

UGANDA

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Political system Uganda has a presidential system. The president and members of the Ugandan Parliament (MPs) are elected separately. While the president and parliament each have different constitutional responsibilities, some of their responsibilities are interdependent. The president is both head of state and government and performs both the titular and executive functions. The president appoints ministers, ambassadors, the inspector general of the government and the inspector general of police. Furthermore, he or she appoints, on the advice of the Judicial Service Commission, the chief justice, his or her deputy, the principle judge, judges of the Supreme Court, judges of the Court of Appeal and the panel of judges of the High Court. Whereas such presidential appointments are subject to parliamentary approval, there have been only rare instances when parliament has rejected a presidential appointee. As in other presidential systems, the president has, for example, the prerogative to declare war and also has the prerogative of mercy.

The constitution also provides for the position of a prime minister, who is the leader of government business in parliament and who also coordinates the implementation of government policies, but without any executive powers. The prime minister is appointed by, and is accountable to, the president. Some of the common characteristics of a parliamentary system can also be identified in the Ugandan political system. Most of the ministers are, for example, appointed from among MPs to the extent that out of the 332 MPs, 69 or 21 per cent are active ministers. In addition, anybody appointed minister from outside parliament automatically becomes an ex-officio member of parliament. In spite of the existence of several governance institutions in Uganda, the president is strongly involved in all aspects of government.

The election of the president, as provided for under article 103 of the 1995 constitution and the enabling law, the Presidential Elections Act 2005, is by universal adult suffrage. Initially, the 1995 constitution provided for a two-term limit to the presidency. The constitution was, however, amended in 2005 with the term limits being removed. Article 105 of the constitution, which had initially limited the election to the presidency to two five-year terms, now stipulates that a person may be elected to hold office as president for one or more terms. The removal of term limits to the presidency in Uganda raises questions about Uganda's commitment to strengthening democracy – and in particular realizing a peaceful transfer of power – which the country has never experienced in 46 years of independence.

Since the restoration of multiparty governance in Uganda in 2004, there has been one presidential election, which was held on 23 February 2006. The next elections will be held in 2011. Five candidates contested the 2006 presidential elections with the following results:

- Yoweri Museveni (National Resistance Movement, NRM): 59.3 per cent;
- Kizza Besigye (Forum for Democratic Change, FDC): 37.8 per cent;
- Ssebaana Kizito (Democratic Party, DP): 1.6 per cent;

- Abed Baikal (Independent): 1 per cent;
- Maria Obote (Uganda People's Congress, UPC): 0.8 per cent.

Prior to the restoration of multiparty democracy, Uganda had been governed under a movement system. This system was introduced by the National Resistance Movement (NRM), which captured power in 1986 and immediately banned the operation of political parties. Under the movement system, elections were held on the basis of "individual merit", i.e., anybody contesting electoral office did so as an individual and would be assessed on their individual merits rather than as a member of a particular political party. Two elections were held under the movement system: in 1996 and 2001. The results for the 1996 elections were as follows: Yoweri Museveni got 75.5 per cent, Paul Ssemogerere 22.3 per cent and Muhammad Mayanja 2.2 per cent. The elections that followed in 2001 produced the following results: Yoweri Museveni received 69.3 per cent, Kiiza Besigye 27.8 per cent, Aggrey Awori 1.4 per cent, Francis Bwengye 0.3 per cent and Chapaa Karuhanga 0.14 per cent. However, it should be noted that in spite of the practice under the movement system, voters could be associated with a particular candidate to due linkages with pre-movement political parties. The multiparty system only became operational after a referendum in July 2005; the first elections to be held under this system were on 23 February 2006.

The Ugandan constitution was introduced on 8 October 1995. It was amended in 2005, removing the presidential term limits and introducing the multiparty system. Uganda is a signatory to the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the United Nations Human Rights Declaration. These rights were domesticated in the 1995 constitution under chapter 4. Article 29 of the constitution specifically states that every person shall have freedom of speech and expression, and the constitution further guarantees the freedom of the press, the freedom to assemble and demonstrate together with others peacefully, and the freedom to form and join associations, political parties and other civil organizations. Among the process rights guaranteed in the constitution is the right to a fair hearing. The constitution also provides that people arrested, restricted or detained will be kept in places authorized by the law. In spite of these constitutional provisions, there are reported cases of people being detained in "safe houses" (ungazetted areas, where people are imprisoned by security forces). In addition, the state has increased restrictions and stopped demonstrations and political meetings, especially those organized by opposition political parties.

Constitution

Article 29 (e) of the 1995 constitution gives freedom to all Ugandans to form and join associations and form political parties. Article 72 guarantees the right to form political parties. The constitution mandates parliament to enact a law to regulate the conduct of political parties. The Political Parties and Organizations Act was enacted to this effect in 2005.

Constitutionally, decision-making in Uganda is in the hands of elected people. The president, MPs and local government leaders are elected by universal suffrage. Nevertheless, the extent to which these elections are free and fair has been subject to debate. There is the argument that the current composition of the Electoral Commission – the body responsible for organizing and holding elections – prevents the electoral body from being impartial: its members are appointed by the president, who also has the power to dismiss them. Furthermore, several cases of post-election petitions and the subsequent rulings in the courts that confirm election malpractices, such as vote rigging, bribery and voter intimidation, indicate that Uganda still falls short of meeting the standards for free and fair election.

State of democracy

All adults have the right to vie for any of the elected positions. This right is, however, hampered by a number of restrictions, including an age limit for candidature. For example, presidential candidates have to be above 35 and below 75 years of age. Another limitation is education; candidates standing as president, member of parliament or chairperson of district local councils have to have completed minimum formal educational to advanced level (high school) standard

or its equivalent. The second last factor is the candidate's personal financial situation. According to the Presidential Elections Act 2005, Section 10 (6), the nomination papers of any presidential candidate have to be accompanied by a non-refundable fee of four hundred currency points, which amounts to Uganda shillings 8 million or the equivalent of USD 4,000. Likewise, article 11 (3) states that the nomination papers of every person standing for parliament have to be accompanied by a nomination fee of ten currency points. Whatever the rationale, the effect of the nomination fee is to exclude people who are not very rich from elected positions. In addition, even though the constitution guarantees that nobody will be subjected to discrimination based on gender or any other sectarian considerations, several cultural barriers limit women's participation in politics.

In the area of governance, while the constitution was amended in 2005 to allow the operation of political parties, and although multiparty-based elections were conducted on 23 February 2006, the political environment remains to some extent unfavourable to opposition political parties. There has been a popular demand, particularly from the political opposition, that if the elections are to truly reflect the will of the people, the Electoral Commission should be reformed to include members from opposition parties. The removal of the president's power (who is an interested party in any election) to appoint and remove members of the Electoral Commission has also been demanded. Lastly, it is claimed by opposition actors that the fusion between the ruling party and some state organs gives the ruling party – the National Resistance Movement (NRM) – an advantage over other parties. In some cases, for example, the NRM uses the organizational structure of lower levels of local government to carry out its own mobilization activities.

There are four major developments that have taken place in Uganda over the last five years which have significant implications for the country's politics. First was the constitutional amendment in 2005 which resulted in the adoption of the multiparty system of governance. Second was the removal of presidential term limits, which was criticized as a significant reversal in Uganda's democratic process. Third, there are signs that the war in Northern Uganda between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony and the Uganda government forces, which has lasted for over 22 years due to feelings of marginalization, is almost coming to an end. Its resolution is likely to have an impact on the political configuration of forces in Uganda, given the fact that this region has traditionally cast a protest vote against President Museveni and his ruling NRM party. Fourth, the increasing tendency for opposition parties to work together is an important development. On 5 August 2008, the Conservative Party (CP), the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) and the Justice Forum (JEEMA) signed a memorandum of understanding, the Inter-Party Cooperation, in which these parties agreed to cooperate in the advocacy of and campaign for the removal of all obstacles to the full realization of free and open democratic multiparty governance in Uganda.

Separation of powers The Ugandan state has three major pillars of power: the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. Uganda operates a single executive and has a unicameral parliamentary system with 332 MPs; it is a unitary state. However, through its decentralization policy, significant powers have been devolved to local government, particularly to the local district councils (Local Council Five – LC V) and sub-counties (Local Council Three – LC III). Leaders of these local government bodies, including the chairpersons and councillors, are elected through universal adult suffrage and by a simple majority vote. Every political party is free to field candidates. As with national-level portfolios, the ruling party still enjoys dominance within local government councils. The table below shows the party affiliation of the chairpersons of district and sub-county local government in Uganda.

Table 1 | POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHAIRPERSONS

Party	District Chairpersons (LC V)		Sub-County Chairpersons (LC III)	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
National Resistance Movement (NRM)	59	74.6	646	65.9
Forum for Democratic Change (FDC)	4	5.1	93	9.5
Democratic Party (DP)	1	1.3	21	2.1
Uganda People's Congress (UPC)	1	1.3	24	2.5
Conservative Party (CP)	0	0	0	0
Justice Forum (JEEMA)	0	0	0	0
Independents	14	17.7	196	20
Total	79	100	980	100

The main function of the judiciary is the adjudication of cases both civil and criminal. The judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, which resolves any dispute relating to the interpretation of the constitution, the Court of Appeal, the High Court and the Magistrates Courts. According to article 128 of the 1995 constitution of Uganda, in exercising their powers, the courts will be independent and will not be subject to the control or direction of any person or authority. In spite of this provision, the government has on several occasions interfered with the work of the judiciary. The judiciary is independent as long as the issue under jurisdiction is not pertinent to the survival of the regime. Where regime survival is at stake, the executive has often interfered. The independence of the judiciary is undermined by the executive defiance of court orders; repeated criticism of the judges and the court decisions, particularly by the president; and direct interference with the discharge of the judiciary's duties, for example when security operatives (Black Mambas) surrounded the High Court to re-arrest treason suspects released by the court. Other shortcomings include the politicization of the appointment of judges and the use of military courts to try civilians for the alleged possession of illegal guns (International Bar Association 2007).

The Parliament of Uganda is composed of the following categories of members: 214 members who are elected directly by a simple majority vote to represent specific constituencies; one women representative elected from each district; ten Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) representatives; five workers' representatives; five youth representatives elected by college votes on a regional basis (youths are defined under Ugandan law as people aged between 18 and 35 years); five representatives of people with disabilities; and all cabinet ministers appointed from outside parliament, who become, as mentioned earlier, ex-officio members. In addition there are several MPs who are independent. According to article 79 of the 1995 constitution the role of the Ugandan Parliament is to make laws on any matter for the peace, order, development and good governance of Uganda. Its oversight functions include: vetting presidential appointees, discussing and passing the national budget and scrutinizing government expenditure through its Public Accounts Committee. The oversight functions of the parliament are performed through committees, which include the Appointments Committee and National Economy Committee, among others.

National assembly

Apart from the committees, there are also numerous caucuses in parliament, most of which cut across party affiliation. These caucuses can be categorized as: identity-based caucuses, such as the Uganda Women Parliamentarians (UWOPA); ethnic- and religious-based caucuses, such as the Buganda caucus; issue-based caucuses, such as the caucus on food security; and party caucuses, such as the UPC parliamentary group and the NRM caucus. All MPs belong to their respective party caucuses.

The election of MPs is provided for under article 81 of the 1995 constitution. The enabling law is the 2005 Parliamentary Election Act. Uganda's electoral process is based on a single member electoral system. Uganda is divided into 214 constituencies. Each political party nominates a candidate for elections. The candidate who gets a simple majority of the votes is declared the winner. The same principle guides the elections of women district representatives. Representatives of workers, youths and the UPDF are elected under different electoral procedures. Table 2 shows the composition of the current Parliament of Uganda, commonly known as the 8th parliament.

Table 2 | DISTRIBUTION OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS ⁽¹⁾

Party	Latest election (2006)			Total	Present status
	Constituencies	Woman representatives	Indirect		
National Resistance Movement (NRM)	141	59	14	204	PP PPM/GA
Forum for Democratic Change (FDC)	27	10	–	37	O
Uganda People's Congress (UPC)	9	–	–	9	O
Democratic Party (DP)	9	–	–	9	O
Conservative Party (CP)	1	–	–	1	O
Justice Forum (JEEMA)	1	–	–	1	O
Independents	26	10	1	37	O
Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF)	–	–	10	10	O
Ex-officio MPs	–	–	13	13	PPM/GA
Total	214	79	15	321	

⁽¹⁾ Number of seats out of a total of 321 seats in 2006.

Abbreviations: PP = party of the president | PPM/GA = party of the prime minister and sole party in government | O = party is in opposition.

The NRM (National Resistance Movement) party enjoys an absolute majority in parliament and thus does not need to enter into a coalition with any other political party. Nevertheless, it has signed several memorandums of understanding with some independent MPs that bind such independents to support government policy. The rest of the parties are in the opposition with some loose cooperation between them, where the largest opposition party, the FDC (Forum for Democratic Change), provides leadership, including the leader of the opposition and the majority of the shadow ministers.

For several reasons, the 8th Parliament of Uganda can be categorized as an executive-dominated parliament, which exerts limited influence on the executive and has low autonomy and limited influence on policymaking. The executive's dominance of parliament is due to a number of reasons: first, the ruling NRM enjoys an absolute majority of seats; second, 21 per cent of MPs are ministers; third, the 10 members of the Uganda People's Defence Forces are serving soldiers, who according to the army's code of conduct are not supposed to contradict their commander in chief – the president; and, fourth, parliamentary decisions are mainly made by the NRM caucus, which often meets outside parliament and is at times chaired by the president. Lastly, both the speaker of parliament and his deputy are also members of the ruling party.

II. PARTIES AND THE PARTY SYSTEM

II.1 Party System

Article 72 of the 1995 constitution guarantees the right to form political parties and any other political organization. In addition, the Political Parties and Organizations Act 2002 regulates the tasks and organization of political parties. It sets out the rules regarding the formation and registration, internal organization and financing of political parties in Uganda.

Legal regulation

It is a requirement that every political party should have at least 50 representatives from each of the districts in Uganda, or represent at least 50 per cent of all the districts of the country. Uganda operates a single member plurality (SMP) system of elections. Each political party can present candidates for parliamentary elections. The candidate who gets the majority of the votes in a constituency is declared the winner. There are therefore no electoral thresholds to cross in order to win parliamentary seats.

Article 71 of the 1995 constitution lays down rules which all political parties must follow. These rules include: every political party should be of national character; membership of a political party should not be based on gender, ethnicity, religion, or other sectional divisions; the internal organization of a political party should conform to democratic principles; members of the national organs of the a political party have to be subjected to regular elections; political parties are required by law to account for the sources of their funds and assets.

In theory, the main source of funds for political parties is membership fees and subscriptions. However, the drive to attract many supporters hinders the will of the parties to enforce the payment of such fees. The Political Parties and Organizations Act 2002 includes several prohibitions relating to the funding of political parties. Parties are, for example, prohibited from acquiring funds from non-citizens, foreign governments and diplomatic missions. They are also prohibited from receiving financial support from any institution, body or person which has demonstrated an intention to overthrow the government of Uganda or to endanger the country's security, or from any organization which has been declared terrorist, under the Anti-Terrorism Act 2002. A new bill, the Political Parties and Other Organizations Amendment Bill 2008, has been presented in parliament according to which all registered political parties and organizations will be (partially) funded by government. The bill, which is yet to be passed by parliament, proposes that funds will be provided based on the numerical strength of each political party in parliament. In achieving financial accountability, parties are required to publish the sources of funds and the names of the people who contributed to the funds, including contributions by those who are not citizens of Uganda, membership dues paid, donations in cash or in kind, and all their financial transactions. The accounts of all parties are supposed to be audited once every financial year. In spite of the these regulations, all political parties apart from the FDC have never declared their sources of income and assets, or submitted accounts.

Party financing

Relevant parties The relevance of political parties in Uganda cannot be meaningfully measured by the parties' performances in previous elections – largely for the reason that there has been only one multiparty election in a period of 29 years. There are, however, some important elements that can be considered in the assessment of relevant parties. There are, for example, political parties which have existed in Uganda since the colonial period and which have survived attempts to destroy them or make them irrelevant in Uganda's politics. Such parties include the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), formed in 1960, the Democratic Party (DP) formed in 1954, and Conservative Party (CP), formed in 1979. During the movement system, these political parties were legally allowed to exist, though their activities, including the fielding of candidates for any elected positions, were prohibited. It is important to note that though the elections in Uganda between 1996 and 2005 were conducted under the movement system, there is evidence that the actors in those elections represented well-known political party interests.

Currently, the six parties represented in parliament can be regarded as the relevant parties in Uganda. These are the National Resistance Movement (NRM), the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), the Democratic Party (DP), the Conservative Party (CP) and the Justice Forum (JEEMA).

Thirty-two political parties were registered in Uganda between political space being opened up in 2005 and the 2006 general elections. These parties included the existing parties – CP, JEEMA and UPC – which also had to become registered. Since the 2006 general elections, four other political parties have been registered. These include the Activist Party (AP), the Congress Service Volunteers Organization (COSEVO), the People's Development Party (PDP) and the National Youth Revolutionary Organization (NYRO). While the relevant parties, such as the Uganda People's Congress, the Democratic Party, the National Resistance Movement and the Forum for Democratic Change appear to be stable, several other political parties, such as the Forum for Integrity in Leadership appear to have been formed purely for the elections and their participation in Uganda's politics remains rather insignificant.

Party families Political parties in Uganda are generally not organized around a particular ideology. Most of the parties are non-ideological and pragmatic in nature. They have more flexible goals and no fixed positions. In addition, parties usually shift their positions on different issues, in several cases for the purpose of achieving electoral success. Nevertheless, the relevant political parties can be categorized into the following families:

Table 3 | IDEOLOGICAL COMPOSITION OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

	Name and founding	Present situation	Situation prior to present
Centrist-right Parties	DP, 1954 FDC, 2004	O O	O –
Parties with religious values	JEEMA, 1995	O	O
Conservative	CP, 1979	O	O
Pragmatic	NRM, 1981	PP, PPM/GA	PP, PPM/GA
Social Democratic	UPC, 1960	O	O

*Abbreviations: PP = party of the president | PPM/GA = party of the prime minister and sole party
O = party is in opposition.*

The following can be noted about party families in Uganda:

- When the National Resistance Movement captured power in 1986, it embraced socialism. In 1987, however, it made an ideological shift from socialism to neo-liberalism. The factors behind NRM's ideological shift include among others the fact that when it captured power in 1986, the world's socialist bloc was crumbling and socialism as an ideology was losing appeal. Second, it inherited a poor economy, which needed much donor support and investments from outside, for which donors emphasized neo-liberal economic policies. In its official position, however, the NRM states that it is "a multi-ideological, multi-interest and progressive mass organization" (constitution of the NRM).
- The Forum for Democratic Change was registered in 2004. It has international affiliations with the International Democrat Union (IDU), an association of conservative, centre and centre-right parties. The party also has working relationships with the Swedish Christian Democrats (KIC-Sweden) and the Conservative Party of the United Kingdom.
- The Democratic Party was formed in 1954 and espouses Christian Democratic ideals.
- The Uganda People's Congress was formed in 1960 as a socialist party. Its biggest challenge is how to redefine socialist policies so that they fit in the changing world order where the principles of liberalism appear to be dominant.
- The Conservative Party is the only party which has maintained an ideological consistency since its formation in 1979. It was built to fight for a federal system of government and to support traditional institutions and has maintained this ideology to the present day.
- The Justice Forum was formed in 1995. Its National Executive Committee is fairly representative, with a number of leaders from different religions and tribes. It is, however, partly seen as a Muslim-dominated party.

Parties in Uganda are primarily formed due to a combination of three major factors. First, they are a result of ideological clashes in society. For example, the Uganda National Congress (the Uganda People's Congress was a precursor) was formed by rural farmers and small African traders who were protesting against the colonial system that discriminated against African traders. Second, political parties have been built around ethnic and other identities. The Democratic Party and the Justice Forum were, for example, formed by Catholics and Muslims respectively, who felt marginalized by the colonial and post-colonial state. Third, some parties in Uganda are formed by people running for office. Apart from the Democratic Party, the Uganda People's Congress and the Conservative Party, which have survived the test of time and appear to be institutionalized, most parties in Uganda are formed around election time and several of them go into limbo after the elections.

Origins of parties

Parties in Uganda are important for good governance. They offer people an opportunity to participate in politics and offer people alternative candidates for elections. Political parties are also important for policy formulation. The NRM as well as the opposition parties have pronounced themselves on several issues affecting the country, such as corruption, national security and the land question. Lastly, political parties have acted as vehicles for individual candidates to pursue their political goals. On the negative side, however, political parties have been accused of polarizing Ugandans on religious grounds, with the Uganda People's Congress initially drawing support from the Protestant community while the Democratic Party drew support from the Catholics. Particularly in the 1980s the relationship between members of the different political parties was characterized by a high degree of intolerance, resulting in communal conflict and family-break ups in cases where the wife and the husband belonged to different parties.

General significance of parties

There are several factors which determine how people vote in Uganda. There seems to be a tendency in Uganda for some groups to believe that rulers need to be either soldiers or militaristic in character. Apart from this, the urban-rural divide also tends to affect the way people vote. Peasants who mostly occupy rural areas and who make up the majority in Uganda are conservative or favour the status quo. They thus tend to vote for the party in power while urban areas, in particular Kampala city, have a tendency to vote for the opposition. During the 2006 elections, for

Voter-party relations

example, the ruling NRM got only 39.5 per cent of the votes from Kampala while the opposition FDC received 56.7 per cent. Furthermore, gender relationships have been a factor in Ugandans' voting behaviour. As a result of some government policies on promoting gender equality, the NRM enjoys considerable support from women voters. Fourth, the war in the north has been a particular determinant of how people from that region vote. The north has traditionally, because of the war, cast a protest vote against Museveni and his NRM and supported any presidential candidate seen to be strong enough to challenge Museveni. Lastly, ethnicity and regionalism have been important factors in determining voting behaviour, as indicated in Table 4:

Table 4 | POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE 2006 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Candidate	Party	Total	Central	Eastern	North	West
Museveni	NRM	59.3	61.8	56.0	29.6	78.5
Besigye	FDC	37.4	34.7	41.2	62.9	20.0
Ssebaana	DP	1.6	2.7	0.9	2.4	0.6
Baikal	Independents	1.0	0.6	1.0	2.2	0.5
Obote	UPC	0.8	0.2	0.8	3.0	0.2

All data in per cent.

From the above table, it can be concluded that Museveni and the NRM got overwhelming support from Western Uganda (78.5 per cent), his home region, and from Buganda (61.8 per cent). The FDC received overwhelming support from the North, exploiting the protest vote against Yoweri Museveni. The votes of the UPC and DP appear insignificant, nevertheless, it is important to note that Miria Obote (UPC) got most votes from the North, the home region of the party's founding president, Dr Apollo Milton Obote. All the UPC MPs are from Lango, further highlighting the ethnic factor. All the DP MPs are from Buganda (Central), from where the party's president, Ssebaana Kizito, comes, and from where he collected most of his presidential votes.

Since Uganda has had one multiparty election in the last 29 years, it may be difficult to determine whether the relationship between voters and the parties has been stable. Nevertheless, results from the previous elections in Uganda show a decline in support for Yoweri Museveni and the NRM. Museveni's 1996 high score of 75.5 per cent of the total votes has steadily declined in subsequent elections. In the 2001 general election, he scored 69.3 per cent, a decline of 8.2 points. During the 2006 general election, he scored 59.3 per cent, a decline of 14.4 points. Several reasons may be advanced to explain the decline of support for Museveni. First, Museveni is seen by parts of the electorate as having stayed in power too long (23 years), which has created fatigue among supporters. The NRM also lost supporters who were ideologically convinced that term limits are important for any system of democracy. As a result, the FDC is largely constituted by former NRM supporters who left the party partly because of the lack of internal democracy and partly because Museveni's succession process was not clear.

II.2 Individual Parties

Party membership All political parties are supposed to have registered members. However, because parties in Uganda are catch-all political parties, the issue of membership is not vigorously emphasized. Most supporters are not registered and therefore do not possess party cards. Not a single party in Uganda can provide clear statistics about its membership, and no national statistics are available.

The National Resistance Movement is largely perceived to be supported by women. It also has support from the rural areas. It is more concentrated in Western Uganda, largely because the founding members of the NRM were from there.

The Forum for Democratic Change basically has its MPs from the North and North Eastern Uganda. This should not, however, be taken as a concrete support base for the party. As mentioned earlier, the North has always cast a protest vote against Museveni, which could explain the region's current support for the FDC as the party which demonstrates a higher likelihood of defeating the NRM.

The Democratic Party used to have nationwide support across all Catholics in the country. However, over time, especially in the 1980s, its support base has shifted from being a Catholic-dominated party to being a Buganda-based party. It has support in Buganda irrespective of the religious divide. In the 1980 elections, the DP won over 95 per cent of the parliamentary seats in Buganda.

The Uganda People's Congress is a party which at one time enjoyed massive support from all over the country, apart from Buganda. Nevertheless, its support has reduced to the extent that all its current MPs are from the Lango sub-region.

The Conservative Party, like all other parties, has a National Executive Committee, which is fairly national in outlook. However, the issues for which it stands are largely popular in Buganda, making it more of a Buganda party.

Finally, the Justice Forum is seen to be dominated by Muslims. Several factors, however, make it difficult for the Justice Forum to enhance its support among the Muslims. First, apart from a few places, such as Butambala in Buganda, Iganga in Busoga, Bukonde sub-county in Sironko district, and some parts of West Nile, Muslims lack any geographical concentration. They are dispersed around trading centres. The absence of geographical concentration makes it difficult for the party to win parliamentary seats where representation is on a territorial basis. The second problem is the issue of multiple identities. Muslims are Muslims but they also have other identities, such as belonging to ethnic groups, which affect their voting behaviour.

All the political parties have rules which regulate their internal procedures. A party statute is a precondition for a party to be registered. Nevertheless, it is common with all parties that some aspects of the party constitutions are allegedly not fully observed, which leads to internal divisions, for example over positions and functions, and also to legal challenges against some party decisions.

Party organization

The organizational structures of political parties coincide more or less with local government structures. The DP can be taken to illustrate this point. It has a National Council and branches at district, constituency, sub-county, and village level. The party branches are supposed to be permanently active, being responsible among other things for maintaining the registers of members, propagating party values and policies, and carrying out mobilization and membership recruitment. However, because of financial constraints, most party branches are only active during campaigns. It is important to note that even though the political parties have organizational structures that reach to the village level, a number of these structures do not function. This is evidenced by the fact that during elections some political parties fail to field candidates. For example, out of the 992 candidates who stood for the 2006 parliamentary elections to fill the 214 direct seats and the 69 seats for district women representatives, NRM had 275 candidates (27.7 per cent), FDC had 174 (17.5 per cent), UPC had 88 (8.9 per cent), DP had 81 (8.8 per cent), CP had 5 (0.5 per cent), JEEMA had 9 (0.9 per cent), while 354 (35.7 per cent) were independent candidates.

All the relevant parties in Uganda have a youth wing. The well-known party youth wings include: the FDC Youth League, the Uganda Youth Congress (UYC), the Young Conservatives (CP), the Uganda Young Democrats UYD (DP) and the NRM Youth League. In the DP and FDC, the youth wings are relatively autonomous while the UPC has a secretariat for young people at every level of

the party. The youth activities are centrally controlled. In all the political parties youth activities are dominated by training and workshops aimed at sensitizing them about party policies and values, and issues of democracy and governance in general.

In spite of the several workshops held, the impact of this training on the activities of the youth leagues remains to be seen. The most common activity by all the political party youth leagues has been fielding candidates for guild elections at institutions of higher learning, especially at universities. The FDC, DP and NRM have dominated the leadership at universities.

Even though one can argue that the youth leagues of political parties have been ineffective, there is one exception: the Uganda Young Democrats (UYD), formed in June 1995. Though affiliated to the DP, it is semi-autonomous. The president of DP is its patron, but DP's executive committee does not determine the leadership of UYD, nor its policies and strategies. UYD has its own constitution and its own semi-autonomous women's league. It also has a semi-autonomous students' youth wing. Recently, however, there have been fierce internal fights for UYD leadership positions, leading to partial paralysis and friction within UYD. Within the DP, nonetheless, UYD has an influence, not only on policies but also its leadership. One manifestation of this was is when it forced the Democratic Party to withdraw from the Inter-Party Cooperation. The youth wing is further pushing for Norbert Mao, chairman of the LC V in Gulu (Northern Uganda), to be the party's candidate for the 2011 presidential elections.

Every relevant party has a women's league. The FDC has a specific gender mainstreaming policy, according to which 40 per cent of the leadership posts in the party are reserved for women. The National Delegates' Conference is composed of 50 per cent women, with a female and male delegate from each constituency. In spite of this policy, not all parties have been effective in mainstreaming gender in their policies and leadership structures. According to a recent report by the Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), cited by the Political Party Forum, the DP has the most women in its national executive (36 per cent), FDC is second (31 per cent), and NRM third (23 per cent). Like the youth leagues, the focus of the women's leagues for all parties has been training. The impact of the numerous training programmes and workshops on policymaking and political party activism is yet to be measured. It is, however, important to note that the FDC Women's League organizes separate celebrations on National Women's Day. The Women's League claims to have to some extent overshadowed the celebrations organized by the government.

Societal entrenchment Unlike in the 1960s, partly because of the desire for civil society to be autonomous from political society, political parties have not established formal relationships with civil society organizations. In the 1960s the DP had close links with the Catholic church. The UPC had close links with the Protestant church and a section of the trade union movement. Today, the DP still has some close links with the Catholic church, and most of its leaders are Catholics. Even if there is no institutionalized linkage between the workers' organizations and the NRM, all the five worker MPs in parliament are NRM supporters. In addition, the FDC has linkages with the Change Initiative, the DP with the Foundation for African Development (FAD) and the UPC with the Milton Obote Foundation (MOF).

Internal decision-making All political parties have a national conference of delegates, which is supposed to deal with policy and strategic issues. In addition, at each party branch, there is supposed to be a party conference, which among other things is meant to deliberate on policy issues, and which is supposed to take place regularly. In reality, however, such meetings are rarely held due to organizational difficulties, in particular a lack of funding. Consequently, most of the parties' decision-making is left in the hands of a few people. For example, within the NRM President Museveni appears to be very influential in the decision-making process, followed by the secretary-general of the party. There have also been numerous complaints within the UPC about the "personalized" style of leadership by the party's president, and the UYD appears to be influential in the decision-making process of DP.

Political parties are expected to conduct primaries to select candidates for elective positions. There are, however, several cases where parties choose candidates without going through the primaries. There are no formal quotas for the nomination of women representatives or representatives of any ethnic or social group. During the 2006 election, among the candidates who campaigned for the 214 direct parliamentary seats, the NRM had 12 (5.6 per cent) female candidates out of 214; the FDC had 5 (3.6 per cent) female candidates out of 138 candidates, while the DP had 5 (7.4 per cent) out of the 68 candidates; the UPC had one (1.3 per cent) female candidate out of 78. Among the independents, there were 8 women (2.8 per cent) out of 290 candidates. With the ideology of patriarchy, parties under a single member electoral system apparently still believe that male candidates stand a better chance of being elected than female candidates. In addition, due to the existence of parliamentary seats reserved for women, there is a tendency for people to believe that the direct parliamentary seats are supposed to be occupied by men.

By and large, the internal relationships within all the parties is hierarchical. The party leaders, particularly of the FDC, CP and NRM, play a dominant role, partly because of their charisma. In addition the parties are characterized by a patronage style of leadership. The chairperson and secretary-general of the parties usually wield most of the powers.

Unlike in the 1950s and 1960s, there is little significance attached to the party names today. In the 1950s and 1960s the DP, was known as *Dini Ya Papa* (party of the Pope) because of its linkages with the Catholic church. The UPC on the other hand was known as the "United Protestants of Canterbury", symbolizing its connections with the Anglican church. Whereas the names of the parties may not have significant meanings, their symbols do. For the NRM, the bus symbolizes inclusiveness, while for the DP, the hoe symbolizes agriculture and the peasant nature of Uganda's economy. Party victory signs also have meanings, for example, the Forum for Democratic Change's two fingers symbolize a president's two-term limit in office.

Stability of party ideology/ programmes

National party committees and party branches at various levels undertake programmatic work, especially during elections. They are deeply involved during party primaries and determine strategies for their candidates. Nevertheless, for the NRM, there is a tendency for the party to also use state structures in the mobilization of votes.

Political parties use various channels to communicate with their voters. The NRM has a monthly newspaper, *The Movement Times*. Political parties have access to the liberalized media and appear, for example, on talk shows on a weekly basis, although they may have problems accessing the government owned media, such as *The New Vision* and the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation. With assistance from some Arab countries, JEEMA is in the process of acquiring its own radio station. Apart from the CP, the rest of the relevant political parties have websites, where important documents are posted, with the UPC having the best developed website. The percentage of the budget spent by the political parties on communication is difficult to assess, since almost all political parties are not transparent about their financial affairs.

Communication

Even though the law provides that the state-owned media should be equally accessible to all political parties, the public media is rather monopolized by the government. Opposition parties claim to be denied reasonable access. Even though some of the political parties have websites, the poor reading culture among Ugandans as well as the limited availability and access to the internet (in particular in the districts) make this method of communication largely ineffective. Radio stations are the most significant means of communication, and not just in the districts, and are used by all political actors. On 25 May 2007 the government published the Regulation of Interception of Communication Bill (RIC). The bill seeks to legalize the monitoring of private communication. It makes a provision for the lawful interception and monitoring of certain communications in the course of their transmission through telecommunication, postal or any other related services or systems in Uganda. The bill empowers security agencies to intercept terrorism-related mailed letters and monetary payments. It empowers the security minister to intercept communications

upon request from the chief of the defence forces, the inspector general of police and the director of the Internal Security Organization "if terrorism, serious crimes such as robbery, or a threat to the State is suspected" (*The New Vision*, Monday 7 April 2008). The bill also seeks to provide for the establishment of a communications monitoring centre in Uganda. The bill is currently being considered by the parliamentary Committee on Information and Communication Technology. The bill has been criticized by the political opposition and civil society, including the media and NGOs, for violating not only individual rights but also for interfering with the confidentiality of sources – which would mainly have an impact on journalists, but would also affect politicians. Amnesty International has also raised serious concerns, particularly about its incompatibility with international human rights standards, particularly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Uganda being a party to both treaties (Amnesty International 2007).

Relationship between party and parliamentary groups Members of each political party in parliament are organized into parliamentary caucuses. Examples are the NRM parliamentary caucus, the UPC parliamentary group, the FDC parliamentary caucus and so on. At a formal level, MPs are members of the delegates' conferences and constituency branches of their respective parties. MPs derive policy guidelines from the national executive committees (NEC) of their parties. The NECs of the opposition parties have a say in determining who is appointed as a shadow cabinet minister and all MPs are accountable to their NEC. Their position in parliament on controversial issues is supposed to be determined by the NEC of their party. Quite often, particularly in the Forum for Democratic Change and the National Resistance Movement, MPs have been summoned for disciplinary purposes. One problem, however, exists largely because Uganda is a presidential system where elections for both the president and MPs are conducted on the same day. Because no one can stand for president and a parliamentary seat at the same time, and since parties always present their leaders for the presidency, currently no leader of an opposition party is an MP. As a means of establishing control, elected MPs are supposed to be subordinate to the leadership of their party, particularly the national executive committee.

III. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The multiparty system became operational in 2005 and the first multiparty election was held in 2006, when some of the parties were less than a year old. As young institutions in the realm of political governance, parties are bound to face numerous challenges. Nevertheless, so far political parties in Uganda have been quite effective in bringing to light some of the shortcomings of the government. They have been participating in elections even though under unfavourable circumstances.

Political parties in Uganda are still generally weak in terms of organization. The NRM as the largest party relies on the organizational structure of the state. Political parties' relationship with civil society is rather weak partly because of the new political paradigm that says civil society should be autonomous. Though in the minority, the opposition parties have been successful in making the NRM accountable through the Public Accounts Committee in parliament.

There are several obstacles to the institutionalization of party democracy in Uganda. First, the parties' financial base is very weak. Second, there is the "founding member syndrome". In particular the NRM is organized around Museveni as an individual and less around specific issues. Third, Uganda's political culture plays a role. Uganda by nature is a bi-party political system. Numerous parties may exist at any one time but at every election, people tend to be divided around two centres of power. Currently, these are the National Resistance Movement, consisting of people who want President Yoweri Museveni to remain in power, and the Forum for Democratic Change, a coalition of people who wish President Yoweri Museveni to leave power. This makes other political actors less relevant. The fourth obstacle is the culture of militarism. There is a general belief in Uganda that only people with a military background can lead. Leaders of political parties without a military background find it difficult to be accepted. The fifth obstacle is the

question of ideology. It is very difficult for the ordinary citizen to distinguish between the ideologies of the different political party. The global ideological dominance of liberalism has resulted in the convergence of party ideologies. The sixth obstacle is the uncertainty over when Museveni will leave power. There is the belief within the NRM that as long as Museveni is still interested in power, he will always win in elections, particularly due to his control of the Electoral Commission and access to state resources for campaigns. A seventh obstacle to overcome would be electoral malpractices which prevent free and fair elections in which presidential power might be transferred.

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