"Of Mustard Seeds and Democracy".
Assessing the Impact of "Movementocracy"[1] on Uganda's Contemporary Modes of Governance

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Abstract

In spite of re-introduction of multi-partyism in 2006, the political landscape in Uganda remains far from plural - caused by too many central features of the previous "no-party" democracy remaining intact. This article analyses various elements hampering Uganda's protracted transition to multiparty democracy, and shows how they are embedded into the historical, cultural, social and political legacy of "Movementocracy" – the mode of governance introduced by President Museveni. Five interconnected and interdependent hindering factors have been identified and selected for this analysis – ruling party's tight control over the transition process, poor mode of governance, shortcomings of anti-governmental political and societal actors, upwards accountability of local stakeholders towards donor community and lacking atmosphere of political tolerance. The presented findings offer views, perceptions and frames from various representatives of Ugandan political, academic and social life.

> *"[…] before the 'mustard seed' of freedom and democracy could be sown in Uganda, the land first had to be cleared of the rocks and weeds of a corrupt system, which had given rise by the 1970s to sectarian dictatorship and violence." (Museveni 1997: xiii)*

I. Introduction

When the National Resistance Movement (NRM) of President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni came to power in 1986 (thanks to its military wing, the

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[1] The term "Movementocracy" refers to the Movement or "no-party" mode of governance of President Museveni. (Mukwaya 2004) The specific characteristics of the Movement system will be explained in the article.

National Resistance Army, NRA), it adopted a system of so called "no-party" democracy in Uganda. The founders argued that multiparty politics would revive primordial identities and promote sectarianism. (Museveni 1997; Ondoga ori Amaza 1998; Kanyeihamba 2002) This alternative to liberal Western democracy was, according to its makers, based on an all-inclusive principle of citizenship and individual merit rather than membership in "divisive" political parties. (Ddungu 1989; Kabwegyere 1996) However, it soon became clear that the no-party system was misused by the NRM and helped to entrench one-party (rather than no-party) rule which lasted (legally) until the referendum of 2005. (Nassali 2004) Then President Museveni was "forced" (internally as well as externally) to open up the political space and allow multiparty dispensation to replace the previous mode of governance. However, two years after the multiparty presidential and parliamentary election of 2006 the one-party regime in Uganda is still a reality. The NRM continues controlling the state apparatus (according to the "winner-takes-it-all" principle) as well as using public resources to finance its activities. The Movement resisted internal democratization and retained an essentially military structure. Above this, the Ugandan society remains divided, with no prospect of bringing the various actors together in a mode of interactive, participatory governance. The causes of this development lie partly in the political, historical and cultural legacy of "Movementocracy" – a mode of governance, which is a result of combined internal (national) as well as external (international) forces.

The primary objective of this article is to analyze what factors hinder a complete transition towards a functioning multiparty system in Uganda and how the legacy of "Movementocracy" is reflected in today's society.[2]

The findings presented in this article are based mainly on my discussions and open-end, in-depth interviews[3] with various representatives of political, academic and social life during field research conducted in the summer of

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[2] The aim of the paper is not to question whether multi-party politics is the right political system for Uganda, as the formal rules have already been adopted and are at least theoretically in place.

[3] All but three interviews (the sources wished to stay anonymous) have been recorded with digital voice recorder. The majority of them took place at the working place of the interviewed partners, be it parliament, university, state house, political parties HQs or offices of the NGOs or civil society organizations. Some of them took place also in restaurants or pubs in the city centre of Kampala or in the homes of my interview partners.

2007 and February 2008 in Uganda. In the course of my research I conducted ninety qualitative expert interviews with various key actors of political and social life. I have identified four major groups of actors – academics, civil society representatives and journalists, donor[4] community representatives and politicians from all political parties represented in the 8th Ugandan parliament[5]. At the core of the agent-centered approach applied in this study is the consideration of agents themselves, their diversity, connectedness and levels of interactions. (Axelrod 1997)

The conducted expert interviews are used in the article not solely as illustrations of respective experts' positions, but serve at the same time as the main source of information for analysis of the hampering elements on the way to multiparty democracy, as there are, till present day, not many publications accessible[6].

The interviews have been analyzed with qualitative interpretive methods/tools and offer reflections of various stakeholders on the democratization process and the transition from one-party mode of governance to pluralism currently under way in their country.

Each of the stakeholders' stories conveys a very different view of reality and represents a special way of seeing. The actors "select for attention a few salient features and relations from what would otherwise be an overwhelmingly complex reality" (Rein, Schoen 1994: 26) to offer a comprehensible and for them convenient picture of their subjective reality.

The stake-holder groups interviewed by me hold conflicting interests (incumbent forces versus non-incumbent forces including not solely oppositional political parties, but also a variety of journalists, civil society organizations, and academia representatives) and "their problem formulations and preferred solutions are grounded in different problem-setting stories rooted in different frames." (Rein, Schoen 1994: 29). The reliance on interview data poses specific problems to my study, as the interview setting was certainly affected by my positioning within the field.

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[4] By donors, I refer to bilateral governments and multilateral agencies that provide development assistance.

[5] These currently comprise the incumbent NRM-O, and the opposition parties Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), Democratic Party (DP), Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC), Conservative Party (CP), JEEMA as well as independent candidates.

[6] These encompass above all reports of the EU, Western donor agencies present in the country, local research centers and human rights organizations on the conduct of 2005 referendum and 2006 parliamentary and presidential elections. (see below)

The answers might have reflected what my interview partners assumed I wanted to know or what they thought it was in their interest for me to know. Rein and Schoen underline this by claiming "all interpretations are necessarily conditioned by particular society, historical period, and social status from which they originate. In other words, what you see and know depends on who you are, when you are, and where you sit." (Rein, Schoen 1994: 41)

The interviews used in this article are supplemented by analysis of secondary literature dealing with Uganda's political history as the current mode of governance has to be understood as a legacy of Uganda's specific historical, cultural, political, economic and social past.

However, despite the heterogeneity of the actors, it was possible to generate some common views from the conducted interviews and thus identify the main hampering elements on Uganda's way to multiparty political system from the view of my interview partners.

Five main hindering factors have been gathered and selected for an analysis in this article: tight control over the transition process by the ruling party, poor mode of governance, shortcomings of anti-governmental political and societal actors, upwards accountability of local stakeholders towards donor community, and absence of culture of political tolerance. These factors have been perceived as crucial by all four groups of stakeholders and interpreted as obstacles to pluralism despite the introduction of multiparty politics. It has to be stated clearly here that the majority of these actors share serious discontent with the mode of governance of President Museveni and are very critical about his performance. Interestingly enough, the interviewed representatives of the government agreed with some of these elements. They explained them however as inevitable (tight control over the transition process, absence of culture of political tolerance) or described them as failures of other, non-incumbent actors. This results in ways of seeing specific situations as mutually incompatible. A concrete example presenting different perspectives of the same problem-setting shall explain more. The opposition is complaining about teargas being used while the police and army forces disperse rallies held by the opposition and perceives it as a violation of basic human rights and freedoms. The government side has a completely different view and perception of the same situation: "…*whenever they [opposition] make a rally in the centre of the city, they disrupt business, so they are given certain areas to carry out their activities, but they disobey*

government, they are being so unreasonable, so *obviously teargas must be used*!"
(Apolo Nsibambi, Prime Minister of Uganda 21st February 2008)

II. Background to the Concept of No-party Democracy in Uganda

Up to this date, pluralism in Ugandan politics has not been allowed to take root, as the current President Yoweri Museveni and his concept of "no–party democracy" has successfully prevented the formation of political parties since he took office in 1986.

Museveni's arguments against a multi–party system, such as ethnicity, religious sectarianism, subversion and disunity have a long tradition in Ugandan political history.[7] Museveni inherited all the cleavages and tensions (ethnic, religious, the North–South divide and the strong militarism of Ugandan politics) from colonial practices as well as former presidents Milton Obote and Idi Amin[8], but instead of eliminating them, he continuously took advantage of these shortcomings.

The Movement arrangement was introduced to Ugandan politics when President Museveni took power in 1986 after a five-year bush war, as an all inclusive and participatory arrangement, in which leadership was to be based on individual merit rather than political parties. Party activities were subsequently banned. The philosophy of the Movement was that not all types of democratic forms of governance are equally well adapted to deepen democracy under all kinds of socio-political conditions. The Movement system was projected as being homegrown and thus suitable for the specific circumstances and conditions of Uganda's past. The individual merit system was considered democratic because in principle it provided unlimited access for all persons to political offices. Participation in practice was exercised through the creation of Local Councils, which made the Movement popular around the whole country among the general population.[9] (Kasfir 2000; Oloka-Onyango 2000; Okuku 2002)

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[7] "Museveni's claim that the opposition in Africa tends to be ethnic, and therefore by implication illegitimate, explains little, for where the opposition is ethnic it is more likely that the government is no less ethnic. It also ignores the fact that a legal ban on organizing an opposition does not remove it, it simply tends to drive the opposition underground." (Mamdani 1998: 31 in Okuku 2002: 7)

[8] See for example Hansen 1974; Kabwegyere 1974; Mamdani 1983; Mukholi 1995; Mamdani 1996; Oloka-Onyango 1997; Mamdani 1999; Okuku 2002; Twesiime-Kirya 2005.

[9] The Local Council structures are still intact and provide the basis for the success of the transformed NRM-O. (NRM-Organization)

The Movement was originally created as a temporary and transitional solution for four years to allow the country to recover from periods of war, crime and violence caused by Obote I, Amin and Obote II regimes. However, the no-party type of governance entrenched itself with time rather as a "one-party" system (above all through the adoption of the Movement Act in 1997). Oloka-Onyango claims in accordance with other Makerere University scholars (Kasfir; Mugaju) that the Movement was "simply a state-supported political organization – a single-party in all but a name." (Oloka-Onyango 2000: 55) This mutation and increased monopolization of power was confirmed also by the constitutional court, which ruled in 2002 that "the movement system had never existed and that the government of Uganda was based on a one-party system." (Atoo et al. 2008: 33)[10]

The matter of future of the political dispensation was thus put to a vote in a referendum. Article 69 (1, 2) of the constitution provides that the people of Uganda shall have the right to choose between the movement political system, a multiparty political system or any other democratic and representative political system. (Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995: 58, Article 69)

In 2005 two fundamental changes affecting the rules of the game and political contestation occurred. Firstly, Article 105 (2) of the Constitution that provides "a person shall not be elected under this constitution to hold office as a President for more than two terms as prescribed by this article"[11] (Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995: 77, Article 105 (2)) was lifted by way of constitutional amendment, which enabled President Museveni to stand for his third term. Secondly, Ugandans decided on 28 July 2005 in a referendum with a 92.5 margin[12] that the political system will be changed from a no-party to a multiparty dispensation. The removal of term limits overshadowed the transition to multiparty politics and both processes have

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[10] Ssemogerere and Others vs Attorney General, Constitutional Appeal 4/2002, (challenging the constitutionality of the 2002 Political Parties and Organizations Act). "The petitioners sought to distinguish between the movement as a political system, referred to and provided for in Article 70 of the Constitution, and the movement of the *Movement Act*, which, they argued, is a political organization. The Constitutional Court accepted the petitioner's arguments." (Gloppen et al. 2008: 59)

[11] The quest for lifting the term limits became popularly known as "kisanja" issue, meaning "term" in Luganda.

[12] However, voter turnout was only 47%. (CMI Research Report 2005)

been confused with each other. The issue of new head of state took the center stage and was given extraordinary importance by the government, to such an extent that the government was ready to bribe 200 NRM members of parliament with five million Ugandan shillings each to vote in favor of lifting the term limits. This "cash-for-votes" scandal was uncovered by the *Sunday Vision* newspaper and consequently admitted by several NRM members of parliament. (For more details see Atoo et al. 2008)

It has to be mentioned here that the method used to decide on these two issues influencing the future mode of political governance differed significantly. The return to multi-partyism was put to the people in a referendum, as it was not a controversial issue and the NRM was not running a big risk. However, the lifting of the presidential term limits was pushed through parliamentary procedures (which made buying of the votes possible), in order to enable firm control of the process. How exactly the process has been controlled by the ruling power and which other factors played a role in preventing pluralist governance to take place will be analyzed in this article.

III. Analysis of Five Hampering Elements on the Way to Multi-Partyism from the View of Interviewed Stakeholders

> **"***When you are doing research on Uganda, you have to look what is written and what is practical. What is practical is not democratic at all.***"**
> (Prof. Aaron Mukwaya, University of Makerere, 6th September 2007)

As starting point of the discussion, it has to be mentioned that the majority of the interviewed stakeholders was convinced that no real transition was taking place in Uganda as too many central features of the previous system of "no-party" democracy remain intact. It was their conviction that the transition has not begun conceptually, because the individual merit system still exists and still operates under the formal multi–party rule.

The phenomenon of not genuine or "forced" transition towards pluralistic political system, despite adoption of pluralistic norms, laws and institutions is not unique to the Ugandan case. Institutional understanding of

democracy and election-focused approach has received prominent importance among many academic scholars.[13]

However, the exclusive emphasis on elections, as the most important institution of democracy available to citizens, cannot answer the question concerned with the quality of democracy (O'Donnel, Cullell 2004; Diamond, Morlino 2005) as "many countries [in Asia, Africa, and Latin America] adopt formal electoral institutions without becoming democratic in more significant ways." (Schaffer 1998: 4) Some scholars (Gitonga 1987; Wiseman 1990; Ottaway 1993, 1997; Bratton, van de Walle 1997; Schaffer 1998; Oloka-Onyango 2005) thus find it useful to distinguish between the normative meaning of democracy and formally established institutions of electoral democracy. Marina Ottaway (1993: 3f), talks of "limits of electoralism", as it provides inadequate criteria for categorizing regimes as democratic and distinguishes between "the ritual of democracy" and its "substance"[14], given that "many African leaders are learning to play the election game-giving aid donors an election barely clean enough to receive a low-passing grade, but dirty enough to make it difficult for the opposition to win."

On the theoretical or "ritual" level Uganda is an established democracy with all rights and freedoms being guaranteed by the constitution. On the practical or "substance" level, there are many constraints such as personalization of power, absence of the rule of law, corruption, politization of ethnicity, which slow down the process of democratization. Theoretically, there are multiple parties present, practically pluralism is absent from Ugandan politics. What factors have been generated from the academic literature and identified by my interview partners as constraining the transition process towards multiparty democracy?

III. I. Tight Control over the Transition Process towards Multiparty Democracy

> *"Time was ripe and he [Museveni] did not think he was running a big political risk."* (Niels Hjortdal, DANIDA, 27th August 2007)

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[13] Schumpeter 1962; Powell 1982; Lipset 1983; Di Palma 1990; Huntington 1991; Przeworski 1991 to mention a few.

[14] Bratton and van de Walle distinguish between "procedures" and "substance". (Bratton, van de Walle 1997:12)

There is common agreement among all groups of interview partners (even among the NRM representatives including the prime minister and several other ministers) that President Museveni did not allow multiparty rule because of his commitment to pluralism. Even after opening up the political space as a result of the 2005 referendum, President Museveni was not committed to the principles of multiparty democracy and saw himself "forced" to allow them to operate. In Professor Simba Kayunga's opinion *"the allowance of multi–party politics was just a question of legitimatization, not a question of trust in political parties as institutions of governance"* (Professor Sallie Simba Kayunga, Makerere University, 7th September 2007). Pressures from the international community, regional partners within the East African Community as well as from members of his own Movement were increasingly growing. The justification for a no-party system of governance ran out and could no longer be used, because it was not convincing enough. An agreement among interviewed stakeholders prevailed that it would be increasingly difficult to continue with the "no-party" system in the global era of multiparty electoral democracy. Also, the internal pressure and growing discontent within the NRM called for a radical solution. Professor Simba Kayunga talks of *"betraying the promise of inclusiveness"*. President Museveni dealt with the "unreasonable ones" in his own way and decided to *"mubaleke bageende"* or "let them go".

> "Some people are confusing issues. Especially some of our very committed Movement supporters think that the coming Referendum is a contest between Movement and Multi-partyism. They think that the Referendum is designed to find out what the people prefer: Movement or Multi-partyism. This, in fact, is not the issue. There is no doubt that the Movement is much better than the Parties that we have ever known here in Uganda past and present. There is nothing wrong with the Movement. It is the best. The question, then, is: How long should we go on with trying to wrestle (okumegana) with the uncommitted who are forced to stay with us in the Movement because of the Ssemateeka (Constitution)? Do you want us to continue with this lack of cohesion kujegyemba in our Movement? My answer is: No, mubaleke bageende! Our anti-sectarianism medicine has cured those who wanted to be cured. However, our patience with those who do not want to be cured has run out. That is why we say: mubaleke bageende!" (Speech by President Museveni ahead of the 2005 referendum)

However, before making such generous statements and allowing "those who do not want to be cured" to establish their own political parties, President Museveni made a reality check and knew very well that there were no alternative forces within the country that could challenge him successfully and threaten his power base, and was thus not afraid of permitting the formal existence of political parties. (Professor Aaron Mukwaya, Makerere University, 6th September 2007). Makara, Rakner and Kiiza thus claim in this context that "[…] the decision to reintroduce the multiparty system was intimately linked with the *kisanja* issue: the lifting of term limits on the election of president, ensuring the re-election of Museveni." (Makara, Rakner, Kiiza 2008: 277)

President Museveni managed to persuade the voters that a double transition, not only that of a political system (from no–party to multi–party), but even an additional change of guards (from an old to a new president), would lead the country into chaos and possibly another civil war. The guiding element of the 2006 elections thus became the slogan "*do not risk instability*". This psychological effect of creating fear in the minds of Ugandans serves as a very effective means for demonizing political parties and ascribing to them several negative events that occurred within Ugandan society.[15]

Museveni thus silenced two oppositional forces, international and national, with one decision. As Makara, Rakner and Svasand expressed it: "Opening the political space would silence the donors and the opposition groups within as well as outside the Movement itself, while lifting the term limits would mean the return of incumbent leadership." (Makara, Rakner, Svasand 2008: 276)

These reasons have been affirmed to me also by members of the ruling cabinet. Minister for General Duties and NRM representative Adolf Mwesige put the "forced transition" as follows:

> "There were people within the Movement, about twenty-five percent that were agitating for the return to multiparty democracy and you can't just ignore them. We also had our friends, our development partners, who were of the view that they would work better with us if we were in multiparty dispensation. So, for those two reasons to

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[15] For historical background see Mamdani 1976, 1983; Barya 1993; Hansen, Twaddle 1995; Mugaju, Oloka-Onyango 2000; Okuku 2002; Carbone 2003; Odoki 2005.

accommodate our people here (although in the minority), but also to continue cooperation with our development partners, we accepted."
(Adolf Mwesige, Minister for General Duties, 7th September 2007)

One can say that the campaign for President Museveni was supported by the argument that it would not be wise at all to remove the driver of the transition from the driving seat.

Interesting to observe is the perspective NRM leaders took to explain the necessity of lifting the presidential term limits and thus allowing President Museveni to stand for another term. Besides the issue of security and stability, NRM cadres presented the presidential candidature of Museveni as the will of the people and the authority the people were able to use over the government.

> "As long as people see you as the answer and as an instrument that can move society forward, you are there. So, at the time we amended the constitution, it was clear that we did not have an alternative leader."
> (Professor Tarsis Kabwegyere, Minister for Relief and Disaster Preparedness, 25th February 2008)[16]

The improved economic situation (GDP real growth rate of 6% for the year 2007) contributes to a kind of apathy among the voter population and explains, according to interviewed partners, low interest in political issues and a push for change in the society. Oloka-Onyango claims that this attitude plays into the hands of President Museveni and makes him almost exclusively the "only player in the game":

> "For the first time people are secure in their economic lives. People are more satisfied, and even if they are very angry, they are in minority. Most of them are satisfied. They have security which they didn't have. For those kinds of people ... forget anything else. That makes a very big difference in the way that people conceptualize and struggle for democracy. If at the end of the day, you can have your meal in your house, you are satisfied. So, they do not care too much about politics."
> (Prof. Oloka-Onyango, Makerere University, 16th August 2007)

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[16] Similar statements have been made also in the interviews by Prime Minister Apolo Nsibambi, Deputy Speaker of Parliament Rebecca Kadaga or Minister for General Duties Adolf Mwesige.

The transition process to multiparty politics has been especially difficult due to the fact that President Museveni has had practically twenty years head start for campaigning. It can be claimed that the level playing field for the election was uneven, biased and in favor of the NRM. (Twesiime 2003; Nassali 2004; Kiiza, Makara et al. 2008; personal interviews) The prevailing conviction among the representatives of academia and opposition is that one of the main reasons why Museveni was able to re-win the elections was that the Movement structures are still intact from grass-roots up to the national level and the incumbent has the decentralized management skills and the pressure groups in place to mobilize people. The Movement with the rural state infrastructure behind it saved a lot of costs for the party and gave it a great strategic advantage. Mahmood Mamdani claims the RCs [17] were deployed as instruments of the state to hamper popular mobilization since the Movement gained power in 1986 (see Mamdani 1989; Oloka-Onyango, Tindifa 1991; Okuku 2002). That ensured that Movement candidates would be able to retain in power thanks to the partisan support of Local Councils. (Makara et al. 1996) It is a big challenge for opposition parties to undermine this strategic campaign apparatus and to penetrate the local council' structures that agitate the rural population in support for the NRM (and are practically fused with the NRM). (Kiiza, Makara et al. 2008)

III. II. Poor Mode of Governance

> *"The road to dictatorship is paved with democracy […]."*
> (Charles Onyango-Oboo in *Daily Monitor*,
> cited in *BBC News* 2005, July 28)

The following elements have been named and identified by the interviewed stakeholders as being significant signs of poor mode of governance and thus hindering the transition towards multiparty democratic dispensation: personalization of power and fusion of NRM-O with the state of Uganda[18], political monopoly and growing authoritarianism[19], military structure of the

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[17] Resistance Councils were renamed Local Councils after the end of the guerilla war.
[18] Oloka-Onyango 1993; Ssenkumba 2000; Nassali 2004
[19] Kasfir 2000; Oloka-Onyango 2000; Barya 2000; Mugaju 2000

Ugandan state[20], misuse of the ethnic card[21], and finally partisan and poorly organized presidential and parliamentary elections of 2006. (Personal interviews, reports[22]) As the first four of these elements have been established in Ugandan politics for long and have been extensively dealt with in academic literature, I concentrate on the last one, partisan and poorly organized elections, which has, due to its relative recentness, not been covered so broadly yet.

The interviewed representatives of academia, opposition political parties[23] and civil society organizations[24] as well as the donor community[25] understood the course of the last presidential and parliamentary elections in 2006 as a demonstration of poor mode of governance, as it was according to them partisan, poorly organized and included rigging, vote buying, intimidation, harassment, and deliberate delay of amended laws. Insufficient civic education was perceived by them as being responsible for the fact that people did not have enough time to internalize the values of pluralism. At this point it is crucial to differentiate between the polling day when elections actually take place and the electoral processes, which are much more comprehensive and start long before elections. I argue that the new electoral cycle for the 2006 election began immediately after the polling of the previous elections in 2001, and was thus a long-term process. International election monitors often fail to recognize this fact and concentrate solely on the free and fair conduct of the elections shortly before and at the polling day.[26] However, as Uganda's case showed, the decisive planning of President Museveni's campaign had started long before elections took place. (Makara, Tukahebwa, Byarugaba 2003)

The Electoral Commission, which is "mandated under Article 61 to organize, conduct, and supervise regular, free and fair elections and

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[20] Hansen 1974; Oloka-Onyango 1993; Brett 1995; Okoth 1995; Mugaju 2000; Okuku 2002; Mukwaya 2004

[21] Kasfir 1976; Mudoola 1993; Karugire 1988; Okuku 2002

[22] See EU Monitoring Report 2006; DEMgroup 2006; Human Rights Watch 2006; CMI Report 2006

[23] FDC, DP, UPC, JEEMA

[24] HURIPEC, HURINET, DENIVA, NGO Forum, MS Uganda, Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI), Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC), Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC)

[25] USAID, European Commission, SIDA, DANIDA, WB, British High Commission

[26] For further argumentation see Elklit, Reynolds 2002; Kiiza, Makara et al. 2008.

referenda" (Electoral Commission 2006: xv) failed according to the majority of interview partners its function and was not able to deliver the amended acts (allowing political parties to operate, mobilize and hold rallies) in time and offer a sufficient civic education program.

The Electoral Commission (EC) does not have credibility among opposition political parties and civil society organizations as it is regarded by them as an arm of the Movement and thus partisan. They are convinced that the constitutional change to multi-partyism in 2005 was not reflected in the composition of the EC, which continues its work in the old composition under Movement system from November 2002. The time pressure resulting from the late legislation constrained the establishment of the EC's operational structures at all levels. "[…] Voter education began only two months before the elections, and at the local levels it started a week before polling day" (Makara, Rakner, Rwengabo 2008: 102). However, according to Professor Kiggundu, the chairperson of the EC, the failures of the EC were partly due to inadequate, inconsistent and late funding provided by donors. (Prof. Kiggundu Badru, Chairman of the Electoral Commission, 3rd September 2007)

III. III. Shortcomings of Anti-governmental Political and Societal Actors

> *"Political parties are not able to organize, mobilize, reach the people, set up branches. They don't have the capacity, the know-how, it is just, they are there, they are registered, established and that's it. And how to move forward, they do not have a clue."*
> (Maureen Nahwera, SIDA, 23rd August 2007)

The outline of the two previous hindering elements – tight control of the transition process and poor mode of governance - on the way to multiparty political system might lead to the assumption that obstacles responsible for the protracted transition in Uganda are caused solely by the incumbent force. To make the picture more complete, the following two points focus on the performance, achievements and failures of two crucial local groups of stakeholders – opposition political parties and civil society organizations and one international group – donor agencies represented in Uganda.[27] The

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[27] This will be handled in the next point "Upwards accountability".

complex historical legacy of Uganda's politics impacts their mode of institutional functioning and operations as well. It is necessary to include these actors into the analysis in order to understand all hampering elements on Uganda's way to multiparty governance.

Political Parties

Political parties in the Ugandan context are according to their own representatives (as well as observers from outside) too new, untested and ungrounded to become a real formative political force. Their organizational and structural base has become very weak - if existent at all - through the twenty years long ban of their activities. (Kiiza, Svasand, Tabaro 2008; Kiiza 2008; personal interviews) Even though the existence of political parties is no longer restricted by the law (since the referendum of 2005) and they could officially form a viable opposition, their representatives admit that the efficiency of their playing field is minimized by their own weaknesses and their disability to function as real institutions.

There was agreement among all interviewed stakeholders that political parties in Uganda are not stabilized organizations, but rather groups of individuals with no organizational structure and no ideology. Their leadership – being the most crucial aspect of effective transition – is reputedly not committed enough to the principles of multi–party democracy. Due to internal factions and lack of vision the parties are not in the position to present the people of Uganda a viable alternative to the current government in office. This scenario makes clear that the coalition of such parties would not improve the situation as bringing several single, weak institutions together does not create one strong coalition. In the year 2000, shortly before the unsuccessful referendum on opening up of the political space, a loose coalition of seven opposition parties[28] was formed and allied behind a common presidential candidate, Dr. Kizza Besigye. After his failure to succeed against President Museveni in the 2001 presidential elections, the coalition resumed its existence, however, with

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[28] The original members of the G7 coalition were: RA (Reform Agenda), NDF (National Democratic Forum), DP (Democratic Party), UPC (Uganda Peoples Congress), CP (Conservative Party), JEEMA and the pressure group Free Movement which initiated the talks. The coalition was later renamed G6, after the merging of the RA and the NDF to form a new political force and the strongest opposition party FDC (Forum for Democratic Change).

increasing internal disputes which escalated ahead of the 2006 elections when each of the opposition political parties fielded its own presidential candidate.

Political parties' representatives themselves admit that they have serious problems to complete the transition to the multiparty system since they are not capable of organizing, mobilizing, or reaching the people and setting up branches outside the capital city of Kampala. The academics from Makerere University as well as representatives of civil society draw further attention to the lack of credibility and legitimacy of the Ugandan political parties, as their character is essentially "electoral". They point at the fact that these are not grass–roots parties that emerged in response to the needs of the people or to the demands of local self-help groups. The political parties appear shortly before elections and disappear almost immediately after their unsuccessful performance. Academics and analysts claimed that one of their major failures with respect to communication to their voters is that their agenda has not yet been identified, and their message has not yet been clearly sent and translated to the people. Political parties often seek the excuse for their own failures in the concept of "Movementocracy" and claim their environment is not supportive of their activities and does not enable them to obtain sufficient funding for their operations throughout the country. (Ssenkumba 2007) However, many of my interview partners were convinced that if the local communities considered the parties relevant, no additional funding for their organizational structures would be necessary, as the people would contribute and participate voluntarily.

Civil Society[29]

> *"You have to try to open that space. It is your function, you operate within that arena. For me, the civil society hasn't done enough to push that space. They are better embraced in the context of service delivery, but not so much in the context of pressure."*
> (Prof. Oloka-Onyango, Makerere University, 16th August 2007)

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[29] For an extensive report on the position of civil society organizations in Uganda, their strengths, weaknesses, values, structures as well as operational context and environment see report by CIVICUS 2006.

All four groups of interviewed actors share the view that civil society could act as a complementary institution to political parties towards transition to increased political pluralism.[30]

However, at the same time they admit that civil society in Uganda has not taken up the political agenda sufficiently. Civil society organizations dealing with politics have been according to Oloka-Onyango very "*coy, reluctant and unwilling*" to become engaged in the debates on political issues. The organizations have primarily development character (Dicklitch 1996, 1998; de Coninck 2004) and their main area of concentration is service delivery (women, youth and children are strong areas of influence) because in this field, they act in cooperation with the state (which is still lacking the capacity to deliver) and not in opposition to it. (Tripp 1998, 2000; Bazaara 2000; Kjaer, Olum 2008)

The explanatory reasons for this attitude of "a culture of fear and political apathy" (Dicklitch, Lwanga 2003: 482) have to be searched in the historical development of civil society in Uganda and the legacy of colonialism as well as the following repressive regimes.[31] With NRM coming to power, "civil society activity in Uganda virtually exploded" (Oloka-Onyango, Barya 1997: 120), however, the NRM government tolerated and encouraged solely apolitical and service-oriented organizations, as it does not accept the possibility of being challenged politically. (Bazaara 2000; Katusiimeh 2005; Kjaer, Olum 2008)

Even if the political realm of civil society organizations is not in direct opposition to authoritarian practices of the NRM and it acts rather as a watch-dog, the government side continues to label many civil society organizations as "opposition" and tends to repress confrontational NGOs, media, anti-corruption groups, election monitoring bodies, human rights groups. (Kjaer, Olum 2008)

The idea that one could be colored politically constructs fear among Uganda's civil society organizations. (Dicklitch, Lwanga 2003; Coninck 2004) That is why, the majority of my interview partners claimed that civil society in Uganda often tries (or is forced) to remain apolitical, or in other

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[30] On the theoretical background and the role of civil society in democratic theory and its contribution to democratic transitions as well as consolidation of democracy see Fatton 1992; Bratton 1994; Harbeson 1994; Foley, Edwards 1996; Hadenius, Uggla 1996; Bratton, van de Walle 1997; Diamond 1999.

[31] See Mamdani 1993; Bazaara 2000; Kabwegyere 2000; Katusiimeh 2005.

words does not try to challenge the government and other power stakeholders in their positions. The NRM strengthens its position with a set of legal practices to successfully accomplish the "ritual of democracy" and thus appear credible while obeying the principle of the rule of law. Bazaara (1999: 66) notes: "[T]he NRM has made arrangements so as to ensure that NGOs remain basically 'economistic' organizations whose activities cannot rise into politics. This it has done by enacting the 1989 NGO Registration statute allowing no NGO to operate until it is registrated by the NGO Registration Board (Ministry of Internal Affairs)."

Other problems faced by civil society organizations, which became apparent in the interviews, are that civil society organizations are very often perceived as a source of income and some of them are developing into an industry as a means of survival. The donor-driven agenda constrains their activities and forces them to follow the rules set from above. (Mamdani 1995; Bazaara 2000; Kjaer, Olum 2008) Many do not use their own comparative advantage but concentrate their activities on specialized areas of work set by donors without diversifying their resources and stretching their capacity. (Robinson, Friedman 2005; Oloka-Onyango 2006; personal interviews)

There is agreement among pro-oppositional forces that civil society organizations in Uganda could play a significant role in fostering democratization, as they might be able to mobilize the population around programs, advocate for particular positions or even oppose the government on some issues. Their main area of delivery in a transition process should become a proper civic education program. (Hadenius, Uggla 1996; Kjaer, Olum 2008) However, to manage this agenda of crucial importance alone is not imaginable due to the institutional and governance weaknesses as well as financial and capacity constraints mentioned above. Interviewed partners stressed the importance of involvement and co-governance of several actors[32] including further international civil society organizations, grass-roots groups, development partners, Electoral Commission, parliament and political parties while delivering civic education.

As stated above, the donor community in Uganda plays, besides local stakeholders, a crucial role in the transition to the multiparty political system. The next factor identified as slowing down the process of pluralism

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[32] On theoretical background on interactive form of governance see Kooiman 2003.

is thus the upwards accountability of government, political parties and civil society organizations towards development agencies represented in Uganda.

III. IV. Upwards Accountability

"At the superficial level they [the donors] talk of democracy, at the private level, they say, if Museveni were not there, everything would collapse."
(Prof. Sabiti Makara, Makerere University, 5th September 2007)

According to representatives of academia, opposition political parties and civil society organizations the transition to multiparty political dispensation in Uganda appears even more unattainable when the role of the international donor community active in Uganda is taken into account.[33] The performance of the donor community in Uganda was evaluated rather negatively by all interviewed actors, except parts of the ruling party who appreciate the contributions of donors to the development of infrastructure. The nature of interests of the donors as well as their inconsistency in promoting rule of law, democracy and good governance in Uganda are seen by all actor groups as the biggest obstacle in order for the development partners to become an agent in the process of democratization.[34] Professor Kiiza states:

> "They [donors] talk democracy, but often times their economic and ideological interests are more important than political pluralism in the countries where they operate. The interesting thing is that after the elections you get many of these partners coming back to support the government, typically as they have been doing. If you say this government rigged elections and the rules, there was corruption, the voter registers were not appropriated, why should you then say the government is legitimate? The process was rigged, the rules were not followed, the opposition was harassed, public resources were used

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[33] Okuku states that, "[F]rom the early 1990s onward, the international community would tolerate the restriction of political rights and abuse of human rights in Uganda as long as the NRM regime pursued and encouraged private enterprise." (Okuku 2002: 27)

[34] For the nature of interests of donors in Uganda see also Hauser 1999; Haynes 2001; Okuku 2002; Barya, Opolot, Otim 2004; Kanyeihamba 2006.

from one party, but the conclusion is the outcome is legitimate."
(Professor Julius Kiiza, Makerere University, 30th August 2007)

The influence of development partners on Uganda's policies is visible at various levels, the governmental and the non-governmental, as well as the pro-government and pro-oppositional. The funds provided to the state budget enable the donors to set the policy agenda. (Nassali 2004) According to Oloka-Onyango the most revealing effect of the assistance provided by the donor community is the fact that it has offered an infrastructure of support for the government to retain itself in power and therefore to undermine the accountability of government to the people. (Professor Oloka-Onyango, Makerere University, 16th August 2007)
President Museveni even sacrificed his left oriented ideology (on its background see Museveni 1997) for the budgetary support and embraced liberal economic policies directed by the World Bank to legitimize his rule and prolonged stay in power.

> "He is quite calculative. He captured power at the time when the Cold War was ending, so that necessitated some strategic shifts. If the Cold War has not ended [sic!], he would have presided over a political framework, which is not different from that of Castro or Mao."
> (Professor Sallie Simba Kayunga, Makerere University, 6th September 2007)

Uganda's prime Minister and close ally of President Museveni paradoxically agrees and admits the inevitability of shifting positions:

> "Yes, experience taught him that he must be clever, because Uganda's economy was diminished, and so it required a lot of assistance to restore the economy."(Apolo Nsibambi, Prime Minister of Uganda, 21st February 2007)

Interviewed academicians, political analysts and representatives of opposition political parties highlight the geopolitical interest of donors as another important point of consideration while allocating money to state budget of African democracies.[35] Uganda serves as stabilizing country in the

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[35] These assumptions have been confirmed to me among others by interviewed representatives of SIDA, European Commission, USAID, and British High Commission.

Great Lakes Region and in addition President Museveni decided to send troops to Somalia to stabilize the situation in the Horn of Africa.

The influence of the donor community represented in Uganda is further visible on the performance of oppositional forces. Academia representatives talk of adjustment of the policies of all political parties in order not to alienate the donors and win some, at least indirect capacity-building support. The effect of this assimilation is according to them that the ideologies of different parties do not differ and closely resemble each other. Also the non-governmental level and thus civil society organizations have been affected by programs initiated by donors and are currently almost totally dependent on foreign funding.

Even if the prevailing conviction among all donors active in Uganda is that the lifting of the presidential term limits was a wrong approach on the way to multiparty democracy, the donor community representatives were not prepared to talk about internal mechanisms and the amendment of the constitution.

Most of the development partners have good relationships with Uganda and the fact that President Museveni's personal balance sheet is not adding to his credibility will not change the position of the donor agencies represented in Uganda. (Nassali 2004) Emma Namuli, representative of the European Commission in Kampala, confirms:

> "So much we do not agree on certain decisions of the government, as long as the core agreement between EU and the government has not been violated, the aid will not be cut." (Emma Namuli, European Commission, 23rd August 2007)

III. V. Absence of Culture of Political Tolerance

> *"It is not about closing the space; it is about closing the minds."*
> (Prof. Susan Muwanga, Makerere University, 15th August 2007)

The last obstacle, identified by interviewed stakeholders and analyzed in this article, making the transition to pluralistic political system more difficult, is the absence of culture of political tolerance and of interactive governance within the society. Oloka-Onyango perceives a *"real absence of the culture of pluralism"* (Professor Oloka-Onyango, Makerere University,

16th August 2007) as being crucial, as civil society organizations, political parties, the Electoral Commission and other actors continue behaving in a way that does not reflect that there was an institutional transition in politics. As it became evident from the interviews, interest groups, predominantly political parties belonging to different political camps, do not possess the capacity to act together and are intolerant to people who belong to different political groups or are holding opposing political views. State apparatus serves (almost solely) as a means of accumulating wealth.[36] This procedure leads to further disempowerment, exclusion and marginalization of antagonistic forces from the decision-making process and politization of ethnic lines. This practice with roots in colonialism (Kabwegyere 1974; Mamdani 1999; Okuku 2002) might have further reaching consequences as Henry Kasacca, Ugandan representative of "Friedrich Ebert Stiftung" (FES) points out:

> "People are now increasingly raising the questions how can you have the entire high commando of the army coming from one area[37]? The whole issue is becoming a familiar affair, because nobody else can be trusted. So what it will promote, is mobilizing the rest of Uganda against him [Museveni] respectively mobilizing the rest of the country against the West. It was like UPC politics, when dealing with Buganda issue." (Henry Kasacca, FES, 3rd September 2007)

The interviewed groups of actors are convinced that despite the official transition to multiparty dispensation that took place in 2005, President Museveni is not ready to assure that the opposition has the capacities to challenge him. (Ssenkumba 1998; Nassali 2004; Oloka-Onyango 2005)
Even if the newly adopted laws (Political Parties and Organisation Act 2005 being the most significant) allow the political parties to operate, oppositional political parties are almost entirely confined to bigger cities, as the strategy of the ruling party is to limit oppositional activities to urban

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[36] For background see also point "poor mode of governance".

[37] President Museveni himself is coming from the Western region and the NRM was built around ethnic groups of Banyankole, Baganda and Banyarwanda all coming from South-Western Uganda. The other ethnic groups, especially from the North, who were very prominent under the previous governments of Obote I and II and Idi Amin feel a sense of marginalization that partly explains the civil war in the North. (See also Okuku 2002)

areas. However, to rely solely on urban support may not be successful in a country with majority of the population living in rural areas. [38]

In addition to that, it is interesting to analyze the different positions used in this situation by the antagonistic (pro-government and pro-oppositional) forces. Both sides agree that there is no real multi-partyism present in the society and thus the transition to pluralistic political system is not accomplished and both sides perceive the situation as a problem. However, their justification is based on different reasoning and they see the problem-setting from various perspectives. The position of the pro-oppositional forces is that the ruling party has difficulties to accept that opposition has something to contribute to the governance debate. The government side perceives the problem differently and claims the opposition does not represent an alternative government, but rather is an "anti-government and thus anti-state clique of saboteurs and destroyers of society who aim to grasp power." (Professor Tarsis Kabwegyere, Minister for Relief and Disaster Preparedness, 25th February 2008)

In the context of this conflicting problem-setting, which divides pro-government and pro-oppositional forces into two antagonistic camps, interviewed representatives of academia and civil society stress the importance of a genuine transition to pluralistic political system that encompasses tolerance of other political opinions:

> "If you do not move in your mind to accept that opposition is part of the democratic culture and opposition is not rebellion, and opposition does not take deliberate actions with the aim to overthrow government ... we haven't made that transition." (Professor Oloka-Onyango, Makerere University, 16th August 2007)

Conclusion

This article has analyzed five hampering elements on Uganda's way to multiparty political system. It has shown that the historical, cultural, social, and political legacy of "Movementocracy", mode of governance introduced by President Museveni, is very complex and influences not only the representatives of the ruling power gathered around the person of President Museveni, but also the performance of other societal and political actors

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[38] For patterns of voting in selected districts see Makara, Tukahebwa, Byarugaba 2003.

with crucial importance for genuine transition, such as opposition political parties, civil society organizations or Western donor agencies represented in Uganda.

The hampering elements, which complicate the transition process to multi-partyism are unique to the Ugandan context and are made up both of the historical structures in place and the current performance of the various stakeholders of the transition process and their interactions. It was not possible to identify a single element of crucial importance responsible for "protracted" transition, as all five - tight control over the transition process by the ruling party, poor mode of governance, shortcomings of anti-governmental political and societal actors, upwards accountability of local stakeholders towards donor community, and absence of culture of political tolerance - are closely intertwined and dependent on each other. They have to be considered and addressed simultaneously while assessing the impact of "Movementocracy" on the current mode of governance in Uganda. To separate them and concentrate solely on a single component, while not taking into consideration its embedment into Uganda's historical, political, cultural and social legacy, will not allow for genuine pluralism within Ugandan politics, but only at a "ritual" or institutional level.

Zusammenfassung

Trotz der Wiedereinführung eines Mehrparteiensystems im Jahr 2006 ist die politische Landschaft in Uganda weiterhin alles andere als vielfältig da zu viele zentrale Elemente der vorangehenden "no-party"-Demokratie nach wie vor intakt sind. Dieser Artikel analysiert die Ursachen hinter dem sich hinziehenden Übergang zur Mehrparteiendemokratie und zeigt auf, wie diese in die historische, kulturelle, soziale und politische Hinterlassenschaft der "Movementocracy" eingebettet sind. Fünf miteinander verbundene Faktoren wurden identifiziert und werden in dieser Analyse diskutiert: die enge Kontrolle der regierenden Partei über den Übergangsprozess, eine schwache Regierungsform, Schwächen der politischen und zivilgesellschaftlichen Akteure, die der Regierung gegenüber kritisch eingestellt sind, die Rechenschaft der lokalen Stakeholders gegenüber der internationalen Geberkommunität sowie das Fehlen einer Atmosphäre von politischer Toleranz. Die Studie basiert auf den

Sichtweisen und Wahrnehmungen von RepräsentantInnen aus dem ugandischen politischen, akademischen und zivilgesellschaftlichen Leben.

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