus emerged amongst church leaders in the North on the need to be proactive in 'bearing witness' about the conflict and to engage directly in peace building. This transformation resulted in a number of initiatives that placed religious leaders at the heart of efforts to support a political resolution of the conflict and to address the consequences of the war. The most prominent bodies that conducted these initiatives were the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) (Fr. Rodrigues, ibid.).

Gender and women in politics

Commenting on gender dimensions of women's political participation in Uganda's politics, Ahikire (2007) states that right from the colonial period onwards, public politics as a distinct state-centred activity was constructed as a male domain, with women conversely constructed as 'the other' – occupiers of the private space. However, like others, Ahikire recognizes the NRM for bringing women into this public politics thus:

> That the significant public presence of women is related directly to affirmative action policies instituted by the National Resistance Movement (NRM), a former guerrilla movement that seized state power in 1986, is well documented… Prior to 1986, women's participation in public politics was dismal, as manifested in 1980 when there was one woman in a legislature of 126 members … (p.3).

The findings of the EOS reveal that women only sometimes engage in the electoral processes in Uganda. This demonstrates that women's participation in political matters is limited only to a few of them, as Ahikire argues below.
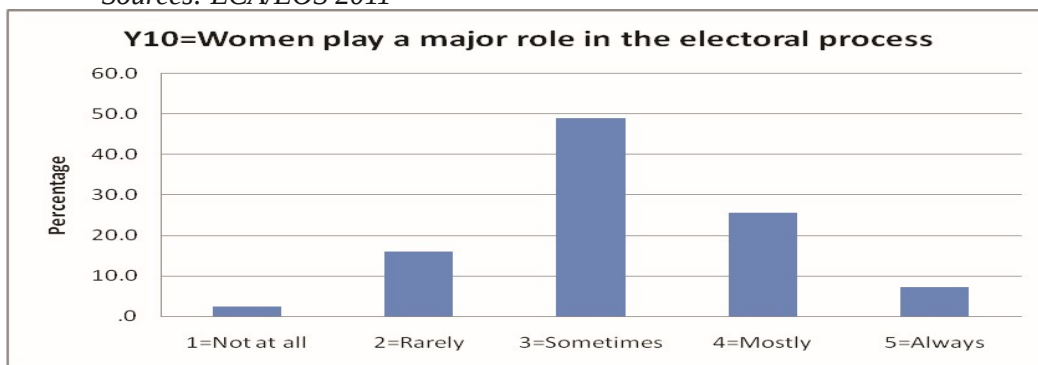
Sources: ECA/EOS 2011

Figure 4: Perception of women's role in the electoral process in Uganda

While commending the NRM's emancipation of women in Uganda, Ahikire points out that, on closer scrutiny, this applies to a few women and the gendered terrain of Uganda's state-society relations remains largely masculine and business as usual. She notes:

> On the whole, the political gains of women were seen to benefit only a few elite urban or privileged women, without necessarily transforming the nature of women's engagement with the state. The general argument is that some women merely joined public politics under the tutelage of high-command patronage, thereby creating them as mere clients of the NRM, beholden to the regime, as it were … (p.15).

On the whole, therefore, women, like other identities, have only worked into the arena of public politics under the NRM to provide a historical mission - to strengthen the NRM's grip on power and not to expand the frontiers of gender-equitable democratic governance in the country. Among others, in politics, Tamale, while appreciating the affirmative actions by NRM to make politics more gender-equitable has examined how women have adapted their legislative strategies for empowerment in the light of Uganda's patriarchal history and social structure. Above all, she underscored the challenges of women's parliamentary participation as a result of affirmative action handed down by the president, rather than pushed up from a grassroots movement (1999). One could also look at similar conceptions in Tripp's *Women and Politics in Uganda*. The factors disadvantaging women's effective engagement with politics are also largely cultural in terms of embedded patriarchy and its logic of disenfranchising women's rights to land, wealth and social opportunities (Opolot, 2010). In addition, a recent survey of youth concerns and youth at risk also revealed that, countrywide, female youth are generally negatively affected by the less desire for girl-child education in Uganda. There are more boys in schools and the boys are also the most active in civic and political engagement. Women's life chances can only increase by investing in their equitable access to social services, employment and politics (Youth Map Survey, 2010).

The National Language Question

The 2006 National Cultural Policy defines language as a means of expressing the creative arts of orature and literature. The 65 indigenous communities (The Constitution of Uganda 1995 – Schedule 3) representing Uganda's diverse cultural heritage also provides a rich variety of indigenous languages and dialects. English is the official language of Uganda and Kiswahili is the second official language, albeit the failure to garner national consensus on this with the Buganda Kingdom providing the stiffest resistance to Swahili. In other words, the development of languages in Uganda has not been uniform and tended to privilege some languages, such as Luganda which is spoken in Buganda, over others and sometimes contradicted national unity. In addition, the multiplicity of languages does not always facilitate direct communication amongst communities (National Cultural Policy, 2006). There exist in the country non-indigenous communities. Some are a product of intermarriages between some indigenous people with foreigners who live in Uganda. In fact, for most Ugandans the non-viability of Uganda as a nation stems, above all, from this lack of a unifying 'national' language (Ahikire et al, 2013).

Implications of diversity/homogeneity for the emergence of sub-national identities

There are various implications of Uganda's diversities. One of them is that it has made the development of a national consciousness very difficult. Most Ugandans are first and foremost tribal and then being Ugandan is secondary. Uganda is known for its diversities but another challenge is that they polarize the politics. Most Ugandans define their identity primarily by tribe first and nationality later. Sub-national identities are therefore essentially tribal in nature. Historically, following in the footsteps of the colonial 'divide and rule' policies, most of post-colonial governments have reinforced these ethnic divisions in politics and in aligning national resources to entrench themselves in power.

The NRM leadership, like others before them, are also said to indulge in nepotistic ethnic and tribal politics. It is common to hear citizens complaining that whereas northerners of northern Uganda, easterners from eastern Uganda and sometimes even those in central Uganda are sidelined, "it is the westerners and southerners" enjoying the most under the NRM "in terms of accessing juicy jobs and highest ranks in national Commissions, Authorities and Civil service or the armed forces" respectively. However, this has always been vehemently denied by the government. Nonetheless, the findings from the EOS in Figure 5 also confirmed that most Ugandans believe that sectarian identities have considerable influence in Uganda's politics and that they have been invoked in some instances been mobilized against the public good to subvert genuine democratic political processes such as desire for "free and fair elections" and "the search for a national; languages", among others.
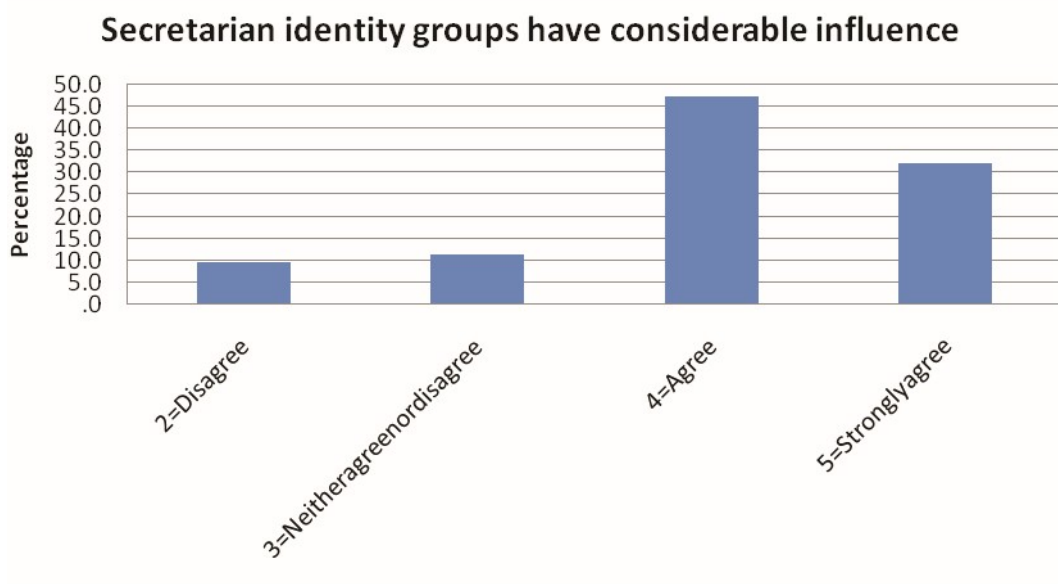
Source: ECA EOS 2011

Figure Five: Perceptions on the Influence of Sectarian Groups

It is clear from the above data that the majority of Ugandans; out of 50% (45%) percent said that indeed sectarian identities have considerable influence in the directing the NRM is governing the country. From the narratives, commentators observed that in the past, during the 1980s under Obote II (himself from the north) it was said that 'northerners' were privileged than the rest of Ugandans; currently, it is said that the NRM symbolizes a party for 'westerners'. By extension, the traditional parties like DP (was deduced to be mainly for elements in central Uganda but generally southerners) and UPC (is still seen as a party for the northerners). To date, these patterns of manipulating sectarian ethnic identities that was a construct of the British Colonial era has remained favorable to most of the post independence leadership in Uganda. The other dimension of cleavages in governance lies in the invoking of religion. In recent times, the JEEMA party emerged as a Moslem party; the DP (comprising Catholic majorities) and the UPC (dominated by Protestants) stand as the major parties demonstrating a religious influence (Tukahebwa, 2003; Pincywa, 2003; Akiiki-Mujaju, 2003). Until the NRM came to power, the army had historically been associated with northerners and the police with easterners because under the colonial dispensation these areas had courageous people with features like good height suitable for effective performance in the army and police. Today, it is evident that the NRM has endeavoured to change this monopoly of the forces by the northerners and easterners and encouraged mainly westerners and, to some degree, southerners to join the forces. Once again, one has to be conscious of the ethnic bias question in the forces; it would appear this partisan element arises mostly in people from 'western', specifically the Bahima, who dominate the higher echelons of the forces, while the rank and file is dominated by northerners and easterners.

Political elite and Masses: Political parties and Associations in political mobilization

On the whole, citizens consider the political parties in Uganda to be weak. The post-1986 years of one-party democracy till 2006, dampened the quality of the nascent political party activism. As Barya (2000) states, under the NRM's defence of one-party rule, political parties had been branded as obstacles to democracy. Most of all the parties are said to lack internal democracy and, other than the old parties like DP and UPC, tend to have limited grassroots structures linking them effectively with the masses. According to the ECA survey, most Ugandans think political parties lack internal democracy implying that they are not consultative and allocation of positions within their own ranks and are therefore mostly not nationally inclusive enough. By implication political parties are elitist, sectarian and in most cases therefore, the commons or masses are alienated from their running but are only mobilized to vote during elections. This finding could therefore justify some of President Yoweri Museveni's concern with Uganda's old political parties.

Source: ECA/EOS, 2011

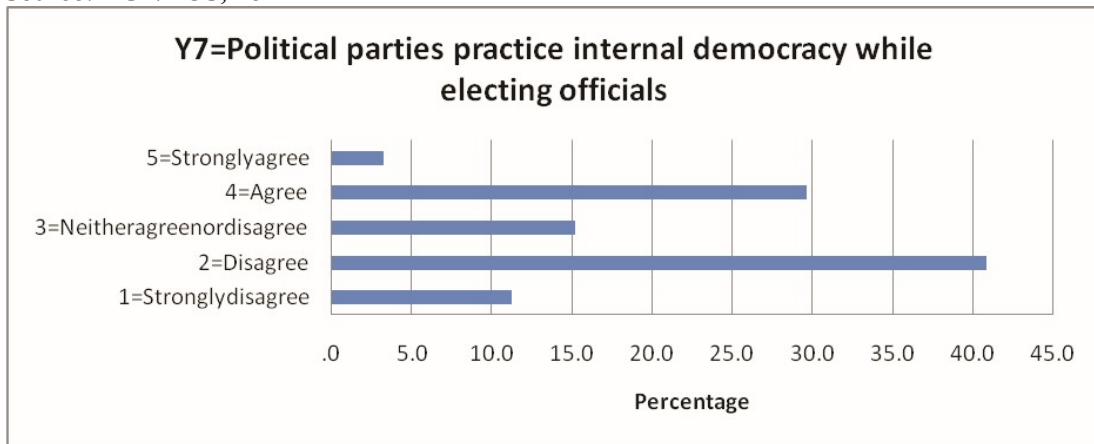**Y7=Political parties practice internal democracy while electing officials**

Figure 6: Perceptions of democracy in political parties

However, not all these problems are intrinsic of parties in themselves. Some are related to the policies of the NRM. For example, Citizens observed that in most of the cases, the political parties, opposed to NRM are starved of equitable financing and allowed limited logistics to compete favourably while campaigning and during monitoring of elections. Most Ugandans (45%) out of those that answered this question share the view that the parties are not equally resourced. This is in sync with what the Commonwealth Observer Group established: that "the incumbent NRM is the most resourced party". In their report, they raise issues with the laxity in the electoral laws of Uganda, that are weak in regulating political party activism and campaign financing in Uganda because it is openly abused and used to cushion the party in power.

Source: ECA EOS 2011

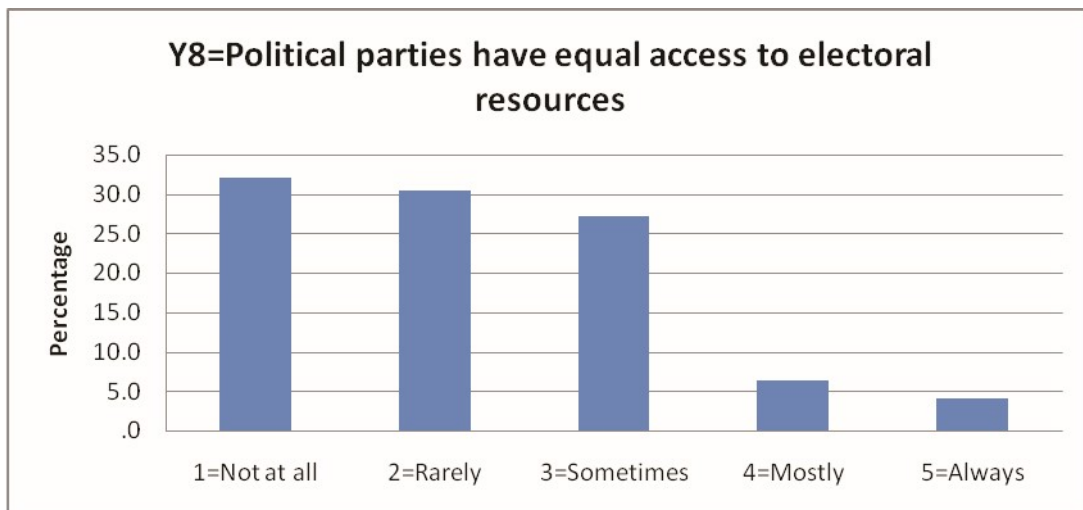**Y8=Political parties have equal access to electoral resources**

Figure 7: Citizens on whether political parties share equal access to Electoral Resources

In the absence of equitable internal funding, most of the political parties tend to access external funding and in an effort to control this avenue of funding they are required to declare their sources and amounts of funding received. Obviously, there is resistance and often what is declared is at the discretion of the party as, most times, all the parties both in opposition and the NRM conceal their actual incomes and under-declare their standing.

The Civil Service

Political Parties aside, the civil service is another domain in which to assess relations between elite and the masses. Couched in bureaucratic terms, traditionally the civil service was intended to be impartial by recruiting on merit to ensure no subaltern influences bias opportunities and diversities are recruited equitably. In fact, during the early years, a civil servant was also required to rotate in different districts such that by retirement one had not only been vertically promoted to higher ranks but also horizontally by working in various parts of the country other than their own. Ideally, if this was adhered to, working in the civil service would link elites to the masses; however, this does not seem the case any longer. The findings of the EOS revealed that most Ugandans think that the national civil service is required by law to reflect diversity of the country in its composition, appointment and promotion but it does not always comply with this requirement.

Table 4: On whether the National Civil Service is legally required to reflect diversity

Is the Civil Service required to reflect diversity?	Frequency	Percent
1=The national civil service is not legally required to reflect the diversity of the country in its composition in terms of appointment and promotion, and it does not do so	24	19.2
2=The national civil service is not legally required to reflect the diversity of the country in its composition in terms of appointment and promotion, but traditionally does so.	11	8.8
3=The national civil service is legally required to reflect the diversity of the country in its composition in terms of appointment and promotion, and it sometimes complies with it.	65	52.0
4=The national civil service is legally required to reflect the diversity of the country in its composition in terms of appointment and promotion, and it mostly complies with it.	19	15.2
5=The national civil service is legally required to reflect the diversity of the country in its composition in terms of appointment and promotion, and it always complies with it.	6	4.8
Total	125	100.0

Source: ECA/EOS, 2011

Just like the political parties there are concerns that individual merit has been compromised and recruitment into the civil service is now mostly driven by non-official identity. In Uganda, the party, ethnic group or tribe and the religion in power have tended to dominate the lucrative positions in the civil service. Today, the NRM is being castigated for favouring 'westerners' in job allocations in the key sectors and the top positions of the civil service, including the armed

forces and police. In spite of this, it is worth mention that, in principle, President Museveni and other NRM leaders are ardent anti-sectarian campaigners. For example, in 2008 the President used the eruption of political chaos triggered by sectarian killings in post-election Kenya to call on all Ugandans to desist from sectarianism because it could reverse all the achievements Uganda has made in many years. The President said the NRM government had worked so hard to defeat tribal and religious tendencies in Uganda's politics which he said had brought political chaos in the past and warned politicians against inciting people on tribal and religious grounds (www.ugpulse.com/uganda-news/government).

The character and differentiation of the country's civil society, politics and governance

Civil society has increasingly become more vigilant generally and during the conduct of monitoring electoral processes over time but remains largely a non-threatening commentator on political developments in Uganda under the NRM. The ECA/EOS sought opinion from Ugandans on the role of CSOs in engaging government.

Table 5: CSO's role in promoting accountability and transparency

Role of CSOs in promoting accountability?	Frequency	Percent
1=does not contribute to the promotion of accountability and transparency in government	3	2.4
2=rarely contributes to the promotion of accountability and transparency in government	19	15.2
3=fairly contributes to the promotion of accountability and transparency in government.	49	39.2
4=moderately contributes to the promotion of accountability and transparency in government	41	32.8
5=contributes effectively to the promotion of accountability and transparency in government	13	10.4
Total	**125**	**100.0**

Source: ECA/EOS, 2011

The majority of Ugandans opine that CSOs are only fairly (39%) or just moderately (32.8%) contributing to the promotion of accountability and transparency in government. A significant number (15.2%) were of the view that CSOs rarely contribute to the cause of checking government lack of accountability and transparency. These opinions have a trajectory. According to Oloka-Onyango (2003), while human rights and women's rights CSOs (in our view CSOs in general), witnessed substantial growth contemporaneously with the rise to power and tenure of the Movement regime, considerable limitations remain in the way of their autonomous operation. CSOs have in the main adopted an uncritical stance to lapses in accountability and transparency in government by adopting what Oloka-Onyango calls a 'softly-softly approach to the pursuit of human rights issues' (Ibid., p. 19). Talking to the leadership of independent CSOs like the Human Rights Network (HURINET) revealed that management was itself ambivalent about the impact that its activities had had on lawmakers.

This ambivalence was reflected in the general comment that the government was not easily influenced by civil society pressure (Ibid: 20). Beside the independent CSOs, even the would be public watchdogs against the abuse of democracy, such as the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) are appointed by the executive and rendered mostly complacent in engaging the state's dwindling accountability and transparency in areas like respect for critical opposition and matters concerning adhering to the rule of law. This is attested to by the evident failure to restrain the government from deploying the Presidential Protection Unit (PPU) of the army, and other undefined militias, such as the "Black Mamba" during the heat of the 2011 electoral process. More so, it is clear that changes in the legal framework governing CSOs/NGOs are intended to gag critical freedoms of speech and assembly that are crucial for a vibrant CSO agency.

The role of the State in Mediating Political Competition and in the Distribution and Allocation of Public Resources and Social Surplus

In most instances the distribution and allocation of public resources and social surplus is done in an arbitrary manner, lending itself to nepotism and opportunism along some of the affinities discussed earlier on. In short, public resources and social surplus are mostly used to sustain the NRM's domination of political power. One could ask, do we ever have a surplus budget in Uganda? Our starting point is to commend the government for making attempts at economic reforms since 1996.

According to Barya (2000) and Bikaako (2002) one of the reforms NRM initiated to revamp the economy was giving new life to the IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programmes introduced by the Obote II government. The underlying assumption was that a downsized government would necessarily greatly reduce corruption and concomitantly enhance economic efficiency. In agreement with this view, President Museveni has on several occasions re-echoed that privatization 'reduces the surface area of corruption' to the bureaucracy and public service, the army, police, revenue authority, courts and the judiciary. However, the reality is different. The economic reforms gave birth to new actors in the development process. These include actors from within the private and NGO sectors. These actors have undoubtedly, contributed to the unprecedented level of corruption in Uganda as well as the forms of corruption (Bikaako, 2002). Even the privatization process itself is shrouded in corruption and despite the belief that Museveni himself is largely free of blemish; members of the cabinet and Museveni's family have been implicated in dubious deals and questionable associations (Oloka-Onyango 1997: 215).

One of the ways of establishing the state's role in mediating and allocating resources is to also establish what citizens think about government's state of responsiveness towards their concerns as broadly speaking as possible. In Table 6 below, the ECA survey established that government was only rarely responsive (44.8%) or only fairly responsive to basic needs of communities in a fair manner.

Table 6: Level of Government Responsiveness

Government's responsiveness	Frequency	Percent
1=does not respond to the basic needs of the community	7	5.6
2=rarely responds to the basic needs of the community in an efficient manner	56	44.8
3=fairly responds to basic needs of the community in an efficient manner.	50	40.0
4=moderately responds to basic needs of the community in an efficient manner.	9	7.2
5=fully responds to the basic needs of the community in an efficient manner.	3	2.4
Total	**125**	**100.0**

Source: ECA/ EOS 2011

Table 7 below of the ECA survey shows that in the majority Ugandans also perceived that the NRM government rarely acts in a publicly accountable manner (40.8%) and or only sometimes (37.6%) does the NRM government do so doing the overriding view is that there are low levels of accountability and transparency in the management of public resources. For that matter, what citizens are imputing is that a non-responsive state cannot qualify to be a democracy.

Table 7: Level of Governmental Accountability

Level of accountability	Frequency	Percent
1=never acts in a publicly accountable manner	7	5.6
2= rarely acts in a publicly accountable manner	51	40.8
3=sometimes acts in a publicly accountable manner	47	37.6
4= mostly acts in a publicly accountable manner	18	14.4
5=always acts in a publicly accountable manner	2	1.6
Total	**125**	**100.0**

Source: ECA/ EOS 2011

Bikaako (2002) attributed the non-responsiveness or poor accountability and lack of transparency of government to overdependence on foreign sources of funding under the NRM. In her analysis, the increased dependence on donor funds has increased the gap between the governed and the governors. Unlike taxation which forces a confrontation or otherwise between the taxing authority and the taxed (thus an important accountability mechanism), foreign funding has enabled implementing agencies, both government and the non-governmental agencies, to avoid accountability to the citizens and divorce themselves from the citizenry. As such, local efforts to establish good governance have been undermined. The situation is further aggravated by Government's tendency to stifle alternative political institutions that seek to challenge its workings or check its excesses (Bikaako, 2002: 24/5). However, it ought to be noted that some scholars, such as Fredrick Golooba among others, have contested this thesis of tax base "fiscal" versus patronage "rents" determined nature of state responsive to citizens. Frederick Golooba has made this position clear in his comments to this paper citing the example of Rwanda as a more responsive state to its citizens albeit being more aid-dependent that Uganda in real terms. This should, however, not stand as a disqualification of the Bikaako argument, that is also popularized by CODESRIA-based political economists, among others

Nowhere was this rapaciousness in the abuse of public resources most evident than during elections and notably the 2011 Presidential elections which the Commonwealth Observer Group characterized as the height of 'commercialisation of politics'. The 2011 elections went on to depict in sufficient conditions, poor culture of moderation and insufficient levels of tolerance that according to Fruare (1994) and Diamond (1988) are requisites for good elections and promotion of accountability and transparency. Indeed as Ssempebwa (1992) noted, elections do not necessarily bring about democracy; however, depending on the socio-political circumstances, elections could be organized with objectives that are far from democratic. Elections can be one way of seeking to legitimize the rule of dictatorial faction (Sempebwa, 1992). This can be said of the restricted role of elections in furthering political competition in Uganda.

Conclusion

In spite of the considerable politico-administrative reforms in Uganda especially since 1986, there are indications of regressions that warrant concerns for the future democratization of the country. Some notable reforms have included significant trends towards economic growth and poverty reduction, decentralization, return to multiparty political systems and development of a progressive constitution with pronounced institutions for pursuing accountability and transparency in government. Nonetheless, Uganda today still demonstrates the trappings of a post-colonial divide-and-rule state in which elections and associated instruments of political transitions serve partisan interests. Thus the institutions and personalities serving such structures such as the Electoral Commission, for example, are selected and positioned to ensure this happens. This has been attributed to the escalation of corruption as a tool of statecraft in Uganda today. One commentator stated that as Ugandans *"we are born in corruption, bred on corruption and die in corruption"* (Ahikire et al, 2013).

Paternalistic politics embedded on using state fiat and national resources to enforce compliance of the society, its key structures and individuals to the incumbency are the order of the day. A case in point is the perpetuation of the incumbent NRM in power by manipulating the lifting of term limits has been followed in recent times by the enacting of the Public Order Act 2013, which in effect further suffocates freedoms of association and assembly. This is underlined by the acquiescence with the army, a complicit media and 'apolitical' cultural kingdoms to dominate political space and foment widespread corruption. The army is increasingly taking centre stage in politics and in turn enables the authoritarian character of the state where elections have become mere pretences and a mockery of substantive democratization.

The independence of the three arms of the state is simply pretentious and highly circumscribed by the NRM to be used at will in legitimizing its hold onto power. In essence, we are witnessing an ever-increasing centralization of the state. Formally seen as an example in democratic decentralization during the 1990s, currently Uganda has been retracting all powers back to the centre in a bid to rid the NRM of any serious challenge to its hold on political power.

The increasingly cowed civil society and the media have lapsed into self-censorship doing what some have termed 'softly softly' interventions in engaging the NRM on matters of accountability and transparency in all walks of political, social and economic accountability. One would not be wrong to conclude that in Uganda today, there is limited respect for politically accountable diversities; those with democratic credentials as opposed to those serving NRMs partisan interests per se, save for in as far as they are used to formalize and cement the incumbent NRM's hold onto political power. For example, cultural institutions can emerge and obtain support only in as far as they are pro-NRM but not more or less.

Under the NRM the organization of elections has also failed in its role as a formal tool for mediation of transparent political succession in Uganda. Since 2006, but mostly after the 2011 elections, all the political parties that participated in the electoral exercise termed the exercise a sham because of the electoral malpractices that characterized the entire process dominantly perpetrated by the manipulative activities of the NRM.

In summing up the wider state of concerns with current governance structures in Uganda, we conclude with views from an elder statesman. In a well penned letter he wrote to President Yoweri Museveni after the 2011 Presidential elections, Mr. Bidandi Ssali who was one of the presidential candidates, stated that the results of the 2011 elections "created despair and disenchantment over elections in the country for many Ugandans". He reminded the President that he is "so imbued with military powers that convince him that he will be able to preside over a police state he created pitched on patronage, the might of the gun and the power of money". However, Mr. Bidandi Ssali reminded the President that "the sustainability of such a state is not borne out by any example in recent history". Above all, Mr. Bidandi Ssali appealed to the President to "try and develop a new stance towards the opposition in Uganda". That he should start considering the leaders of other political parties as colleagues and not as enemies "vying to snatch his power, his mutual deep rooted abhorrence"(The *Daily Monitor*, Tuesday, March 1, 2011, "Bidandi Ssali's Letter to President Museveni after 2011 Polls", Monitor Publications, p.5).

These were words of a wise man indeed. Citizens shared the same sentiments in their comments on their aspirations for a better Uganda during the recent study on 'Uganda @ 50. They would like to see good and caring leadership for Uganda. To most, good leadership is predicated on the restoration of the presidential term limits to curb the tendency for leaders to overstay in power, which they say leads to abuses and the need to combat corruption most especially where attention has tended to focus on indicting small thieves while shielding those with connections to the President. In addition, there was a call for a more transparent and accountable electoral system rather than one beholden to the incumbent. To Ugandan citizens, the poor downward accountability of elected leaders was a concern that was partly attributed to partisan electoral systems and processes which in turn have resulted in producing uncaring, ineffectual legislators and unaccountable executive leaders. Unless the manipulative partisan trends that reproduce them are reversed, the country will continue downward into non-democracy and, ultimately, tyranny.

As demonstrated by the statement, "it all begins with us", in the Uganda @ 50 Project conducted in 2013, in order to prepare Uganda for sustainable development in the future,

citizens must engage in reconstruction of the state through proper constitution making to provide governance and resource allocation systems that minimize political opportunism; enhance indigenous entrepreneurship; maximize wealth creation; promote peaceful coexistence of population groups; and generally increase the national welfare.

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