

Beyond the nation: global democratisation in Uganda and the politics of dispensation

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ABSTRACT

Global frameworks for democratic development today tend to remain within a comparative lens where each country is treated as a sovereign capsule. This portrait eludes the political structures that accompany contemporary globalisation and set the conditions for domestic development. Notably, the comparative perspective eschews the hierarchical nature of states and influential non-state actors that impact democracy movements. Merging international relations theory and comparative politics and using the example of Uganda to illustrate, I create 'the politics of dispensation.' Like a doctor dispensing a pill to a patient, Uganda shows how susceptible a country can be to forces beyond democratic control.

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This article seeks to find ways of mainstreaming international actors into theories of domestic democracy in order to explain in more detail why democratisation programmes in Africa and elsewhere struggle to maintain change. The analysis arises from a ground-up attempt to understand democratisation in Uganda in 2009.¹ Enhancing work in political science, the paper strives for an inclusion of the role of international actors beyond the concept of 'donor countries'. The purpose is to explain processes of democratic and non-democratic elements in the system that cannot be explained simply within Uganda or within the lens of sovereign states. Similarly democratisation (or the lack thereof) in Uganda cannot simply be understood through international political economy (IPE), which has focused on major economic actors in the system.

Looking to post-structural analysis, this study takes seriously the concept that, politically, the sovereign nation-state no longer explains the dynamics of global politics and that therefore the notion of 'donor nations' is categorically misleading. The article critiques state-based comparative theory on Uganda in order to illuminate undeveloped dimensions of politics necessary to understand contemporary democratisation programmes. The inductive methodology, conducted through semi-structured interviews with elite political actors, highlights the need for more in-depth and nuanced theories of the relationship between international and domestic processes of democratisation. Simply put, democracy in Uganda cannot be explained without incorporating international influences in the analysis. What theories have been able to do this in relation to Uganda and East Africa more generally?

Building on the analysis of Jean-François Bayart and Achille Mbembe, the paper develops a theory I have called 'the politics of dispensation' in order to understand Uganda and also to help future analysis of a wide variety of political settings. Whereas IPE scholars, such as Susan Strange,² developed the economic elements of the push on state sovereignty, this paper seeks to develop modules of international political influence found during field research. The modules I have suggested are not exhaustive and they do not reflect what is possible when discussing the politics of dispensation. Furthermore, this work is focused on democratisation but the politics of dispensation may be applied to other areas more specifically, such as economic trade, legal studies or even cultural development.

In the first section I will illustrate how International Relations (IR) theory and its uneasy companion, comparative politics, tend to obscure both history and international political dynamics. Next I will suggest how it may be of use to political scientists to consider non-state dimensions when discussing democratisation by developing the concept of dispensation. Finally, through an illustration of Uganda's political history, I show how the theory of dispensation does generate a basis for prescriptions, which are different from the UN- and state-based perspective.

International Relations and the comparative perspective

Although IR theory has pushed the limits of national politics in many respects in recent decades, it has continued to review individual country dynamics rather than the state system as a whole. More to the point it has struggled to include all countries in the world and to conceptualise the dynamics of sovereignty between them. Similarly, major world programmes run through the UN and other agencies often continue to dispense their policy under the premise that each country exists as a sovereign territorial base with equality between each. Coupled with the conditions that have allowed major institutions to maintain a comparative and territorial perspective, democratisation programmes are unlikely to be successful in almost any setting. Countries experiencing the process moreover must negotiate international influence when considering domestic policy, no matter what their local cultures.

Through this paper I will discuss the undemocratic nature of the international system that imposes democratisation programmes, the influence of large actors in the international system on smaller or less powerful countries, and the impacts of this on democratisation programmes. I argue that much of the literature, including much of the postcolonial literature, which relies on concepts such as 'neo-colonialism', gets trapped in a nationalist lens. In this way also democracy itself is defined through the system rather than through any Platonic notion of what democracy could be. A new concept, 'dispensation', might be considered an addition to our understanding of what is going on in contemporary democratisation.

The idea of dispensation is in line with what some other authors have been finding in their own research. For instance, Michael Keating suggests that democratisation has actually undermined democracy in Uganda.³ His second thesis states, donors, it is argued, may be more interested in pursuing neo-liberal reforms in recipient states than in defending forms of substantive democracy that might undermine such reforms'. He also states that in Uganda: 'Parliament had supplemented its own capacity to provide executive oversight by forming network linkages with both national and international civil society actors.'⁴

Rather than continue to negotiate with the local politicians in regard to the water project in Bujagali, the claims against the project were taken to the World Bank via lobbying in Washington, DC. Keating's research shows the importance of international levels of governance but it does not operationalise this view. He looks to Alison Ayers to say that neoliberalism advocated internationally has pushed Uganda into a 'thin' form of democracy, in order to satisfy an international notion of what democracy should look like today.⁵ Yet Keating focuses on policy transfer of the 'donor community'; I argue that we need to go beyond this in order to track democratisation and understand how power in the system works.

The most important context for understanding democratisation today must come from the development of the United Nation system after World War II. In many ways the concept I am trying to develop echoes insights formulated by IR specialist R. B. J. Walker. He has written:

it has not been possible to entirely erase a sense that there has been no clear line between democracy and dictatorship in our experiences with the modern sovereign state, even while the sovereignty of the modern state remains the regulative ambition of societies everywhere, whether already supposedly modern and democratic or still modernizing and thus supposedly more prone to dictatorship.⁶

Walker's formulation follows from his claim that the system of sovereign states has often been a more important determinant of political life in the past 50 years than any particular type of domestic sovereign arrangement. All states in the system are part of a global and at times exceedingly hierarchical construct, which shapes and constrains all supposedly sovereign government structures. In *After the Globe, Before the World*, Walker is suggesting that the nature of the international system is so over-determinate that the types of local constitutions have little bearing on the position of states.

The international system, however, is no longer, if it ever was, merely a system of independent states at all. The recent turn towards every state assuming democracy, especially in the Global South, is almost paradoxical in the historical and structural context of the global system. As countries began to gain independence and join the UN system in 1947, many governments had already lost their sovereign boundaries to international influences, such as in proxy wars tied to the Cold War, but also to international finance and banking, global church groups, technological innovation and competition, international trade agreements and more. In essence the concept of sovereignty for these countries was always highly elusive. Ghana's leader Kwame Nkrumah himself said:

Decolonisation is a word much and unctuously used by imperialist spokesmen to describe the transfer of political control from colonialist to African sovereignty. The motive spring of colonialism, however, still controls sovereignty.⁷

Sovereignty and democracy can be both unrelated and related. A democracy occurs somewhere, but sovereignty and the sovereign structure may themselves be democratic or undemocratic. The international system, as I think Walker, Bayart and Mbembe are suggesting, has an impact on how these structures of the domestic state are formed internally. Elements of democracy and dictatorship are to be found in almost every country in the world, as well as in the state system itself. Therefore, given that every country in the world is embedded in the international system, the concept of governance in one country must be understood within the context of the whole. A country that has little influence over its own existence must be understood from the perspective of the citizens that constitute it.

How can a person influence a territorial space that has little power over its own fate? If democracy is to flourish it must flow throughout the entire political system.

The international system does not require a tremendous amount of study to reveal its historically embedded hierarchy. Besides the Security Council and G7, there are very many organisations that lack democracy in a global sense. Those organisations that do have a structure with the potential to develop an equal voice for all nations, such as the World Trade Organization or General Assembly, either lack power, as in the case of the latter, or are overrun by large states, major corporate interests and overwhelming bureaucracy, as in the former.⁸ Despite the 'one nation one vote' character of these organisations, the influence is limited. Yet dispensation is more than international organisations. Most countries in the world are not simply influenced by these organisations but are also inundated with numerous non-governmental organisations, corporations, international legal entities and societies that push their own development agenda through the sheer power of influence.

Democratisation

When looking at democratisation in Uganda the problem reveals itself almost as a dual case study. Uganda has its specific history but so too does the international influence on governance types. With the amount of international involvement that comes with democratisation today one might well question the concept of the social contract itself. For both Rousseau and Hobbes the first principle of a government was its territory, and territorial integrity is enshrined even today within the Charter of the United Nations. Most countries in the world might arguably never have had this. The conditions of international relations have ensured that there is a hierarchy of states and that only a handful of countries can truly influence it. In this way this study is very different from work done by IPE scholars, who may not look specifically at the generation and types of political systems that shape democratisation programmes.

In another vein the perception that only modern states are able to attain democracy has been a throw-over from the Enlightenment that continues to ensure that the cultural preferences of powerful nations remain the norm. This has obscured the many traditions of democracy in the world that might guide the development of political systems in a localised and context-specific manner. For instance, Immaculate Kizza has said in her study that democratisation projects often assume that Africa has no history of democracy and that Africans can be taught to become democratic. She argues that significant studies, for instance by Ali Mazrui and L. J. Teffo, trace the history of African consensus-style democracy and show clearly that the alleged lack of democratic traditions is a misconception.⁹ Teffo calls the pre-colonial system 'communocracy', a form of governance rooted in the communal pan-African philosophy known as *Ubuntu*.¹⁰

As the global era of democratisation is upon us, what we often find in its stead are frameworks articulating a single universal procedural option across continents and cultures and streamlined through international organisations. This makes Western governments and other international actors at least as responsible for the shape of democracy as the people who may actually vote in elections. This is not a simple donor–client relationship from which either party can withdraw, but an embedded and interrelated system of democratisation that has real consequences for the average citizen. In order to achieve such a universal prescription, however, the local context-oriented conceptions of democracy must first be erased.

There are indeed many procedural forms of democracy and creating a universal model has been an exciting challenge for many people in the social sciences. The problem that has confronted theorists today is the lack of success with democratisation movements.¹¹ Although Samuel Huntington suggested that democracy moves in waves and that social scientists should avoid being alarmed by the occasional slide into dictatorship and/or revolution, others have been less convinced and are rather occupied with understanding the protracted nature of conflict.¹² Furthermore, ethnic fighting, as in Kashmir, Spain, Iraq and Zimbabwe, to name just a few places, continues to cause concern about the effects and effectiveness of elections or even democratic politics generally.¹³ At best, it is difficult to gage whether Huntington was right in his predictions of eventual liberal–secular modernisation. Perhaps democracy will mean something more specific than these universal models suggest.

Proceduralist debates have suggested that constitutional arrangements may be shifted or adapted in order to accommodate the needs of diverse places, yet the limits on these possibilities are contained within some specific notions of what a democracy must entail and what traditions of governance must be respected in their design. By contrast, in his seminal work, Giovanni Sartori suggested that political parties, for instance, were not beneficial unless they occurred under specific conditions.¹⁴ Attempts to develop universal templates of democracy with a limited procedural toolbox are evident in the case of political party development, which has been heavily contested by a number of countries and groups as contrary to the historical and contextual conditions of their people.¹⁵

By the time the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were launched in 2000 the Western literature on democracy essentially expressed one procedural option for countries everywhere: multiparty democracy. In the context of Uganda, in particular, and Africa, in general, this evoked a heated political choice but among Western development specialists it appears to have had no doubters. USAID, Canada's former international development agency, the OECD with Sweden as a leading donor, international think-tank IDEA, Finnish Development Assistance, the British and Irish development agencies, and the World Movement for Democracy,¹⁶ among others, all claimed that, despite some difficulties, for instance in supporting undemocratic parties or unduly influencing elections, the vehicle of the political party unquestionably strengthens the development of democracy. In a 1999 technical paper USAID showed how it seeks to strengthen political parties in all democracies:

- (1) the establishment and organisational development of viable, competing democratic parties at national, regional and local levels;
- (2) the provision of organised electoral choices to citizens through political parties;
- (3) the democratic governance of societies facilitated by political parties in government and opposition.¹⁷

The policy push towards multiparty systems among donor institutions is a direct response to the perception of poor governance and leadership in Africa and other places as well. It arrived in the wake of IMF-fostered structural adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s, when all aid-receiving governments were considered too large and lacking in effective governance. The procedural option of political party democracy has been heavily contested, mostly on the grounds that it is divisive, elitist and internationally influenced. The record of multiparty democracy in Africa has not been a positive one, demonstrating the need to start reframing

what we mean by democracy and to discover the strains on creating these systems in countries around the globe.¹⁸

Yet political parties are just one part of the notion of dispensation, despite their universal support. Countries that have rejected parties most often do so on the grounds of anti-imperialism. These leaders include Castro in Cuba, Gaddafi in Libya, Museveni in Uganda and Kagame in Rwanda. Dispensation, however, occurs on many levels that are not tied to one country or even one policy. Political parties are viewed in this paper as more of a vessel for the politics of dispensation. In Africa at least they have often helped to bring the influence of international actors to the floor of domestic politics.

The politics of dispensation

The politics of dispensation refers to a condition of politics in which the choices for citizens are heavily embedded in the international nature of the domestic state.¹⁹ Explicitly, what I mean by dispensation is that the concept of the 'sovereign state', at least in Uganda, is neither adequate nor accurate in understanding democratisation. If we try to conceive of what democratisation might mean in the absence of a sovereign state, perhaps even an actively undermined state, we will have to reconsider how democratisation can happen and what democracy might mean.

In the next section I demonstrate the significance of this in the case of Uganda's politics through four key analytical concepts related to democratisation. These modules are: state capacity, militarisation, technocratic proceduralism, and ideological development. I have chosen these areas because they were indicated by my interviewees in Uganda and because they are integral parts of what Sartori has called 'sub-system autonomy'.²⁰ Similarly they are areas highlighted by development scholars over the past 60 years. Without one of these areas operating democratically the constitutional system is compromised. If one of these areas is heavily influenced by sources outside the sovereign state, then the territorial nature of democratisation is questionable. As I have said, this list is not exhaustive and dispensation can be articulated in a number of different ways. Nonetheless, what I found by dissecting politics with these categories will hopefully show their utility.

Dispensation speaks to what Mbembe describes as the active 'informalisation' of African economies and states.²¹ This is not the same as merely privatisation or the austerity measures of the IMF, but involves the active erosion or destruction of formal state institutions and of political accountability. Mbembe's work allows us at least to begin to conceptualise the international influences in the political context of democratisation today. To develop this, I suggest that so far Mbembe's work has an inside-out quality and I would like to further enhance his theory with a more outside-in perspective.

In *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, first published in French in 1989, Jean-François Bayart introduces many of the concepts Mbembe later refined in 2001.²² In the Preface to the second English edition in 2009, Bayart operationalises the concept of 'extraversion' he developed in the 1980s. He explains that, since the period of structural adjustment in the 1980s, the state-elite in Africa has accelerated the tendency to integrate themselves into the global system and to ingratiate themselves with private international actors. Within this outward orientation Bayart suggests that the 'discourse of democracy' was used by African elites as 'another source of economic rents, comparable to earlier discourses such as the denunciation of communism or imperialism'.²³ The elite have been so effectively co-opted

(through high salaries) into the IMF and World Bank policies of good governance and civil society, Bayart says, that 'those potential counter-elites [have been] confined within the "legitimate" problematique of development.'²⁴ Bayart refines six aspects of extraversion in his work and through them he argues that the democratic developments in Africa have always been historically embedded in international affairs. 'Seen from this angle, the reinvention of the democratic model imported from the West remains a possible mode of the ongoing history of extraversion.'²⁵

In Mbembe's terms, in the context of international relations and aid and democratisation programmes, African politics has been 'zombified' and is witnessed through increasing centralisation of a state that simultaneously lacks real capacity in terms of public goods provision. Mbembe describes 'fractionated sovereignty' as a system of centralisation in the conditions of weak and fragile states. His concept develops Bayart's notion of the hallucination of state power in Africa, defined as more ceremony than reality. In Mbembe's version, power has become fetishised.²⁶

What distinguishes these analyses is the ability of both authors to insightfully consider how both informal and formal aspects of power in Africa allow international dynamics to assert themselves within the domestic context. At the centre of Mbembe's analysis are 'first, the de-linking of Africa from formal international markets; second, the forms of its integration into the circuits of the parallel international economy; and third, the fragmentation of public authority and emergence of multiple forms of *private indirect government* accompanying these two processes' (emphasis in the original).²⁷

As Mbembe demonstrates in this work, people in Africa often view their own political leaders as weak or powerless in the face of international negotiations. Observing their leaders court donor funding and justify anti-popular domestic political actions is a common occurrence in the daily press. The daily politics of many African states is embedded in international negotiations. Teasing out the implications of this suggests that the analytical imposition of boundaries on a domestic state, boundaries that are not always to be found empirically, does not really help develop our understanding of a place such as Uganda. Considering that many government initiatives must weigh the opinions of international donor countries and dozens of international agencies in their policy-making processes further suggests that the domestic, nation-based format, does not speak entirely to whom the *demos* is that would constitute a country such as Uganda's democratic order. Both Mbembe's and Bayart's work has illuminated the international conditions and context of democracy in sophisticated and nuanced ways and both authors have clearly emphasised the international nature of African governance.

Using the guidance of Bayart and Mbembe, the rest of the paper sketches the international nature of the domestic state in Uganda. It is not an exercise often undertaken in the literature on the country and so what follows is both a preliminary investigation into what knowledge might be gleaned from understanding how international influences affect politics and an inquiry into whether or not including international factors in the analysis of Uganda develops our understanding of the country/case. The case is used as a tool to show how such a perspective may be useful for many countries undergoing similar challenges in the context of 'good governance' and international democratisation.

Dispensation in Uganda

For a quick background support to readers, in 2005 Uganda had a second referendum on democratic reform and transitioned its constitution from a no-party system, which was created from the long aftermath of ousting Idi Amin, to a multiparty system. The first and second referendums on the subject, just five years apart, resulted in a complete turn-around. In the first, 90% of the country favoured the no-party system, while the second had the exact opposite result. Since then the country has been attempting to generate a multiparty system. At the same time, the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, who fostered and developed the no-party system for 30 years, altered the constitution to allow unlimited presidential terms and is seeking re-election again in 2016 under his newly formed political party.²⁸

Major works on the subject of Uganda's transition include Giovanni Carbone's *2008 No-party Democracy? Ugandan Politics in Comparative Perspective*.²⁹ In Carbone's view the Ugandan no-party system never seriously materialised because political parties were not outlawed completely when Museveni took power. Rather, Ugandans kept generating 'surrogate parties' that contested Museveni's power. Carbone argues that the idea of no-partyism was never fully implemented in Uganda and that old and new political parties maintained political relevance even though they were not formally allowed to contest elections.³⁰ These factors contribute to his idea that the 2005 referendum did not create a radical break in Uganda, not because of the weak basis for the transition, but because the no-party system was a ruse and the president's party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), always acted as a political party itself. Therefore, he argues, Sartori's concept of a 'hegemonic party' is useful, and Uganda could be characterised under the rubric of 'one party dominance'.³¹ His suggestion is that Museveni's 'hybrid regime' is difficult to transform into multipartyism almost solely because of the strength of the executive office. In his view the donors' relationship to the multiparty process was negligible. The donors, he said, 'largely remained silent' and 'external actors, therefore, cannot really be considered a primary cause for Uganda's transition to multipartyism'. Similarly 'donors only took some *limited* action after the transition to multipartyism had been initiated'. He does not specify what this action was.

The following sub-sections discuss the modules of dispensation I have chosen to highlight. Again this is for the purposes of trying to move the concept of 'donor countries' towards more specific areas of privatisation and indirect government. Mbembe's work focuses on the leadership effects of countries but not as much on the effects of internationalisation on voters. These areas of democratisation in Uganda show fundamental levels of politics and communication in which voters are looking to international conditions and the position of Uganda in the system of states.

Dispensation and technocracy

The first dimension I want to highlight in laying out the politics of dispensation in Uganda is the increasingly technocratic character of politics. Here Arturo Escobar's discussion of the nature of development technocracy in his book *Encountering Development* is especially important. Escobar argues that 'technocracy' has been an integral aspect of the 'regime of development', one that is tied to a particular mutation of Western modernity.³² For example, the technical assistance programmes of the World Bank, IMF and other development agencies are considered by Escobar to be much less benign than these international agencies

admit. Rather, in every development assistance programme there is a 'system of thought and action' that silences other views on, say, agriculture, education, land use or community development. Technocracy, and the incorporation of the dominant means of communication, has been integral to modernisation, development and democratisation.

Democratisation in Africa is increasingly posed as a technical question, addressed by technicians of democracy. A frequent complaint in the literature and in my interviews was that multiparty democracy mechanised politics in a way that both ostracised and commercialised voters. In the current context of Uganda technocracy and technocratic politics is further complicated. For instance, political parties have been promised state funding through the 2010 Political Parties and Organisations Act, but many have complained that money is not forthcoming and they have accused the state of frustrating fundraising attempts. Political parties in Uganda are open to foreign donations, which they must actively court given the lack of domestic funds. As was reported in 2012, political parties must rely on foreign financial support even for delegates' meetings.³³ As my own interviews in Uganda suggested, parties lack broad ideology or vision and consequently lack intellectual commitment among party members and the electorate. Political parties in Uganda show few avenues for developing cohesive ideas except through commercialisation and foreign support.

Uganda's no-party system was a village-based system formed on the principle of individual merit. The multiparty system opens up the country to political competition on a national level but there exist no ideological bases or resources to facilitate this. Parties have so far been concentrated in the cities and party machinery has become heavily commercialised. International party organisations, such as the International Republican Institute are becoming increasingly associated with domestic political parties such as those in Uganda.³⁴ With a very limited culture of digital or print literacy, the mechanisms of political development are tending to displace traditional forms of government that the majority of the rural populations can understand and connect with. My interview with the Hon Stephen Adyeeri in Uganda in 2009 demonstrates this point.

Pluralism is desirable. It is an ideal for humanity, not only for the West but also for everyone. What I am contesting is the winner takes-all multipartyism. That is all I am contesting. I think as I am putting on this suit, that others should not be able to design this suit, because I am a size 58. So we need to make it tailor-made, a design specifically for an area. There are cultural barriers. In African culture it is not proper for one member of the family to be on the dining table when others are not. That is exclusion. We sit and do everything together. We must all be on the table. So the culture of winner-takes-all and exclusion is not African in the first place.³⁵

Dispensation and militarism

A second theme I draw from my field work is that Ugandan democratisation is increasingly pinched in every way by the international context of militarisation, which is making President Museveni more powerful as a result of the centralisation of control necessary for such policies. The problem is that, while multiparty democracy is being instituted, the international community is simultaneously encouraging Museveni's military control of the whole of East Africa, from Somalia to the Congo. Uganda's strategic location, coupled with the Western military training of its key leaders, has given it the region's most fierce and disciplined army.³⁶ In 2012 Uganda had an increase in its military budget of 300%, largely spent on purchases of Russian

fighter-jets.³⁷ It now has a larger army than Kenya and is involved in military operations for the African Union (AU) and the United Nations.

For Bayart coercion is the most obvious form of extraversion. The use of coercion throughout the African state, he argues, has its roots in colonialism. Today it continues to be facilitated through military contracts and often direct support for heavy-handed governments by international actors. The intensified violence on the continent, deepening the banality of physical control, leads Bayart to argue that 'the new style of coercion may also take the form of deregulation (or possibly democratisation?) of the use of violence, in the shape both of collective armed movements and of more individual delinquency, both facilitated by the wide availability of low cost firearms.'³⁸ Mbembe makes suggestions along the same lines when he argues that 'private indirect government', or the 'privatisation of sovereignty', engenders a new system of government in Africa which explicitly includes the '*privatisation of coercion*', because the control of the means of coercion makes it possible to secure an advantage in the other conflicts under way for the appropriation of resources and other utilities formerly concentrated in the state.'³⁹

Uganda is implicated in global security actions. Yet, rather than taking on the security form that Paul Collier has suggested,⁴⁰ it has taken on a more conventionally militaristic nature. US President George Bush Jr elevated military partnerships between his nation and African institutional bodies such as regional security organisations and the AU. Through the US African Command (AFRICOM) networks, which have partnered many military organisations, both public and private, the USA has undoubtedly elevated its military presence in Africa. Professor Horace Campbell argues that AFRICOM ensures US needs from Africa are secured.⁴¹ His conclusion is repeated in popular publications such as those from the Africa Faith and Justice Network, who print the view that these security solutions to African problems divert money and attention away from badly needed services and secure oil interests and other lucrative deals on the continent instead.⁴² Uganda is now spearheading military operations for foreign interests throughout the eastern continent with its latest boost in Somalia with the formation of AMISOM. These posts come with a salary for Ugandan soldiers reportedly ten times that for domestic work. The renewed UN base in Entebbe offers constant support for military operations with flights, medical assistance and general funding.⁴³

The burgeoning area of world military structures has been the private military. Private military corporations (PMCs) have managed to avoid accusations that they are mercenaries and governments are free to employ PMCs. No violation against the Geneva Conventions or any other such law has prevented their operation and public debate about the subject has seemingly been closed off. The Ugandan military is now tied to these external forces in various ways. In 2010 1700 Ugandan AMISOM troops were transported using a PMC, contracted by the US government, under the banner of NATO.⁴⁴ For the average Ugandan, these levels of power are completely inaccessible, and the framework of citizen control over the domestic state is further strained.

It is often said in Uganda that no one can control the military except for Museveni. His main contender, with 26% of the party vote in the 2006 election, was Dr Kizza Besigye of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party. He was Museveni's medical doctor before he was his rival. Besigye has since organised numerous strikes and protests against the government, but his power is waning in the midst of heightened militarism in the country. In 2012 the FDC opted for a military leader, Major General Mugisha Muntu, although Besigye has since regained control of the party.⁴⁵ Despite party competition, leadership selection bids are

conditioned by the state of the country as a whole in relation to external pressures and politics. The strong military components of the politics of dispensation strain democratic dialogue for all actors in the system.

Dispensation and ideology

According to the way Giovanni Sartori describes political parties, Uganda is not able to sustain them at this time.⁴⁶ In Africa and other places ethnicity has often been a means of political mobilisation. This dangerous situation has led to much election violence.⁴⁷ Developing secular and nationalist ideology is one key to a successful multiparty democracy. The absence of secular ideology is one of the main reasons the NRM in Uganda rejected political parties.⁴⁸ Furthermore, in Uganda, the future possibility of ideological development is not simply domestic; when it is fused with political mobilisation, the need to generate funds to ensure that a message gets out is evident.

One way this is apparent is in the development of ideology through religious connections. As part of Bayart's schematic of 'extraversion', he called this internationalised form of ideological development 'mediation', which connects a 'whole range of social categories', most notably including church relations across the planet.⁴⁹ As was apparent in Uganda's early days of independence, political parties are deeply affected by religion. Bayart says:

Now, the development of independent churches or religious movements is, together with war, one of the principal contemporary forms of social mobilisation in Africa. It is also a leading means by which sub-Saharan Africa integrates itself into the international system, such as via the links between the evangelical preachers of Monrovia and those of the religious right in America's Deep South, or between congregations of Christian charismatics among Ghanaian migrants living in the Netherlands and their country of origin.⁵⁰

Uganda has been in the news of late as a result of anti-homosexuality legislation. When the Speaker of House in Uganda came to visit Canada in 2012 she met Hon John Baird, who publicly denounced the proposed legislation for nearly the entire meeting. The Speaker accused the Canadian Minister of being colonial, disrupting the meeting and interfering in Uganda's sovereign affairs.⁵¹ She returned to Uganda to a standing ovation at the airport in Entebbe. The *Monitor* newspaper reporter, Otim Lucima, wrote 'Ugandans understand cultural diplomacy as seen in the Kadaga–Baird brush as a rejection of non-reciprocal Western imposition of their world views on Ugandans'.⁵² The tendency to paint all Western leaders as the same is evident from the statements by the Speaker and in the news report. It suggests that the play between looking for acceptance or at least camaraderie with the West and then simultaneously rejecting that same relationship as neo-colonial, has overcome balanced analysis of this political situation (at the expense of protection for homosexuals in Uganda).

The facts of the occurrence become more complex if we consider the politics of dispensation. Evidently wealthy American preachers and evangelist churches have been pushing Uganda to adopt an anti-homosexual policy and have encouraged anti-homosexual thinking. The Ugandan government has been praised in American churches, and funds have been flowing to Uganda to support those who oppose homosexuality.⁵³ The politics of dispensation is apparent. Even though anti-imperialist rhetoric is being used now to support the Speaker in her brush with former minister Baird, support for the legislation is still ultimately coming from Western churches. Perhaps the private-members bill would have had no hope

of getting off the ground if this money had not been associated with it or if it had not been proposed by American preachers in the first place.⁵⁴

The Canadian government is unable to stand its ground in its attacks on Uganda because it is not aware of or is unable to admit to these church affiliations with the USA. Canada ended up treating the Speaker with such disrespect that she became determined to pass the bill.⁵⁵ The concept in the international press is that this bill has come about because of inhumane cultures and perspectives in Uganda, but this misses the mark. It is not that such sentiments do not exist in Uganda, but the political nature of the question now, coupled with the foreign shaping and funding of political parties, does cast doubt on the authenticity of such politics.⁵⁶ The politics of this legislation is international, and its passing will be the responsibility of many actors.

Dispensation and state capacity

When I was interviewing him in 2009, Professor Charles Mwanbustya of the Centre for Basic Research in Kampala informed me that, in Uganda, ‘We do talk of the “national cake”, we talk of the “national carcass”.’⁵⁷ Although humorous, what he was referring to was the lack of state capacity to actually deliver public goods. This condition, faced by many African states, is critical to the politics of dispensation. As states lack capacity, they also lose control over their own sovereignty and are directed by international institutions which manage their debt and restructure the government. Mbembe writes of the privatisation of government:

Most starkly, the developments now under way in Africa, are *creating systems* in such an original way that the result is not only debt, the destruction of productive capital, and war, but also the disintegration of the state and in some cases, its wasting away and the radical challenge of it as a ‘public good’, as a general mechanism of rule, or as the best instrument for ensuring the protection and safety of individuals.⁵⁸

One of the more telling symptoms of the problems faced by African states today is the frequent suggestion that they lack state capacity but at the same time are forms of authoritarianism or dictatorship.⁵⁹ It often seems as if African states are both all-powerful and yet powerless failures at that same time. Mbembe captures this contradiction, and the forms of hypocrisy it often creates, in his concepts of the hallucinatory ‘commandment’ and of ‘zombification’. Yet Mbembe also reminds us that this is not simply a matter of losing capacity as a result of lack of bureaucratic skill or corruption, or other things of that sort, because what is crucial is the *active* undermining of state capacity in order to continue the privatisation of the state and the economy that Mbembe is describing, a condition that is derived both locally and internationally.

Anecdotally most people I interviewed, those who were among the most powerful and influential in the country, felt sidelined in their ability to define their own democratic systems. It is perceptible from these sentiments that the state in Uganda is informalising in the ways that Mbembe suggests. This lack of official control over politics has increased on the back of IMF adjustments. From the 1990s forward Ugandan state employees, including the military, were reduced by 42% through the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the IMF and World Bank.⁶⁰ Although the state is losing capacity to employ its civil servants, military contracts in particular are still lucrative, given new boosts from non-state forces in Uganda.⁶¹ The International Labour Organization (ILO) released a report in 2005 that recommended that the government offer services to the informal sector because the formal sector (with a

paper trail for taxes or property rights) is unlikely to expand in the near future.⁶² ILO estimates that 90% of employment in urban Uganda is in the informal sector. Furthermore, this sector is largely comprised of women and children. This causes the ILO to argue that the current oil boom in Uganda and related international contracts, infrastructure and market developments, are not likely to have any impact on informal sectors. Therefore state capacity is not something Uganda can develop on its own. It is part and parcel of a deeply embedded international financial and legal regime that must oversee state capacity building or the lack thereof.

Conclusion

If Africa is a continent prone to dictatorial or hegemonic leaders, as the daily news and the academy are inclined to report, then they are dictators of a very particular and unique kind. Importantly they are of an international character, at least partly made in foreign countries but still attempting to be powerful among their own populations. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of anti-imperial revolution has not waned in Africa or Uganda, despite the seeming illusion of state power and compliance with international norms. Shifting between stiff international business meetings promising aid money in Switzerland and meeting under shady trees with shield wielding local chiefs is a pattern of African governance that all successful leaders must negotiate. Populations in Africa have to wonder all the time who might be the next benefactor for their state and what consequences will come from the arrangements. The levels of power and influence are multiple in Uganda, and democracy in one area of politics or society does not spell democracy for all areas. Exchanging one leader for another will not address the many challenges facing Ugandans in democratising their country. Imagine yourself a voter in Uganda today. As in many other places the cacophony of the international has subdued local traditions and voices and so finding authentic democracy is possibly just as problematic as it was during the Cold War.

In *After the Globe, Before the World*, Walker discusses 'fracture zones' in the international system. He argues that the system of states is based on many distinctions related to what constitutes 'modern' and 'developed' and what does not. These distinctions cause much of the order, balance and imbalance in international relations that affect Uganda and other areas profoundly. Walker states that there are (at least) three fracture zone in the international system (that compound and multiply). One is the relationship between citizens and the state, one that transforms a person from a 'mere human' to a political citizen. A second is the relationship between states in the international system poised as they are for war and for battle over the meaning of the modern state system.

A third great fracture zone has been between those who are included in modernity and/or the modern state system, and those who are not. This fracture zone is the one that modern political analysis has been most reluctant to acknowledge or examine, but in modern political life is always open to the possibility of a state of exception articulated much more broadly than on the edges of the modern state.⁶³

In the case of Uganda, a country that may include itself in the third fracture zone of exclusion from the modern state system – a system which it is continually attempting to join – Walker says: 'any state that claims sovereignty is already caught up within the structures of inclusions and exclusions that have worked to affirm a world of exclusions'. The broad exclusions and exceptions to the teleological march of universalist modernity in Uganda have been related

to the creation of the no-party political system. Treated as an illness of traditionalism, the system has been replaced, through a politics of dispensation, by a system that is more suited to the logic of modern states in the international system.

Democratisation programmes have illustrated the fact that universalist claims of democracy can have little meaning for people experiencing the 'democratisation effect'. The structure of the international system has consequences for the domestic structure of the state and, when these are so integral, as they are in many Third World nations, the comparative perspective is of limited use. As Keating has written, African civil society has begun to use the international system to influence domestic democracy. This article has striven to understand this through the theory of dispensation.

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Notes on Contributor

Sabina Singh has been a political science instructor at Thompson Rivers University, Vancouver Island University, Simon Fraser University, Camosun College and the University of Victoria. Currently she is a researcher at the University of Victoria.

Notes

1. After surveying much of the literature, this study focused on politicians and other experts with experience in both the no-party and the party system in Uganda and who could speak to the transition. Most scholars, including Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda* and Carbone, *No-party Democracy?* have suggested that the transition was based on internal pressure. My interviewees suggested that international standards and pressure had a more significant bearing.
2. Strange 1996.
3. Keating, "Can Democratization undermine Democracy?"
4. *Ibid.*, 416.
5. *Ibid.*, 430; and Ayers, "Demystifying Democratisation."
6. Walker, *After the Globe, Before the World*, 147.
7. Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism*, 31.
8. Cohen, *Global Political Economy*.
9. Kizza, "Africa's Indigenous Democracies."
10. Mabovula, "The Erosion of African Communal Values."
11. World Movement for Democracy, "Current Challenges to Democracy." This is an example of one organisation that argues there is a 'backlash' against democracy in many places.
12. Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay"; Huntington, *The Third Wave*; and Reno, *Warlord Politics in African States*.
13. Obi, *No Choice but Democracy*.
14. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*. See also Sartori, "Comparing and Miscomparing."
15. BBC, "Raul Castro defends Cuba's One-party System"; and BBC, "Gadaffi."
16. See USAID, *USAID Political Party Assistance Policy*, 1999, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/pnacr216.pdf; *CIDA Estimates 2007–2008, Part III: Report on Plans and Priorities*, 11, <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/2007-2008/cida-acdi/cida-acdi-eng.pdf>; OECD, http://www.oecd.org/LongAbstract/0,3425,en_33873108_33844437_36219521_1_1_1_1,00&en-USS_01DBC.html; OECD, 16, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/governancedevelopment/For%20WEB%20Accountability%20and%20democratic%20governance%20Orientations%20and%20principles%20>

- for%20development.pdf; <http://www.demofinland.org/index.php/en/>; and World Movement for Democracy, "Current Challenges to Democracy."
17. USAID, *USAID Political Party Assistance Policy*.
 18. Meredith, *The Fate of Africa*.
 19. I derived this term from my field work in Uganda. In that context 'dispensation' is simply a vernacular used in everyday language. Most people I interviewed named their most recent constitutional change the 'multiparty dispensation'.
 20. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*.
 21. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*.
 22. Bayart, *The State in Africa*.
 23. *Ibid.*, xxiv.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. *Ibid.*, lxix. Bayart articulates the 'grammar of extraversion' in these areas: coercion, trickery, flight, mediation, appropriation and rejection. Each of these 'social types' works on two levels: visible and invisible.
 26. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*. These concepts are found throughout the work and form the basis of Mbembe's theory.
 27. *Ibid.*, 67.
 28. *Mail and Guardian Africa*, March 27, 2015, <http://mgafrica.com/article/2015-03-27-as-2016-elections-near-uganda-media-ordered-to-boost-coverage-of-president-museveni>.
 29. Carbone, *No-party Democracy?*, 190.
 30. *Ibid.*
 31. *Ibid.*, 188.
 32. Escobar, *Encountering Development*.
 33. Sulaiman, "Broke Parties."
 34. For instance, "Assistant Secretary Malinowski Encourages Youth Participation at IRI-hosted Discussion in Uganda," November 15, 2015, <http://www.iri.org/web-story/assistant-secretary-malinowski-encourages-youth-participation-iri-hosted-discussion-uganda>.
 35. Interview with Hon. Stephen Adyeeri MP, Buliisa District, Chairman National Economy Committee, Member of the Natural Resources Committee, Owner, Rise and Shine Projects and Investments, Parliament Buildings, Kampala, July 13, 2009.
 36. Damon, "Why is Uganda fighting in 'Hellish' Somalia?"
 37. Matsiko, "Why is Museveni building Region's Strongest Army?"
 38. Bayart, *The State in Africa*, lvi.
 39. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 78 (emphasis in the original).
 40. Collier, *War, Guns, and Votes*.
 41. Campbell, "Africa."
 42. "AFRICOM: Key Facts and Concerns," Africa Faith and Justice Network, undated. Published originally on the Resist AFRICOM coalition website, August 2008.
 43. Mukasa, "UN to expand Entebbe Base."
 44. Isenberg, "Africa."
 45. Wesonga, "The Campaigns that exposed FDC Structures." See also Voice of America, "Uganda's FDC taps Besigye as 2016 Candidate," September 15, 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/content/uganda-opposition-fdc-elects-kizza-besigye-as-2016-candidate/2943432.html>.
 46. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*.
 47. Meredith, *The Fate of Africa*.
 48. Museveni, *What is Africa's Problem?*
 49. Bayart, *The State in Africa*, lxiv.
 50. Bayart, *The State in Africa*, lxv.
 51. Mugerwa, "Kadaga, Canadian Minister in Gay Row."
 52. Lucima, "For Diplomacy."
 53. Filipovic, "The Disgrace of Church Backing"; and Gettlemen, "Americans' Role Seen."
 54. Dicklitch et al., "Building a Barometer of Gay Rights."
 55. Imaka, "Speaker Kadaga Determined."

56. Kirand and Kamp, *Reality Check*, 122–123.
57. Interview with Professor Charles Mwanbustya, Centre for Basic Research, Kampala, July 16, 2009.
58. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 73.
59. For instance, Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda*.
60. "Urban Informal Sector in Uganda."
61. Interview with Dr. S. K. Simba, Senior Lecturer, Makerere University, Kampala, Centre for Basic Research, Kampala, July 22, 2009; and Matsiko, "Why is Museveni building Region's Strongest Army?"
62. "Urban Informal Sector in Uganda."
63. Walker, *After the Globe, Before the World*, 147.

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