

- External Payments Arrears Account (EPA) whose funds totalling 133 billion Tanzania Shillings were siphoned by real and ghost companies.
- IPTL contract to supply very expensive electrical power.
- Other power contracts include Songas, Richamond, and Dowans, the latter two led to the resignation of Prime Minister Edward Lowassa.
- Buzwagi and many other mining contracts.
- Purchase of a presidential jet at an exorbitant price.
- Purchase British BAE System Limited radar at an exorbitant price.
- Extension of the contract with the Tanzania International Container Terminal Services Limited (TICTS) before its time.
- Privatization of the Tanzania Railways and the privatization of over 400 other public corporations, including banks, at give-away prices.
- Privatization of the Kiwira Coal Mine to former President Benjamin Mkapa.
- Privatization of government houses to government leaders and officials at give-away prices. Some of the houses were sold to non-state people as well, such as functionaries of the ruling party.

Most of these contracts and purchases were done during the Third Phase Government of President Benjamin William Mkapa.

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Beyond Movementocracy: The Challenges of Constructing Multipartyism amidst Ethnic and Religious Cleavages

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Abstract

This article argues that constructing a truly functioning multiparty system in Uganda is complicated by a limited understanding of multipartyism, the attitudinal disposition of key political actors towards multiparty politics, the manner in which interest and pressure groups get involved in the political process, sectarianism (ethnicity and religion) as a basis of political identity, the lack of clear ideology, and 'political engineering'. The article concludes if these challenges are not addressed, the creation of a viable multiparty political system will be elusive.

Introduction

When President Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army/National Resistance Movement (NRA/NRM) captured state power on 26th January 1986, he introduced a 'no-party' political system known as the 'movement'. This system was meant to heal the political wounds of the past, and to serve as the new governance mode. It is this style of politics which is herein being referred to as 'movementocracy'. Movementocracy lasted for two decades until the referendum of November 2005 when Ugandans chose to be governed under a multiparty political system. Hence, in February-March 2006, presidential, parliamentary and local elections were conducted under a multiparty political dispensation.

This article argues that constructing a truly functioning multiparty system in Uganda is extremely challenging due to the following key factors: limited understanding of multipartyism, the attitudinal disposition of key political actors towards multiparty politics, the manner in which interest and pressure groups get involved in the political process, sectarianism (ethnicity and religion) as a basis of political identity, the lack of clear

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ideology, and 'political engineering'. Unless these challenges are systematically addressed, the construction of multiparty politics will elude the country for a very long time.

To argue the above standpoint, the article is divided into five parts. Part I defines the concept of multipartyism. Part II gives a brief explanation of 'movementocracy'. Part III traces the history of multiparty politics in Uganda. Part IV, which is the core of the paper, analyses the challenges of constructing multipartyism in Uganda. Part V concludes the discourse.

Conceptualizing Multipartyism

Multipartyism is often confused with absence of parties (Duverger, 1963). The typology of the multiparty system is difficult to establish. Innumerable varieties can be imagined ranging from three parties to infinity. Within each variety, many patterns and shades of differences are possible. Modern political systems are often typologized as multiparty (which may result in majority or coalition governments), two-party systems and one-party systems ('Political Parties in the Legislature', 2005). In multiparty democracies, the party that wins the most votes in an election wins control of the legislature.

Furthermore, in a multiparty system, a political party may win more seats than each of the other parties, but not more than all or some of the other parties combined. In this particular case, parties may form coalitions to achieve a majority. In controlling the legislature, the majority political party, or coalition, has more votes than other parties and can, therefore – at least in theory – easily pass legislation that meets its policy agenda and the aspirations of the constituency that supported it. The ruling party, or coalition, can also vote against and block legislation that counters its agenda or conforms to that of opposing parties. However, to be an effective and lasting coalition, coalition parties must work together, compromising on their individual party platforms to arrive at a consensus with their coalition partners.

Multiparty systems (more than two party systems) are criticized for lacking political stability. The argument is that too many competing interests makes it difficult for parties to work together, form stable coalitions, maintain a general organization, and prevent stalemate within the legislature or between the legislature and executive branches. A coalition of parties may unite to form a government, but governing together often proves difficult.

One way countries attempt to ameliorate these problems is to limit the number of parties that can sit in the legislature. However, countries that legally allow multiple parties may act like a one-party system if one particular party dominates, especially due to that party's greater access to resources and its control over the legal means of oppressing other parties. Hence, very small opposition parties in the legislature may become mere tokens of opposition under multipartyism.

In Uganda, Article 71(1) of the Constitution provides that:

"...a political party in the multiparty political system shall conform to the following principles: a) every political party shall have a national character; b) membership of a political party shall not be based on sex, ethnicity, religion or other sectional division; c) the internal organization of a political party shall conform to the democratic principles enshrined in this Constitution; d) members of the national organs of a political party shall be regularly elected from citizens of Uganda in conformity with the provisions of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this article and with due consideration for gender; e) political parties shall be required by law to account for the sources and use of their funds and assets, and; f) no person shall be compelled to join a particular party by virtue of belonging to an organization or interest group.

These are laudable legal provisions regarding the multiparty political system. The question that this article seeks to address is why these legal provisions cannot be put into effect as constitutionally enshrined so that the multiparty system becomes fully functional. But first let us move to a discussion of the 'movement' political system.

Uganda's No-party or 'Movementocracy'

The notion 'Movementocracy', which is a coinage that refers to the Movement style of politics, is provided in the 1995 Constitution as follows: "The political system in this chapter refers to the movement which was in existence before the coming into force of this constitution" (Republic of Uganda 2006). Justice Benjamin Odoki, who chaired the Constitutional Review Commission that traversed the country gathering views of Ugandans on the review of the 1995 Constitution, defined the Movement as follows:

... a unique initiative introduced in Uganda by the NRM government since January 1986. It is based on democratically elected Resistance Councils from the village level to the National Resistance Council (Parliament). It is founded on

participatory democracy which enables every person to participate in his or her own governance at all levels of government ... It is all embracing in its approach and vision. It has no manifesto of its own, apart from the commonly agreed programme. It does not recruit members, since all people in Uganda are assumed to be members of the Village Resistance Councils. At all times it is to give expression to the people's sovereignty. During elections people vote for candidates based on their own merit and not on the basis of their party affiliation. (Uganda Constitutional Review Commission; Odoki, 2005: 289-291)

Furthermore, Article 70 (1) of the 1995 Constitution provides that:

The movement political system is broad-based, inclusive and nonpartisan and shall conform to the following principles: a) participatory democracy; b) democracy, accountability and transparency; c) accessibility to all positions of leaderships by all citizens, and; d) individual merit as a basis for election to political offices.

Initially, the Movement system was deployed after the suspension of political party activities pending the establishment of a new constitutional order. It was justified in the interest of re-unifying the country that had been torn apart by divisive multiparty politics, and due to the need for reconciliation, political stability and socio-economic reconstruction. The Movement system was, therefore, seen as the system to deliver democracy.

However, in practice, the Movement system resulted in two main consequences. First, it restricted the right of citizens to associate politically in organizations of their choice. Second, it was based on the principle of individual merit wherein Ugandans were compelled to participate in the political process as individuals rather than as members of organized political groups. However, as these restrictions were in force, for all intents and purposes, the Movement system was not different from a political party. In fact, it even degenerated from an institution into personal rule. It is this behaviour that propelled pro-multiparty activists, supported by Western industrialized countries, to struggle for the adoption of multiparty politics.

History of Multiparty Politics in Uganda

In historical¹ terms, from the time Uganda attained independence in 1962, multiparty politics has not been fully developed. From 1962 to 1966, the President of Uganda—and who was at the same time the President of the Uganda People's Congress (UPC)— Dr. Apollo Milton Obote, ruled through a coalition of the UPC and Kabaka Yekka (KY).² This coalition was dubbed a

'marriage of convenience' because the parties had nothing in common except to deny the Democratic Party (DP) political power that it was slated to win. During this period the DP became the *de facto* opposition. In 1966, Dr. Obote disbanded the coalition, acquired excessive executive powers and ruled the country assisted by the minority KY. Consequently, some influential members in the opposition, mainly the DP, started crossing to the government side to acquire political power and material resources from the ruling UPC. Dr. Obote then cancelled parliamentary elections slated to take place in 1967 (Mbabali, 2005). In September 1969, the DP was banned. Thereafter, the KY died a natural death. On 25th January 1971, Idi Amin Dada toppled the UPC and proscribed political party activities. On 11th April 1979, the Uganda National Liberation Front/Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLF/UNLA), assisted by Tanzania Peoples Defence Forces (TPDF), toppled Idi Amin. In December 1980, Dr. Obote and his UPC won a controversial general election. His regime did not last long because he was removed from power by a military junta led by General Tito Okello-Lutwa, mainly because of the political and military crises created by President Yoweri Museveni's five-year long NRM/NRA guerrilla or 'bush' war.

On taking over power, President Museveni introduced the Movement or 'no-party' politics. This political arrangement lasted for twenty years. There are internal and external reasons³ that explain why Uganda had to shift from the Movement to multiparty politics (Simba, 2007). First, because of its exclusionary nature, the Movement became undemocratic, thus alienating many Ugandans to the extent that it was accused of behaving as a political party. Second, due to the lack of internal democracy, the NRM faced severe internal divisions. To cohere, the NRM had to release the dissenters to establish their own political organizations. Third, although the international community categorically stated that they cannot force any political system on Ugandans because it is up to them to choose their own, nevertheless they showed a preference for multiparty politics. Fourth, some political activists were willing to die for the re-instatement of their old political parties (i.e., UPC, DP and the Conservative Party, CP). Fifth, because a multiparty wave was sweeping across Africa, it had become increasingly untenable for President Museveni to resist opening up the political space. Sixth, President Museveni traded-off the re-introduction of multiparty politics with the removal of the two-term presidential limit enshrined in the 1995 Constitution. Lastly, President Museveni was steadily losing political

support country-wide. Indeed, in the 2001 elections, his archrival, Dr. Kiiza Besigye, managed to secure 29% of the electoral votes (Makara et al, 2008), thus forcing him to listen to the outcry for shifting to multiparty politics.

Consequently, on July 28th 2005, a second referendum, which generated a low (47.3%) voter turnout, was held to decide whether or not Uganda should adopt multiparty politics. Responding to the referendum question "do you agree to open up the political space to allow those who wish to join different organizations/parties to do so to compete for political power," the results of the polls were as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of the July 2005 Referendum on Political Systems in Uganda

Results	Number of Votes	% of Votes
'Yes'	3,643,223	92.44
'No'	297,865	07.53
Invalid Votes	93,144	0.03
Total	4,034,232	100.00

Source: Simba Sallie K. (2007), p. 140

Consequently, there was an unprecedented rush by individuals to register political parties before the 23rd February 2006 General Elections. Today, there are thirty-two registered political parties. Some of the parties are really 'briefcase parties' with no clear addresses, and whose leaders are relatively unknown. The results of the February 2006 presidential elections, which had a high (69.2%) voter turnout, are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of the February 2006 Presidential Elections in Uganda

Candidate and Party	Number of Votes Garnered	% of Votes
Yoweri Kaguta Museveni (NRM)	4,109,449	59.26
Kizza Besigye (FDC)	2,592,954	37.39
John Ssebaana Kizito (DP)	109,583	1.58
Abed Bwanika (Independent Party)	65,874	0.95
Miria Obote (UPC)	57,071	0.82
Total	6,934,931	100.00

Source: Simba Sallie K. (2007), p. 140

The total number of registered voters was 10,450,788. The total number of votes cast was 7,230, 456 with 295,525 invalid votes, leaving the number of

valid votes at 6,934,931. In the same period, parliamentary and local elections were also held under a multiparty arrangement. In order of representation in the national parliament, the ruling NRM is the largest followed by the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC),⁴ then the UPC, and then the DP. Jeema and the CP have one Member of Parliament (MP) each (see Table 3).

Table 3: Representation of Political Parties in Parliament by Seats as at 2008

S/No	Political Party	Number of MPs
1.	National Resistance Movement (NRM)	212
2.	Forum for Democratic Change (FDC)	38
3.	Uganda People's Congress (UPC)	9
4.	Democratic Party (DP)	8
5.	Conservative Party (CP)	1
6.	Justice Forum (JEEMA)	1
7.	Independents	40

Source: USAID (2007) *A Directory of the Eighth Parliament of Uganda, 2006-2011*, (Kampala: The Parliament of Uganda), p. 19.

Because the FDC is the major challenger to President Museveni's NRM, it has assumed the status of official opposition party. Indeed, the leader of the opposition in parliament, Prof. Morris Ogenga-Latigo, belongs to the FDC. The parliament is also comprised of MPs known as Independents,⁵ some of whom have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with some political parties. For example, Hon. Omara Atubo, formerly of the UPC, signed a MoU with the NRM. Hon. Cecilia Ogwal and Hon. Ben Wacha, who won as Independents, signed a MoU with the FDC.

Challenges of Constructing Multipartyism in Uganda

There are other several challenges that interfere with the building of multipartyism in Uganda today. This section will discuss the following main challenges: a limited understanding of multipartyism, the attitudinal disposition of key political actors towards multiparty politics, the involvement of interest and pressure groups in the political process, sectarianism as a basis of political identity (ethnicity and religion), the lack of political ideology, and 'political engineering' (Anyang' 2007). However, before discussing these challenges, suffice it to mention that they are not unique to Uganda. Other African countries currently practicing multiparty politics are experiencing the same, albeit in varied dimensions.

Limited Understanding of Multipartyism

One of the most serious and immediate challenges facing the building of multiparty politics in Uganda is the limited understanding of how and why political parties emerge. Quite often, multiparty politics is discussed without recourse to its historical origin. In Uganda, the Uganda National Congress (UNC), as the first political party, emerged as a result of the struggle against colonialism. At first, it was formed around social movements such as cooperatives and farmers' groups, and eventually it metamorphosed into a political party. However, when multiparty politics was re-introduced in 2005, it was not clear in the minds of many Ugandans how this system would operate given that they had been under a Movement system for twenty years. Indeed, even President Museveni himself succumbed to the opening up of the political space not because he believed in the merits of multiparty politics but because he wanted the critics of the NRM to be expelled so that they could establish their own political parties. This is why he frequently labels those in other parties as 'enemies' or 'negative forces', instead of political competitors.

Museveni's stand on multiparty politics agrees with that of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's when he asserted that "Africa cannot afford the luxury of multiparty politics because the issues around which parties organize are the same everywhere" (Republic of Uganda 2008). To Museveni, the issues facing Africa are really not class issues: they have to do with the building of the nation, doing away of colonial oppression, liberation of the common man, and making of the state accessible to all the ordinary Africans. On defending the Movement political arrangement, he concludes that all people, organized as one, should come together as one mammoth political party, based on the masses – internally democratic, and therefore identified as one.

Hence, the one-party democracy, which dominated Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, was based on the fact that the kind of contradictions that led to multiparty democracy in the Western world never found its counterparts in Africa. In this kind of unfavourable political environment, it is difficult not only for multiparty democracy to function properly but also to be embedded. Presidential authoritarianism then makes political competition irrelevant and takes centre stage. This dominance of presidential authority in politics breeds patrimonialism, whereby other political actors end up pandering to the president for all sorts of rewards – a situation that obtains in Uganda today. Unless the people are made more conscious of the rules-of-the game regarding how multiparty politics works, and what keeps it

efficient and effective, it will take a very long time to ensure that it takes root in the Ugandan society. Civic education by governance oriented civil society organizations would greatly enhance this critical awareness.

Attitudinal Disposition towards Multiparty Politics

The attitude of some key political actors toward multiparty politics is another challenge to the construction of multiparty politics in Uganda. Management theory has it that for any change or reform to be successfully introduced in any organization, the strategic managers who are at the apex of the organization should embrace the change process (Stoner et al, 2003). Similarly, in politics, any new reforms or changes that have to be introduced should receive the support of the top political leadership. Short of this support, the reforms or changes will not make any significant headway.

In this vein, what is observable in Uganda is that the attitude of the NRM leadership towards multiparty politics is generally negative. This negative attitude is attributable to President Museveni's ideological orientation against multipartyism (Museveni, 2000). He argues that since Uganda lacks a middle-class because it is pre-industrial, therefore it cannot practice multiparty democracy. To him, multiparty politics would degenerate into unprincipled divisions based on parochial considerations such as ethnicity, language, region and religion. This is why he sees multiparty politics as being suitable for developed industrialized countries where political competition is based on a division of labour and socio-economic classes. One would, therefore, want to know: did Museveni accede to multiparty politics because Uganda is now industrialized? The reality is that Uganda continues to be nearly as backward today as it was when Museveni captured state power twenty-two years ago. The truth is that President Museveni has been against opening up the political space because he pathologically hates any form of political challenge to his stranglehold on power.

Indeed, the obstructions, weakening and harassment of the opposition should be viewed in the light of his distaste of multiparty politics. In fact, he calls those in the opposition 'negative forces' and constantly blames them for all the ills of his government:

You see, I and the NRM are the good guys; the opposition, the media, traditional rulers and all who criticize us are the bad guys. We want to do good to you, but it is these critics who are failing us and are responsible for your suffering. Do not listen to them or support them; rally around us and never abandon us. (Republic of Uganda, 2008: 2)

Clearly, Museveni's attitude towards the opposition, and by implication, multiparty politics, is negative. There is no way Museveni can help build multiparty politics when he strongly believes that those in the opposition are the 'bad guys' or the 'enemies'. This is why in some districts, especially in the west from where he hails, there has been an orchestrated strategy of obstructive containment of opposition presidential and parliamentary candidates so that they do not access the interior of these districts. For example, former Ruhama MP, Augustine Ruzindana, experienced severe restrictions when he wanted to challenge the First Lady, Janet Museveni, to retain his parliamentary seat. After a heavy deployment of the UPDF and security personnel, he eventually lost the race.

In Kampala district, opposition functions have been disrupted forcefully by the police and the 'kiboko' squad. For example, the police and unknown armed personnel publicly caned two opposition MPs, Susan Nampijja Lukyamuzi (MP for Rubaga South) and Nabilah Naggayi Sempala (Woman MP for Kampala) when they tried to hold political rallies in their constituencies. President Museveni has never condemned such violent disruptions. Instead, he persistently blames the opposition for inciting violence. This biased attitude by Museveni does not augur well for the construction of multiparty democracy. Consequently, some opposition parties have resorted to training their own vigilante youth groups to protect their leaders from the NRM's violent antics.

The political situation tends to worsen during elections when President Museveni does not hesitate to remind the electorate that his NRM will not allow 'bad' elements and killers to return to power. Recently, while touring Luwero District, Museveni publicly pronounced that he would not have handed over power even if Dr. Paul Ssemogerere, President-General of the DP, had won the 1996 presidential elections. While Museveni keeps reminding Ugandans and the international community that the 'bad' elements are only found in the opposition, the reality is that he has signed ceasefire agreements with some of the 'bad' elements many of whom he has offered amnesty, or promoted to senior ranks in the Uganda Peoples Defence Force (UPDF), or appointed as cabinet ministers. It seems that Museveni is disinterested in political competition because he wants to dominate the country's politics undeterred. This is why he says there is not any other Ugandan with the 'vision' for the country's future other than himself. This situation has undoubtedly nurtured dictatorship, which has a devastating effect on the construction of multiparty politics.

However, the opposition parties and civil society are not strong enough to forge an alliance to challenge Museveni's stranglehold on political power. Because it is not easy to change Museveni's attitude towards multiparty politics, it would be prudent for other political actors to raise the level of consciousness of the electorate so that they cease being captives of one-person rule.

Involvement of Interest and Pressure Groups

Interest groups are an essential part of the political process. However, not all groups involved in politics are interest groups (Renwick & Swinburn, 1980). Pressure, as used by pressure groups, describes persuasive actions that are organized, and which have some definite intent. But pressure is not something that all people are able to exert equally. Those who are in authority are powerful, and can articulate their demands in an attractive way. They are better able to put forward their case than individuals and groups in society that are less favourably located.

In a democratic sense, although individuals can engage in the political process by virtue of the fact that it is their human right to do so, they are less able to exert pressure, which the government will heed to. Hence, in modern society, Uganda inclusive, most people now belong to one or more interest groups through, say, becoming members after paying subscription fees. The sole purpose of interest groups is to influence policy decisions. In this regard, interest groups differ from political parties by their aims, which are not to take power but to exert pressure. The nature of interest group membership is often limited to one section in society.

Interest groups vary enormously in size, from a few people who join together to pursue some common interest, to the millions of members in trade unions. The two commonest types of interest groups are promotional (or cause) groups and protective (or sectional) groups. The former want to promote a cause by appealing, not to a section, or to a special group, but to everybody. The latter defend a distinct section in society. They are the ones that are most often in the public eye because they have the 'muscle' to exert pressure successfully, and because they have been built by government into a consultative framework for proposals that affect them. Protective groups e.g., trade unions, are the largest of the interest groups.

Although interest groups differ as to where they decide pressure will be most effective, in general most of them focus on three major areas, namely;

government and civil service, parliament and individual MPs, and the public. Government and civil service is the most effective target of most interest groups. To be able to influence the decisions taken by ministers on the advice of civil servants is likely to be the most direct way of achieving the aims of a group. Governance-oriented NGOs in Uganda have found it difficult to influence public policy because of the problems in accessing ministers and senior civil servants who protect their ministers. The government is yet to develop the culture of consulting interest groups. As for parliament and individual MPs, interest groups realize that both are crucial in supporting their cause. Interest groups can sponsor MPs to be elected, ensure that MPs develop a personal interest in their activities, and persuade them through lobbying and advocacy on major policies. Public opinion is difficult to mobilize and is uncertain in its effect. The only time the majority of the electorate is involved simultaneously in any political activity is during general elections.

However, interest group participation is not fully developed in Uganda. Because of persecution by the state, interest groups fear to sponsor candidates to be elected MPs. The return on such an investment may even be unknown. Once elected an MP, especially when in the opposition, one finds it difficult to associate with interest groups—even if they espouse the interests of the MP—for fear of reprisal by state agents. Unfortunately, MPs in Uganda do not consult interest groups on major policy areas to inform their parliamentary positions because they do not see the necessity to do so. Lobbying in Uganda is not well-developed because there are no professional lobbyists whose task is to persuade MPs to support one cause or another. Lobbying is still amateurish. Public opinion in Uganda is difficult to mobilize because the majority of the electorate is poor and uninformed. Mobilization of the public and their support for a political cause is largely sporadic.

Nevertheless, there are governance-oriented civil society organizations that endeavour to participate in the political process alongside political parties. These organizations, which are yet to be fully developed so as to effectively play their governance role, include trade unions, academia, NGOs, and the media. Worst still, the NRM government sees these interest groups with caution, suspicion, and hostility. The amendment of the NGO Act wherein the NRM government has introduced severe restrictions regarding the registration and administration of NGOs attests to the love-hate political and legal relationships between the civil society and the state.

The influence of the mass media, radio, television and newspapers on the formation of attitudes and changing opinions in Uganda is a matter of considerable conjecture. Nevertheless, the media is the main method of political communication for the bulk of the citizenry. The different parties, therefore, must be given equal opportunity to articulate their views. However, on some occasions, the Uganda Broadcasting Council, which is expected to be neutral, acts in a partisan manner in favour of the incumbent president and the NRM party. Compared to the past governments, however, the NRM has performed relatively better in the sense that there are several newspapers and local FM radio and television stations. However, where interest groups and journalists have critical views or portray the NRM government in a bad light, then they are treated harshly (Olum & Mette, 2008). For example, journalists Andrew Mwenda of the *Independent* newspaper and Chris Obore of the *Monitor* newspaper were summarily arrested on trumped up treason and/or sedition charges. Some FM radio stations, such as the Central Broadcasting Corporation (CBS), which is strongly pro-Buganda, have been harassed several times on seditious grounds. Dr. Kiiza Besigye, president of FDC party, and the main challenger to President Museveni in the last presidential election, has been barred from or have had his programmes cancelled at the last minute on several local FM stations on flimsy security grounds. Consequently, he cannot easily reach out to the electorate through the media to articulate his party's manifesto. The NRM is only interested in the population listening to its side of the story. Although the extent to which the media influences public opinion in favour of one party as opposed to another is not known, NRM's obstructions do not augur well in the embedment of multiparty democracy.

The NRM government does not seem to realize that in a mass democracy, which acknowledges the right to form groups, such groups can be of benefit to the working of government. Interest groups ought to have working relationships with the government just as much as the government should consult interest groups on major national issues. However, groups should not develop a relationship with the government whereby they act like government agencies, for example, through receiving government support to pursue their aims—i.e., they are not homogenous. It is, however, true that groups do not have similar aims; they have disagreements amongst themselves as to how they should further their aims, and some are internally heterogeneous. Thus, it is crucial that there is a basis for the formation of

political parties based on the participation of interest groups if multiparty politics is to function properly. This will necessitate statements of the missions, visions, values, principles and ideologies of the parties so that people can make informed choices about membership. Otherwise, parties will be formed for reasons other than attending to the needs of a cross-section of the citizenry, except as tools in the service of the interests of the founding fathers—a situation that occurs in Uganda today. In other words, political parties should never ignore the interests they ought to be representing.

Unfortunately, most political actors within and outside political parties in Uganda are not clear on the mission, vision, values and principles of the different political parties. The major reason for this predicament is the manner in which the parties take cognizance of the interests of their followers. Because of this deficiency, these parties tend to have a small group of people who hold them together. Going by the 2006 presidential and parliamentary elections, the marginal space that UPC, Jeema, and the Conservative Party (CP) occupied -- which stands at around one percent of the electorate for each -- speaks of the low level of support they command. In fact, support for the parties is often driven by material and financial gain. A party worth its name ought to have a group of loyalists who strongly believe that there is work to be done by the party and are, therefore, ready to sacrifice for it. In Uganda, it is rare to find party members sacrificing for the cause of their parties because of the reasons just stated. The manner in which some individuals cross from one party to another party attests to this phenomenon. Also, the general apathy amongst the electorate is a clear indicator that they do not see much likelihood of most of the political parties being able to improve their living conditions.

In sum, interest groups are an integral part of the political process, essential for the smooth operation of any democratic polity. Without them, it would be impossible to maintain a dialogue with government and others holding political power. In Uganda more progress is needed to ensure that interest groups have a positive independent role to play in the political system.

The Basis of Political Identity

Lately, ethnicity and religion have entered into the political lexicon and have dominated socio-political expressions (Kanyinga, 2007). Ethnicity is a broad term which can be defined in different ways depending on the context.

Nevertheless, ethnicity implies a shared cultural identity involving similar practices, initiations, beliefs and linguistic features passed from one generation to another (Chogugudza, 2008). It is how groups organize to advance their interests, and how ethnic elites mobilize their own ethnic groups or constituencies to counter other elites so as to make claims on the public sphere. The different religious beliefs have also stamped their presence in politics more than ever before as modes of political identification. Mkangi (2004) is correct in observing that as Africa, including East Africa, entered the 21st century, it was caught up in an irreconcilable identity dilemma. Although this dilemma is a result of colonialism, the paradox is that it has persisted even today under the rubric of neo-colonialism.

Consequently, Africa has been gripped by crises (socio-political, economic/financial, famine/hunger, environmental degradation, insecurity, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, corruption, bad governance, unfavourable trade relations, foreign debts, and mismanagement of resources) that have shattered the aspirations of her people to the extent that some have psychologically resigned themselves to their current fate of underdevelopment (Ndungu, 2004). As a result, colonialism has not only made Africans lose their self-esteem, their human dignity and their cultural identity, but their political values and practices have been impacted to the extent to which they form and join organizations based on their tribe, language, religion, and region. Hence, for the purpose of this article, we will discuss two major identity dilemmas that have entrenched themselves in the political sphere: ethnicity, and religion.

In Uganda, one reason why there is no clear conceptualization of multiparty politics is mainly because political parties are not well understood in terms of their identity. Indeed, in the process of political struggle, Ugandans did not identify politically with the cause of the struggle. Generally, they identified, and still do identify politically, on the basis of ethnicity (Bantu, Luo, etc.), region (northerners, southerners, westerners, etc.) and religion (Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, etc.). Hence, ethnicity and religion will remain major stumbling blocks for subsequent political organization in Uganda (Muwanga, 2005).

Most parties tend to coalesce around the ethnic origin of the founding fathers and the dominant religions (Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam)

because it is through them that they hope to reap material and financial benefits. President Museveni's creation of so many new and unviable districts, through 'districtization' as a form of reaping political capital, has assumed an ethnic (clan and sub-clan) dimension. Uganda now has about 86 districts, and more are waiting to be created. Therefore, the trend towards political, and especially multiparty democracy, has had the unexpected consequence of heightening ethnic and other forms of social tensions (Keller, 2002). Ethnicity and religion in Uganda continue to shape the character of political life and the practice of politics at the state level, thus breeding ethno-regional conflicts.

Politics in Uganda have been, and continues to be, expressed in ethnic terms because of historical facts, the fear of physical insecurity and perceived and/or real discrimination, inequalities, or inequities. Yet empirical democratic theory argues that a democracy must not permanently exclude any significant group from power if it is to survive (Chandra & Boulet, 2005). Therefore, democracies in which ethnic divisions are politically salient amidst weak political institutions are especially likely to permanently exclude some groups from power, leading to violence and instability. This occurrence is a colonial construct because in forging the colonial state and institutions, force was used to redefine power relations. The state integrated the customary bases of power and traditional authorities into the evolving mode of rule -- native reserves versus settler areas (Mamdani, 1996). In Uganda, the pulling and pushing between the state and the Buganda Kingdom should be viewed in this perspective.

In the context of religion, the colonialists used it to domesticate African peoples (Ndungu, 2004). Specifically, Western Christian missionaries deployed Christianity to convert Africans and make them conform to Western cultural values and belief systems, while ensuring that they abandon their own values and religions. However, and as Ndungu rightly notes, African instituted churches used the same Christian gospel to liberate their people from the ruthless cultural onslaught by Europeans. In Uganda, religion has been used in the formation of political parties to redress marginalization. For example, the DP was formed in 1954, largely by Baganda (as an ethnic group) and Catholics (as a religious category), because the UPC, which formed the first government, was Protestant-dominated. Then KY was formed to preserve Buganda's hegemony in Uganda's politics. Today, the majority of the founders of the Jeema party are Muslims.

Although Jeema activists do not openly state it, their philosophical underpinning is the strongly held belief that Muslims have been marginalized socio-politically from the time the country gained independence from colonialists who had relegated them to an inferior and peripheral status. This religious identity has been used for mobilizing Ugandans to support a particular political party. In fact, it is not uncommon to hear outcries from some religious leaders (e.g., Catholics) and ethnic groups (e.g., northerners) to the effect that the NRM government has, say, sidelined them from cabinet positions.

Unless efforts are made through public policies and programmes that build trust among ethnic and religious groups, sectarian politics will continue to harm the political process in the country. The government must engender the sense that it is credibly committed to protecting the rights of all ethnic and religious groups, and that all the political party leaders are committed to social justice, establishing a government that is transparent and accountable, and maintaining a political system that operates in accordance with democratic principles. To build a multi-ethnic democracy would necessitate balancing one majority by strengthening minorities. The institutions of the electoral system have to permit fluidity in ethnic self-definitions in the political sphere so as to make them as inclusive as possible (Hameso, 2002). This is worth considering because ethnicity compliments other forms of representation because its genuine incorporation contributes to democracy, popular participation, and political legitimacy. Ethnicity performs legitimate political functions and nowhere is its positive instrumentality more important as in a divided society.

Political Ideology

At the centre of the failure by the majority of the people to identify with the programmes of political parties is the ideological question, and especially political ideology as opposed to cultural ideology. The former is less emphasized while the latter is quite strong. Ideology is one of the most controversial concepts encountered in political analysis. Neutrally defined, it refers to a developed social philosophy or world view. Destutt (1754-1836), a French philosopher who coined the term, used it to refer to a new 'science of ideas' that set out to uncover the origins of conscious thought and ideas (Heywood, 1997). A more enduring meaning was coined by Karl Marx who saw ideology as the ideas of the 'ruling class'.

Generally, political parties in Uganda have made minimal headway (if at all) in clearly defining their party ideologies or espousing competing development policies and programmes. The FDC argues that its ideology is 'right-of-centre', implying that it is conservative.⁶ The DP's ideology is 'left-of-centre'.⁷ President Museveni has argued on several occasions that the NRM's ideology is 'multi-ideological'. This assertion has never been clearly explained by the NRM given that when it captured state power on 26th January 1986, it postulated that it would toe a mixed economic line. Indeed, in its 2006 Manifesto, the NRM is silent about its ideology (NRM, 2006). Today, both the politics and the economics of the government under the NRM party are premised upon liberalization and privatization. While Jeema's ideological inclination is mixed, that of the CP is ultra-conservative and anti-privatization.⁸ In its strategic plan, the UPC has not yet worked out its ideology. All it says is that "... UPC has now to review, redefine and re-package its ideology within the context of a changed and ever changing political and socio-economic global environment" (UPC, n.d.: 11-12).

Most of the parties have failed to clearly define their ideologies either because they do not know how to go about it, or they think that it is unnecessary to do so. This is not unique to Uganda because in other African countries political leaders focus more on pragmatism rather than on ideology. Hence, political parties in Uganda are not driven by ideology but by what they think they can offer to their populations -- an objective they have not been able to fully achieve. Consequently, the elite who get involved in politics become the clients of the president, organized along ethnic, regional, religious, and gender lines (UPC, n.d.: 154). This sectarian approach to practical politics contradicts their manifestos and the 1995 Constitution, which emphasizes the centrality of forming political parties based upon national character considerations.

Political Engineering

The issue of 'political engineering' is that political parties often direct their efforts at discussing how to get political membership, who becomes president of the party, what are the relationships between parties, and how often political parties should meet in their committees or caucuses. Important as these issues are, it is more relevant to discuss the environment within which multiparty politics will be embedded. The political environment, which influences the actions of political parties and the behaviour of political and non-political actors, is national, regional,

continental and global) in character. The internal political environment includes institutional variables, both informal and formal, regarding such things as electoral rules, the presidency, the parliament, term limits, and the role of the opposition (Rakner, 2008). The external political environment relates to how countries (developed and developing) and institutions (bilateral and multilateral) influence what happens nationally.

In Uganda electoral rules tend to shape the power of the presidency over and above the opposition. The administration of the elections by the mandated Electoral Commission (EC) has continuously enhanced President Museveni's prospects of winning presidential elections: after all, the majority of the senior officials of the EC are supporters of President Museveni. Added to this reality is the fact that the presidency is so powerful that the opposition stands little chance of taking over political power. The majority of the Members of Parliament (MPs) are NRM supporters who have demonstrated their willingness to back the party's position in parliament at all costs. For instance, they did so by lifting the two-term limit for the presidency after allegedly obtaining five million Uganda shillings each, thus allowing President Museveni to run for the presidency for as many terms as he wishes. The few NRM MPs who express dissenting views from those of the mainstream NRM are quickly labelled 'rebels' as a way of silencing them. The opposition parties have failed to form a strong alliance to challenge President Museveni's stranglehold on political power. The weaknesses of the institutions of the EC and the parliament have devastating effects on the country's democratization process.

In terms of external political institutions, developed countries exercise more influence on what happens in Uganda's domestic politics than regional or continental bodies such as the East African Community (EAC) and the African Union (AU). Countries such as the United States of America and Britain; and bodies such as the European Union, have been able, for instance, to influence the return to multiparty politics more than the regional and continental bodies. This is because they are the biggest financial donors, and their withdrawal would have a devastating impact on Uganda's economic and political conditions. It is strange that after colonial rule, African leaders can so easily succumb to foreign countries and Western leaders with such relative ease. Unless this lopsided and exploitative relationship, which is largely in favour of the developed countries, is contained, one cannot resist the temptation of referring to the African states as being neo-colonial.

Conclusion

This article argued that the shift from the Movement to multiparty politics is now a legal and practical reality. Several reasons have been adduced as to why Uganda shifted to multiparty politics. However, despite this shift, the country is experiencing serious challenges to embedding the multiparty system including: a limited understanding of multiparty politics, the attitudinal disposition of key political actors towards multiparty politics, the involvement of interest and pressure groups in the political process, sectarianism as a basis of political identity, the absence of a clear ideological orientation, and problems with 'political engineering'.

It is crucial that serious measures are taken to construct a truly functioning multiparty political system in the country. First, efforts need to be made to ensure that the citizenry clearly understand the meaning and operations of multiparty politics. Their consciousness should be raised about the 'rules-of-the-game'. Second, because it will not be easy to change President Museveni's attitude towards multiparty politics, there is a need to form a strong alliance amongst the opposition parties, and between them and civil society organizations, so as to free the electorate from the captivity of one-person rule. Third, interest groups should assert their influence more because of their centrality in supporting political parties, as well as in holding government accountable. Fourth, efforts should be directed at public policies and programmes to build trust among ethnic, religious and other identity groups to enhance multiparty democracy. Fifth, the parties must define their ideologies more clearly if they wish to go beyond pragmatism in delivering their policy packages to the electorate and to win them over. Finally, it is vital that political parties and civil society groups become critically conscious of the internal and external environments within which to construct and embed multiparty democracy in Uganda.

Notes

1. For details of this historical narrative of multiparty politics in Uganda, see Olum Yasin (2008) "The Role of Political Opposition in Consolidating Multiparty Democracy in Uganda".
2. Kabaka Yekka (KY) party when literally translated means "Buganda only" party.
3. The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the NRM, which convened in November 2000, had its own reasons for opening up the political space, namely: 1)

to provide the NRM with the opportunity to purify itself of those people who were in the Movement system simply because of the concept of 'broadbasedness', 2) to deprive its opponents the opportunity to accuse the Movement of being undemocratic, 3) to enhance the relationship between Uganda and its development partners, thus facilitating the country's access to world markets and international aid, and 4) to be in step with the world trend of political pluralism.

4. The FDC is an offshoot of the NRM. Its President, Dr. Kiiza Besigye, was President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's personal physician during the 'bush' days. He occupied various high positions in both the military and in the cabinet before he fell out with President Museveni. He has posed a serious challenge to President Museveni in two presidential elections (2001 and 2006).
5. "Independents" are MPs who decided to stand on their own personal merit after being rigged out of the electoral process within their respective political parties.
6. Interview with Deputy President of FDC, Salaam Musumba, on 19th September 2008.
7. Interview with (Hon) John Kawanga of the DP on 18th September 2008.
8. Interview with Ken Lukyamuzi, President of the Conservative Party, on 20th September 2008.

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