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**AN ASSESSMENT OF DEMOCRATIC DELIBERATION IN UGANDA: A CASE
STUDY OF THE FRAMING OF KEY POLITICAL ISSUES IN THE PRESS**

A Thesis in

Mass Communications

by

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ABSTRACT

In public deliberation about Uganda's democratic future, citizens were engaged in animated debates concerning the type of political system and the mode of presidential succession that the country should embrace. This study analyses media discourse about the issues that these debates raised. Two issues were at the heart of public deliberation: whether the country should return to the multi-party system or retain the no-party Movement model of government; and whether presidential term limits should be upheld or scrapped.

The evolution of the democratization process during the political transition from 2000 to 2005 is the setting of the research. In view of the country's turbulent history, Ugandans anticipated that the transition would ultimately yield and sustain a political culture anchored in civil politics, democratic legitimacy, and a stable constitutional order. Drawing specifically on press coverage of the political discourses of elite actors, the study assembles evidence that illuminates the manner in which political elites constructed and framed the issues that were at stake.

Public opinion data on citizens' attitudes toward democracy, political leadership, and democratic institutions are cited and used to underscore the climate of opinion in which the key issues were deliberated, framed, and contested. Accordingly, the issue framing strategies that the elite employed in constructing meaning out of key political developments as reported in the press are explored. The quality of media discourse is assessed from the normative standpoint of the theory of deliberative democracy.

Informed by the social constructionist paradigm in framing research, a set of frame packages was generated from media discourse through a case history analysis and then subjected to a quantitative assessment through content analysis. The core framing processes and dynamics of frame sponsorship and alignment were then examined.

In addition to revealing the dominant frames and frame sponsors, the results indicate that frequently the same frame packages were proliferated and contested across competing claims by rival claims-makers. This tendency reflects the desire by elites to ground their claims in political values that have resonance in the larger political culture.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In recent public deliberation about the future of democracy in Uganda, two key issues came to the fore: one was about the political system that the country should embrace and the other was about the mode of political succession that it should adopt. An interest in the debates that these issues spawned and in the way elite political actors constructed and framed these issues was the motivation behind this exploratory study of deliberative politics in the Ugandan press. The unfolding of the democratization process during the final phase – 2000 to 2005 – of the country’s political transition provided the empirical basis for the study. But the discourse that transpired in the press during this period evolved over the last two decades when public deliberation was consumed by a contentious and animated debate about the transition to a democratic system of government. The public’s expectation was that this system would be anchored in civil politics, popular legitimacy, and a stable constitutional order.

In their analysis of democratic transitions in the developing world, Haggard and Kaufman (1995) maintain that democratization is influenced by the interplay of political, economic, and institutional conditions. Whereas this interaction is recognized, and allowing of the fact that politics cannot be bracketed out of the larger social milieu in which it is practiced, this dissertation approaches public deliberation in the press within the context of the political dynamics of Uganda’s transition from authoritarian to democratic governance. To the extent that the country’s democratization trajectory was directed by transformations in the broader political sphere, the term

political transition is used generically to denote the major developments and issues in Uganda's path toward a consolidated democracy.

To be sure, a political transition was embryonic at the time of independence in 1962 and, give or take, in the half decade that followed. It was, however, punctured in the intervening period from around 1966 until a new political regime emerged in 1986. In temporal terms, the political transition in the present study is the post-1986 process of transformation in Uganda's political culture. The process itself comes, at best, in the mold of Huntington's (1991, p. 25) "two-step-forward, one-step-backward" conundrum. But if the checkered nature of the process complicated the country's democratization, it also made it a valuable case study of public deliberation in a transitional democracy. Without going into an elaborate analysis of democratic development, I proceed on the assumption that, if not in theory and practice, Uganda, at least as far as perceptions go, completed the transitional process after the national referendum on political systems in mid 2005 and entered the phase of democratic after the national elections in early 2006.

Utilizing the methods of constructionist framing research typically used in the analysis of collective and social action discourses, this study elicits and measures a set of issue frames generated from a case history of public deliberation about Uganda's political transition as covered by the press.¹ These frame packages along with other deliberative properties of political discourse are examined through a content analysis of newspaper stories. Although public discourse about the political transition was dispersed

¹ The justifications for relying on press coverage, including the specific choice of newspapers, are explored in chapter 8.

in different deliberative sites, the empirical evidence that supports the analysis was drawn from Uganda's two principal dailies: *The Monitor* and *The New Vision*.²

Some context about media usage is in order at this juncture. The press in Uganda is indisputably the preserve of the elite and especially the urban middle class. In a May 2005 survey by Afrobarometer³ and the International Republican Institute (IRI), only five percent of respondents nationally reported using newspapers and television as sources of news every day; while 61 percent reported using radio for the same purpose on a daily basis. In another IRI survey in January 2006 ($N = 1,200$), only two percent of respondents reported using newspapers as their sources of political information and news; 78 percent mentioned radio; and 15 percent said friends and neighbors. Although a very small fraction of the population uses newspapers as sources of political information, newspapers nonetheless feature prominently in the political networks in which elite discourses circulate. This is because most of the information that is politically consequential in Uganda mostly originates from the press. The leading dailies tend to set the news agenda for the rest of the media.

Purpose and significance of the study

My purpose in undertaking this project was to explore the framing strategies that the political elite employed in the construction of issues concerning Uganda's democratic transformation and to assess from a normative standpoint the deliberative quality of the public discourse transacted in the press. As will be recounted shortly, public opinion revealed interesting patterns in Ugandans' perceptions of

² Independently verified circulation figures for the two newspapers are not publicly available. But according to educated estimates from those familiar with trends in the market, in September 2006 *The Monitor* had an average daily circulation of 28,000 and *The New Vision's* was 32,000.

³ Afrobarometer is a comparative series of national public attitude surveys on democracy, markets and civil society in Africa. See <http://www.afrobarometer.org>

democratic outcomes and processes as the country underwent a transformation in its political culture during the critical transitional period from 2000 to 2005. However, beyond the content of citizens' opinions about the key political issues of the time loomed unanswered questions about the meaning attributed to the shared political experiences and perceptions so graphically captured in surveys of citizens' attitudes toward democracy and its attendant institutions.

Driven by the assumption that public opinion gels within the context of a society's political culture, this study argues that the way political issues are framed provides citizens with the interpretive packages for deliberating politics and forming political judgments. These frame packages and the discourses that carry them also contribute to the molding of public opinion. Taking into account the decisive role that political elites play in the public opinion process, this study explores media discourse in order to uncover the meanings that were constructed out of the political developments that characterized Uganda's democratic transition. In so doing, the study seeks to fill a gap in our knowledge of public discourse and democratic deliberation through an examination of the means by which public opinion about the key issues in Uganda's political transition was nurtured and fomented. A comprehensive understanding of the deliberative process of public opinion as applied to Uganda's political transition would emerge from the kind of empirically grounded assessment of deliberative politics and issue framing that this study offers.

The study also describes the historical and socio-political context of Uganda's political transition as well as the factors that were at play in public deliberation and their impact on the interpretations made of the key issues. Specifically, the

occurrence of political frame packages as portrayed and reflected in news accounts is analyzed and the deliberative quality of the debate is assessed on the basis of criteria derived from the theory of deliberative democracy. Whereas an inquiry into the effects of issue frames on public opinion or on the media audience's political judgments is outside the scope of this work, the empirical evidence about the frame packages at work in political discourse can illuminate the bases of citizens' opinions and judgments.

Background to the study

The opinions that were conveyed in media discourse about the transition crystallized in the context of a uniquely Ugandan innovation of 1986: the political system known as the *Movement*. Conceived as a no-party model of government, the Movement would remain in force until 2005 when the multi-party system was formally restored following a series of two national referenda on political systems. Nonetheless, for as long as it held the reigns, many critics of the Movement viewed it as a sanitized variant of the one-party state.

The concept of the Movement was introduced by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) when it assumed power in 1986 – a year generally regarded as the watershed in Uganda's political history. Hitherto, according to Mamdani (1995), the name Uganda was engraved in the world's consciousness as a synonym for state terrorism. Thus, of all the NRM's accomplishments, none stands out more prominently than its success in discontinuing the “trend towards the repressive forces of the state dominating, suffocating and choking civil society” (Mamdani, 1995, p. 35).

Since independence in 1962, the gun was a constant intrusion in Uganda's politics. Militarism was such a steady presence in the exercise of political power that

even the attempts at civil politics were often backed up by the gun. Consequently, a political culture of violence thrived, thus stifling the development of democratic values, institutions, and the culture of tolerance (Makara & Tukahebwa, 1996). Another repercussion of the post-independence failure to cultivate and deepen the roots of democracy was that in jostling for power, Uganda's political elites persisted in appealing to ethnicity and religion as platforms for their politics. In the process they confused and divided the citizenry. Such sectarian impulses coupled with the inability of the nation's leaders and political elites to adopt democratic norms and to play by the rules of the game left the country teetering from one crisis to another. The country failed to settle on a durable and satisfactory political order despite switching among three constitutions in less than a decade after independence. Unsurprisingly, the whole notion of constitutional governance was soon abandoned to a democratic vacuum that was filled by a long reign of terror stretching from 1966 to 1985. In particular, the psychopathic regime of Idi Amin from 1971 to 1979 epitomized what Sathyamurthym (1986, p. 663) has called "the wholesale lumpenisation of politics."

A fresh political initiative that was brought about when the NRM came to power led to the presumption that a national constitution was yet again the antidote for political crises. This prompted Makara and Tukahebwa (1996, p. 1) to argue that "political crises in Uganda have not been due to lack of constitutions but due to the failure to evolve constitutionalism."

The post-1986 process through which citizens anticipated the crafting of a sustainable democratic system with enduring institutional arrangements for the practice of politics begun like all transitions do. The rules of the political game as set by the

dominant actors determine “which resources can legitimately be expended in the political arena and which actors will be permitted to enter it” (O’Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, p. 6). The NRM, as a case in point, did just that when it assumed power. By suspending political parties, it reserved the right to admit participants into the political process. By imposing its own set of rules, it determined the mode of participation and the pace of the process. The political agenda as set by the NRM culminated in the promulgation of a new constitution 10 years later and the reinstatement of the multi-party system after 20 years.

Naturally, the political transition inspired a long-running public debate about the country’s democratic future. In the course of that debate, citizen deliberation turned decisively on the changes, in both principle and practice, that competing political elites claimed were designed to democratize the country’s political culture – its values, institutions, and structures.

Notwithstanding the disagreements among elite political actors in respect of the democratization roadmap, there seemed to be some minimum consensus about the expected outcomes of the transition. It was anticipated that the democratic transformation would ultimately yield a stable constitutional order upon which the country would be governed in future. In the early stages of the transition, the political elites seemed to agree on the need for a predictable and smooth mechanism for changing leaders and governments. Thus, against the backdrop of a history of violent transfers of power, the question of political succession was resolved in the new constitution that was promulgated in 1995 by fixing the presidential tenure at two five-year terms. However, though the previous tendency of power being monopolized by a select group was not lost on the political elite as they bargained over the new constitution, they were irreparably

divided on the suitable mechanism to forestall that problem. The incumbent regime pushed to have the no-party Movement model adopted, whilst the opposition advocated a pluralistic system that would allow political parties to compete for power on a level playing field.

The failure of the 1995 constitution to settle the question of political systems once and for all foreshadowed the intractability of this issue. In the last phase (2000 – 2005) of the post-1986 transition, the issue of political systems still evoked intense public debate and presented an acute challenge to the political elite. Even as the first national referendum on political systems was held in 2000 so Ugandans could choose between the Movement and multi-party systems, the fundamental issues remained in contention, as an Afrobarometer survey of public opinion discovered.

As noted, there were political developments that necessitated focusing on Uganda's political transition as a deliberative agenda revolving around two core democratic issues. These sparked off two sets of vigorously contested discourses in the press and the media in general. One was about opening up the political system to allow for full-fledged multi-party politics (no-party Movement versus multi-partyism) and the other was about lifting the limits on the presidential term of tenure to allow for open-ended succession (presidential term limits versus no term limits).

The discourse about the question of political systems is construed as a contest between those who favored the retention of the no-party Movement system and those who wanted a change to a multi-party form of government. The 1995 constitution formalized the earlier restrictions on the activities and operations of political parties, falling just short of proscribing the parties.

Likewise, the discourse about the question of political succession is understood as a contest between those who preferred to retain the term limits on the presidency and those who wanted to have them done away with. Article 105(2) of the 1995 constitution restricted the president to two consecutive five-year terms in office. What is considered in this study as the succession question arose on account of the fact that although the incumbent, Yoweri Museveni, was expected to complete his last term in May 2006 as required by the constitution, he pushed to have the constitution amended so as to scrap the term limits. Their deletion from the constitution would allow him to run for president again in 2006.

Public opinion about the political transition

To capture and elucidate the political setting in which the key issues of the transition were constructed and interpreted during the period on which this case study is based, I will describe what was at stake for Ugandans by drawing on the findings from Afrobarometer's program of research on mass attitudes toward democracy in sub-Saharan Africa. Building on the data generated from this pioneering cross-national research program conducted in a dozen countries, Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi (2005, p.44) developed what is probably the most conclusive work yet on public opinion in Africa. They put together instructive evidence about the content of and influences on mass attitudes toward democracy, markets, and civil society. Specifically, they demonstrated that "cognitive awareness" of public affairs and "performance evaluations" of regimes are singularly critical to public opinion formation.

Following what they define as a "learning approach," which is premised on the assumption of "knowledge and experience as the key determinants of public

opinion,” Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) empirically clarified Africans’ conceptions of democracy; the criteria by which they evaluate regime performance; the nature of their support for regimes; their expectations of democratic leadership; and how they learn about politics. Given the evidence available from this research program, we are now better informed than ever before about public opinion on issues of collective interest to African citizens.

As reported by Logan et al. (2003) and Afrobarometer (2005), the results and conclusions from the first (2000), second (2002), and third (2005) rounds of the Afrobarometer survey series are particularly germane and revealing about Ugandans’ perceptions of political reality during the period under investigation. It should be noted that at the time of the 2000 survey, the key issue on the table was that of political systems. The succession question had not yet evolved into an issue about scrapping or retaining presidential term limits. What passed for the succession debate then was primarily a personality-driven leadership contest within the NRM rather than an issue to do with the mode of succession. Although in 2002 Afrobarometer surveyed public opinion about term limits, it was not until 2003 that the actual matter of lifting the limits surfaced in public discourse, thereby raising a fundamental constitutional issue for the entire country. In July 2003, an opinion poll by the IRI for the first time directly asked people for their views on the matter of lifting or retaining term limits now that it was out in the open. The IRI and Afrobarometer followed it up in a 2005 opinion survey that dealt principally with the political system and succession issues.

In the discussion that follows, I will rely on the findings from the three aforementioned sets of opinion surveys to tease out the texture of the debate and the

complexities of the key issues that Ugandans were engaged with in public discourse about the transition. These ought to be understood for one to appreciate the political discourse that was going on in the press during the transition. My main interest here is in those dimensions of public perceptions of the democratic transition that are essentially and explicitly ‘political.’

Ugandans’ attitudes toward democracy

As a way of tapping into Ugandans’ commitment to democracy and their perceptions of the country’s political leadership and institutions, the 2000 and 2003 Afrobarometer surveys asked people a battery of questions pertaining to: support for democracy; opinions about the extent of democracy; satisfaction with democracy; attitudes toward regime alternatives; attitudes toward democratic institutions; provision of political goods; performance of elected officials; trust in individuals and institutions; and opinions about the validity of the constitution as an indicator of the state’s legitimacy. For purposes of the present discussion, I have adapted and summarized the findings reported by Logan et al. (2003) and Afrobarometer (2005) in Appendix C.

Even in the aftermath of the controversial 2000 referendum on political systems in which voters chose to continue with the Movement, and following the equally contentious 2001 election that returned Museveni to power for another five-year term that would bring his total to 20 years as president, Ugandans, by and large, were found to be satisfied with the country’s political system and generally committed to democracy. In 2002, 74 percent believed that democracy was the best form of government, a slight drop from the 80 percent who held the same view in 2000 (see Appendix C: Table I). In 2002, 54 percent were of the view that Uganda was either a full democracy or a democracy with

minor problems, another slight drop from the 57 percent who believed so in 2000 (see Appendix C: Table III). Whereas 60 percent were satisfied with democracy in 2002, those were significantly fewer than the 74 percent who expressed satisfaction in 2000 (see Appendix C: Table V). Given a choice among regime alternatives, a constant 53 percent rejected one-party rule in 2002 and 2000 (see Appendix C: Table VII). On how the Movement government fared in the provision of a range of political goods, 85 and 79 percent, respectively, felt that freedom of speech and the freedom to vote were either better or much better under the Movement in 2002 than they were under previous regimes (see Appendix C: Table XI).

In the areas of leadership and institutions, selected officials holding elective offices were rated highly for their performance in 2002, for example, 92 and 81 percent approval for LC1 chairpersons and the president, respectively (see Appendix C: Table XIII). The president's approval rating in 2002, however, had dropped from 93 percent in 2000. Among particular leaders and institutions in 2002, primary local councils (LC1) enjoyed the trust of 77 percent of respondents followed by the president who was trusted by 61 percent. The Movement had the trust of 56 percent, down from 83 percent in 2000, while opposition parties were trusted by 16 percent, down from 31 percent in 2000 (see Appendix C: Table XV).

The data, however, also revealed that Ugandans' perceptions of democracy and the democratic process as well as their ratings of leaders and political institutions varied significantly with their home region, on the one hand, and their political affiliation, on the other. In particular, the concept of 'home region' warrants some clarification. In Uganda, a person's home region (whether regarded as such in terms

of residence or area of origin) roughly correlates with one's ethnicity. Hence, apart from the Central region, which is cosmopolitan by virtue of being home to the capital city and the hub of politics and the economy, Ugandans tend to be clustered geographically along ethnic lines. Consequently, for historical reasons that will be touched on later, the North, East, West, and Central regions are much more than geographical locations and socio-cultural communities. As a matter of fact, they are political constructions.

Accordingly, the 2002 opinion survey found, for instance, that citizens from the West (85 percent) had a much greater belief in democracy as the best form of government than did their counterparts from the North (59 percent) (see Appendix C: Table II). Similarly, Westerners (70 percent) expressed a lot more satisfaction with democracy than did Northerners (39 percent) (see Appendix C: Table VI). Also, citizens from the West (94 percent) gave President Museveni a much higher approval rating for his performance than did citizens from the North (56 percent) (see Appendix C: Table XIV). And while opposition groups were mistrusted by Ugandans from all regions, Northerners (24 percent) were twice as likely to be sympathetic to the opposition as were Westerners (10 percent) (see Appendix C: Table XIV). Not only were these differences replicated on all measures of Ugandans' perceptions of democracy and their attitudes toward leaders and institutions across home regions, but also across political affiliations, with Movement supporters, as expected, judging the NRM government and the Movement system favorably compared to opposition supporters.

Leading up to the second referendum in 2005, an opinion survey by Afrobarometer and the IRI found that Ugandans remained somewhat divided on the political system. The third in this series of surveys, which was conducted in April-May

2005 (margin of error +/- 2 percent) revealed that a rather small majority (56 percent) supported multi-party politics. Even so, this was a dramatic shift from 2000 when, in the first survey of the series, only 36 percent of Ugandans responded in the affirmative to the statement: “We should have many political parties that compete in free elections.” The second survey, which was carried out in August-September 2002, had registered the upward trend, having found that 46 percent of Ugandans responded positively to the statement: “Many political parties are needed to make sure that Ugandans have real choices in who governs them” (Afrobarometer, 2005, p. 2).

Asked specifically whether they wanted the country to switch from the no-party Movement to the multi-party system, 51 percent favored switching while 45 percent preferred to retain the Movement. The underlying dynamics, however, were complicated. Despite the majority, albeit a thin one, favoring a multi-party system, most Ugandans expected parties to perform worse than the Movement, as the poll data in Table 1 indicate.

Table 1 *Expected performance of political parties compared to the Movement*

Would the multi-party system perform better or worse than the Movement?	Better	Worse	About the same	Don't Know
Representing all views in government	28%	41%	22%	10%
Involving ordinary people in decision making	26%	41%	24%	9%
Addressing women's issues	22%	46%	23%	9%
Involving women in government	22%	46%	24%	9%
Promoting national unity	27%	47%	18%	7%
Ensuring national stability	28%	47%	18%	8%
Ensuring government officials don't abuse power	26%	40%	24%	10%
Observing human rights	26%	40%	24%	10%

Source: *Ugandans divided on political transition*. Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 15, July 2005. <http://www.afrobarometer.org/papers/AfrobriefNo15.pdf>

How then could multi-party politics enjoy the support of the majority when most people seemed to think that political parties would perform worse than the Movement? To explain this apparent discrepancy, the Afrobarometer (2005) researchers argued that the intensity of opinion among Movement supporters tended to be high while multi-party supporters tended to have moderate expectations of political parties. For example, as far as representing all views in government was concerned, 68 percent of Movement supporters believed that parties would perform worse than the Movement; yet among multi-party supporters, only 46 percent felt that political parties would turn in a better performance (see Table 2). To the researchers, it appeared that political party supporters were attracted to the multi-party system mainly on principle or because of other non-performance based reasons, while Movement supporters were chiefly motivated by utilitarian or instrumental considerations in their allegiance to the system.

Table 2 *Expected performance of political parties compared to the Movement in representing all views in government by political affiliation*

Would a multi-party system perform better or worse than the Movement in representing all views in government?	Multi-party supporters			Movement supporters		
	Worse	Same	Better	Worse	Same	Better
	20%	27%	46%	68%	14%	10%

Source: *Ugandans divided on political transition*. Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 15, July 2005. <http://www.afrobarometer.org/papers/AfrobriefNo15.pdf>

Ugandans' views about presidential term limits evolved significantly during the five-year transitional period in which this study is set. Afrobarometer/IRI poll data show that 51 percent of respondents surveyed were in favor of lifting the term limits in 2005 (46 percent were for retention), up from 42 percent in 2003 and 19 percent in 2002.

Taken together, all indicators in this series of attitude surveys suggested that the majority of Ugandans favored democratic systems. Be that as it may, the absence of overwhelming aversion to one-party rule and the ambivalence toward political parties could imply one of two things: either that the Movement was equated with one-party rule or that the no-party brand of democracy that the Movement espoused was perceived as sufficiently pluralistic by a majority of Ugandans.

Underlying the attitudes toward democracy described above, however, is the one enduring fact of political reality in Uganda: wide variations in perceptions as a function of home region and political affiliation. Evidence from the Afrobarometer surveys indicates that there is a correlation between the region where a Ugandan lives or comes from and his or her level of political affinity with the ruling regime. That is to say, in regions of the country where the population feels relatively close to the government, citizens tend to evaluate the regime's democratic credentials and performance more favorably than do citizens in parts of the country where the population feels politically alienated.

Logan et al. (2003) employed the terms 'insiders' and 'outsiders' to capture these differences. Insiders in the political system were characterized as citizens who were either devoted to the Movement or those hailing from the East, Central, and West. On the other hand, social and political outsiders were characterized as citizens allied with opposition groups and those hailing from the North. As noted earlier, these regional designations reflect the topography of Uganda's political landscape, to the extent that, as the poll data cited here demonstrate, citizens from the political North expressed by far a greater degree of disaffection with the political and economic systems and were

separated from the rest of their countrymen, particularly the politically well connected Westerners, by a widening chasm. Moreover, citizens who supported the Movement tended to exhibit equal faith in the NRM as a government and in the Movement as a political system. Conversely, to supporters of multi-party politics or the opposition, there appeared to be no distinction between the democratic regime (the Movement system) as a whole and the incumbent NRM government that presided over that regime. In other words, their perceptions of the fundamental democratic quality of the political system were shaped by their evaluations of the government in power. And as a general rule, as far as mass opinions are concerned, there is an overlap between a Ugandan's home region and her political affiliation.

Objectives of the study

Borrowing a leaf from Edelman (1988, pp. 1-2), I set off on the premise that “political developments are ambiguous entities that mean what concerned observers construe them to mean.” On this perspective, news discourse about politics is not a mere account of events to which the public reacts. Conversely, political developments are constructions of the participants involved in or paying attention to those events. Whether particular events or issues get noticed and the meanings attributed to them are functions of the participants’⁴ situations and the language that they use to characterize and to interpret their situations. A social problem, a political rival, or a leader is at once an entity in its own and a signifier with a variety of meanings that differ in ways that one can apprehend, even if only to a certain degree.

⁴ Unlike Edelman’s “observers,” I prefer to see them as participants on a continuum of engagement. Undoubtedly, some participants are engaged at the most elementary level as observers, plainly, of the political process.

Just as events are constructions, according to Edelman (1988, p. 2), so are the actors in the political process. Not only do the actions and language of political actors define their subjectivity or perception of who they are, these actors are also symbols to other participants in the political process. “They stand for ideologies, values, or moral stances and they become role models, benchmarks, or symbols of threat and evil.” In line with this reasoning, considerable emphasis in this project is devoted to describing, analyzing, and interpreting political developments and the discourses of the actors involved in them.

Therefore, Uganda is used in this exploratory investigation as a case study of public deliberation and the framing of key political issues in the press, simultaneously drawing attention to the democratic ramifications of mediated discourse as a whole. Specifically, the study is designed: (i) to explore the substance and pattern of media discourse about Uganda’s political transition; (ii) to examine the framing strategies employed by political elites to construct the key issues about the transition and to convey their preferred interpretations of political reality; and (iii) to assess the quality of mediated deliberative discourse in a typical African nation making a transition to democracy.

The conceptual framework

My point of departure is Pan and Kosicki’s (2003, p. 48) proposition that “framing is an integral part of public deliberation and it is a strategic action by all participants.” Issue framing and public deliberation are linked on account of their centrality to the process of constructing meaning out of politics. Issue frames provide an interpretive package or narrative through which politics is deliberated, political

consciousness nurtured, and collective action spurred. Public deliberation is goal-oriented and political issues under contention are naturally framed with the intention of constructing particular interpretations of political reality.

Yet, the idea that issue framing is by definition strategic does not assume that the purpose of framing is merely to secure short-term political advantage or to assemble momentary political alignments. While those objectives could be implicit, the enduring value of framing as a strategic function is to create a discursive community – a symbolic network or sphere of participants who draw on a common set of values for making policy and political judgments and evaluations, in addition to sharing the principles, conventions, and norms invoked in expressing those values. In this sense, a discursive community is seen as the very foundation of deliberative democracy. Where such a community of shared values is concerned, “political contentions become occasions for acting out genuine differences in perceptions and opinions as well as such shared culture, thus reproducing the community binding” (Pan & Kosicki’s, 2003, p. 61).

What's more, as Edelman (1988, p. 104) argues, the construction of meaning, which involves constructing “beliefs about events, policies, leaders, problems, and crises that rationalize or challenge existing inequalities” or conditions is a crucial part of the process of strategizing for political advantage. Although coercion and intimidation are employed in all political systems as a means of enforcing compliance or dealing with resistance, in democratic discourse “the key tactic must always be the evocation of interpretations that legitimize favored courses of action and threaten or reassure people so as to encourage them to be supportive or remain quiescent.”

This in essence is a persuasive process because, as Mutz, Sniderman, and Brody, 1996, p. 1) contend, “politics, at its core, is about persuasion.” The implication for deliberative politics is that deliberative systems can be judged to be democratic or not depending upon the degree to which they prize persuasion over coercion and other non-persuasive methods.

In this persuasive process of creating meaning, language or discourse comes into play as the primary vehicle through which issues are constructed and competing issue frames contested:

It is language about political events, not the events in any other sense, that people experience; even developments that are close by take their meaning from the language that depicts them. So political language *is* political reality; there is no other so far as the meaning of events to actors and spectators is concerned (Edelman, 1988, p. 104).

The ultimate goal in invoking particular interpretations of reality is to influence public discourse in such a way as to galvanize desired action and to shape the perceptions and judgments that people form about events and issues. The framing of issues becomes an essential aspect of public discourse, which in turn nurtures the political consciousness that is necessary for effective political mobilization and participation. Whether or not people will support a cause has much to do with their understanding of the issues involved (Gamson, 1992). The frames in which issues are cast are not only critical to the development of political consciousness; the deliberative process through which they are generated and imposed has fundamental implications for democracy if we come to look at the formation of public opinion and the expression of collective preferences as democratic functions in their own right (Althaus, 2003).

Premised on the theory of deliberative democracy, this research advances the argument that deliberative participation in public affairs, or deliberative politics, is a form of democratic participation and that democratic citizen deliberation is critical to public opinion. Modern polities, because of their complexity, have come to rely on mediated public deliberation as a vehicle for advancing and contesting issues of collective interest. A democracy cannot function without the means to deliberate on issues of public interest. Yet, elite political actors dominate political discourse in the media. They routinely make claims loaded with specific frames that they hope will win the citizens over to their own interpretations of political reality. In Uganda as elsewhere, the political elite do use the public media to define the debate about their preferred issues and to raise their salience on the public agenda, thus providing audiences with opinion cues (Kuklinski & Hurley, 1996). For this reason, public opinion ought to be grounded in the interpretive frames through which issues are defined and opinions formed.

Media discourse constitutes a meaning system of its own. Mediated politics – political deliberation transacted through the public media – raises questions about the deliberative quality of the discourse available to citizens who use the media for information, knowledge, and opinions about public affairs of a political nature. For the individuals who regularly tap into media discourse as a resource for learning about politics, the media provide a lot more than information. They also provide citizens with the cognitive parameters or interpretive frameworks for deliberating, making decisions, formulating judgments, and expressing opinions about public affairs. But in a deliberative landscape in which citizens' attention to politics is increasingly mediated, elite actors'

constructions of political reality, that is, the universe of public issues and problems, tend to dominate public discourse.

Gamson (1996) and Chong (1996) direct our attention to the fact that people use media discourse as but one among the many resources they have for making sense of politics. On occasions they may combine media discourse with their own experiential knowledge or with popular wisdom as a way of harmonizing public discourse and personal experience. Sometimes they may use the media to the exclusion of other resources, or they may simply not pay attention to it at all. From Gamson's (1996, p. 111) point of view, "the particular ways in which they use it to build and maintain a frame for understanding depends heavily on the issue involved, although individuals may also vary on the same issue."

In Africa as elsewhere, citizen deliberation (debate, discussion, and conversation) is transacted in a wide range of formal, informal, private, and public forums. In addition, it takes different forms such as the structured and unstructured public discourse carried on among elected representatives, constituents, and political activists in designated public settings and in politically-oriented establishments. Citizen deliberation also includes routine private discussions (the typical everyday talk) about matters of public interest. It is through this public discourse, the *raison d'être* of the public deliberative system, that "people come to understand better what they want and need, individually as well as collectively" (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 211). Whereas all these function as systems for deliberative participation in politics, the present research focuses on the media as deliberative institutions because, at the same time, citizen deliberation increasingly occurs in a deliberative system that is dominated by the public media.

Lastly, in thinking about politics, people derive meaning from the interplay of exposure to the media, personal conversation, and internal dialogue. The media's role in political cognition is to link the micro and macro levels of the system of public discourse. In other words, the conversations that go on in people's social networks assimilate the images and language encountered in the "institutional, group project we call 'news'" (Herbst, 1998, p. 19). However, while the centrality of the media is assumed, media discourse is but one among the variety of resources available to individuals trying to make sense of public affairs.

Structure of the dissertation

The present chapter has provided a background to Uganda's political transition and mapped out the outlines of the core issues at the root of public discourse about the democratization process. Drawing on public opinion data about Ugandans' perceptions of the key issues related to the democratic transition, the chapter has shed light on the climate of opinion that informed the media discourse among the elite with regard to the country's political future. Additionally, it has expounded the purpose, significance, and objectives of the project, and has laid out the conceptual framework upon which the study rests.

Chapter 2 presents a historical perspective on Ugandan society and politics. It describes the milestones in Uganda's pre- and post-colonial evolution and discusses how specific developments shaped the public debates at the centre of the political transition. The roots of the incessant political crises and the solutions that were tried are examined, as are the outcomes of the various attempts to re-establish a stable constitutional order and to map out a straight democratic path.

Chapter 3 discusses the basis of democracy as a concept and system of practices. It appraises the operative principles of democracy and compares the various models of democracy in order to pave the way for a focus on the deliberative variant. It also examines the institutional framework for democracy and the requisite conditions for its successful implementation.

Chapter 4 examines the deliberative conception of democracy and the principles on which it is premised. It discusses the general differences and similarities between the aggregative and deliberative conceptions of democracy. Additionally, it evaluates some of the barriers that stand between the theory and practice of deliberative democracy.

Chapter 5 focuses on themes related to Africa's experiences with the transition to democratic politics. These themes include the contentions about the relevance of liberal notions of democracy in Africa and the role of political agency, specifically the contributions of the political elite, in the cultivation and of democratic values. The conceptualization of African democracy is also discussed with an emphasis on the unique tendencies, practices, and systems that necessitate the application of a set of analytical tools that differs from that which is traditionally used in analyses of democratic development.

Chapter 6 explores the media-democracy relationship in Africa and makes the case for a deliberative conception of that relationship by highlighting the role of the media in cementing the norms and practices of public deliberation. It looks at the functions of the media as a deliberative resource, paying particular attention to the elite-

driven character of media discourse and its consequences for democratic deliberation. In addition, the limitations that the media face as deliberative institutions are examined.

Chapter 7 discusses framing analysis and lays the foundation for adopting the constructionist approach to the framing of political discourse. The different theoretical perspectives in framing research are reviewed, culminating in an analysis of the constructionist paradigm. The discussion here sets the ground for the empirical work on framing by articulating a series of research questions to guide the study.

Chapter 8 outlines the methodology employed for the study, as well as some key limitations. It explains and justifies the conceptualization of the study and provides a breakdown of the techniques involved.

Chapter 9 reports the results of the study. The results are presented and illustrated thematically by research question.

Chapter 10 is a discussion of the implications and conclusions of the results and the study as a whole. It makes a number of specific and general observations that tie together the key normative, theoretical, and empirical considerations and outcomes of the study.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND TO UGANDA'S POLITICAL TRANSITION

Introduction

To appreciate the import of the debates about Uganda's political transition, it is logical to trace the issues they raised back to Uganda's historical experiences. Out of the country's turbulent history emerged a political culture characterized by a host of maladies: religious antagonism; the use of violence to settle political disagreements; the subversion of electoral procedures; the superficiality of party politics; the contempt for constitutional rule; the generalized abuse of power; and ethnic profiling and rivalry.

Along with such other legacies of colonialism as the inequitable distribution of developmental resources among regions, all these problems would become institutionalized in Uganda's post-independence political economy and culture. Equally, the political discourse that the elite were engaged in while deliberating the measures devised to cure the foregoing pathologies or while trying to fortify their own advantages and interests echoed many of the major themes in the country's history.

The colonial encounter

What became the modern state known as Uganda was politically engineered by the British out of an array of pre-colonial social systems whose complexity and sophistication in organization varied significantly – from the centralized kingdoms and principalities in the central, southern, and western parts of the country to the chiefdoms and decentralized societies in the north and east (Mugaju, 2000). The country formally became a British protectorate in 1894. The Buganda kingdom was the dominant monarchical institution when the colonialists and their predecessors, the explorers and

Christian missionaries, first made contact with the societies of this part of Africa in the latter half of the 19th century. By virtue of its relatively advanced system of social and political organization, Buganda would become the central unit around which the colonial state was to be modeled. In the process, it progressed economically and acquired a distinct position, privileged status, and supremacist mentality in relation to other societies. Also, through the policy of indirect rule, the colonial regime co-opted Baganda elites to work as its agents in extending colonial administration to other parts of the country.

In pursuing their imperialist conquest of Uganda, the British wielded the 'sword' as effectively as they flaunted the bible. They used Africans to fight and subjugate fellow Africans on their behalf, and then coerced them to live as citizens of the same country under one government. The use of force scarred the country's body politic to a level that not even self-government could rehabilitate (Lwanga-Lunyiigo, 1989).

Although religion, particularly the activities of Christian missionaries, and domestic politics, particularly the interests of the Baganda, were key factors in the colonization of Uganda, Britain's colonial incursion into and occupation of the country was primarily motivated by the imperial power's drive for geopolitical influence and control as well as material and economic interests in a strategic region of Africa. Nevertheless, the interfacing of religion and politics during the era of colonial occupation, and the attendant polarization of Ugandan society along religious and ethnic lines, so suffused the management of public affairs that religion and ethnicity would become organizing principles of politics (Karugire, 1980).

Ethnicity had a singularly firm grip on politics in colonial Uganda precisely because ethnic groups doubled as real interest groups. For as long as the

colonialists were in control, the central government and its colonial agents, owing to Britain's practice of indirect rule, "became the final authoritative allocators of values" (Gukiina, 1972, p. 76). The promotion of ethnic values was contingent upon the group's relationship with the colonial administration. Kingdoms could not gain territory or dominate their neighbors without the endorsement of the British, which implies that to defend and advance their values, ethnic groups had to curry favor with the colonial administration. To an extent, therefore, "ethnic groups also functioned as political interest groups throughout the colonial era in that they made their claims through or upon the institutions of the colonial government" (Gukiina, 1972, pp. 76-77). As such, the struggle for independence and the post-independence reconfigurations of political contours should be seen in this light.

In fact, Kasfir (1976, p. 95) has attributed the upsurge in "ethnic political participation" during the colonial and post-independence period to several factors whose cumulative impact resulted in the association of 'political prize' with ethnically-based protest and organization. For instance, just as the creation of a local government system revolving around districts and kingdoms escalated the political competition among ethnic groups, so did the superior modernization of some regions, especially Buganda, provoke frustrations and deepen feelings of ethnic deprivation among competing segments of the population.

The transition to independence

The process of Uganda's transition from a British protectorate to an independent state climaxed in the period between 1960 and the granting of independence in October 1962. This transitional phase leading up to self-government was, according to

Karugire (1980, p. 170), “the crucial period in Uganda politics.” Yet, mutual hostilities and lack of understanding prevented the emerging crop of African leaders from reconciling its differences, if only to ease the path to independence. The religious factionalism as well as the territorial disputes and Buganda’s demand for a federal status or autonomy within an independent Uganda would ensure that the transition to independence was beset with problems right from the start.

Uganda underwent a period of heightened nationalism in the fifties and early sixties when agitations for independence grew louder, bolder, and more broadly orchestrated. Although there was never a united nationalist movement, a key by-product of the struggle for independence was the formation of political parties: Uganda National Congress in 1952; Democratic Party (DP) in 1954; Progressive Party in 1955; Uganda People’s Union in 1959; Uganda People’s Congress (UPC) in 1960; and Kabaka Yekka (KY) or ‘The King Alone’ in 1961.

During that period, Sathyamurthy (1986, p. 366) contends, “the forces of national in Uganda rapidly developed alongside an intensification of Buganda parochialism...The hitherto latent political forces elsewhere in Uganda were gradually mobilized into a cohesive, conscious and integrative expression of national identity.” In attempts to mollify the different interests, the independence constitution of 1962 demarcated the country into five federal states comprising the kingdoms of Buganda, Ankole, Bunyoro, Toro, and Busoga, while the rest of the country was divided into 10 districts. Each federal state would be governed by a ruler of its own, an executive council of ministers and a legislature. But whereas Buganda was accorded relatively extensive self-governing authority, the constitution ceded to the other federal states only limited

exclusive powers of self-determination and vested a substantial amount of control over them in the central government. As for the districts, elected councils would be responsible for their administration but their powers were to be defined by the national parliament.

Coming to terms with self-government

The absence of a national consensus and consciousness that transcended ethnic identity in newly independent Uganda also made it futile to try and cultivate a collective sense of nationhood among the different nationalities. Mittelman (1975) points out that especially in regard to the search for a unifying ideology, the first prime minister, Milton Obote, was inspired by ideological initiatives based on transnational and continental sources of identification for the reason that tradition-bound sections of the population were suspicious of efforts to fashion a common Ugandan identity. For fear of reviving age-old enmities and fueling the animosities that were there at the time, Obote couched his initial calls for national solidarity in generalized and abstract terms.

The political structure created by the independence constitution of 1962 was modeled on the Westminster parliamentary system, with the winning political party forming a government headed by a prime minister, and with members of the legislature or National Assembly elected by universal suffrage. The general elections that preceded independence were won by an alliance of UPC and KY, though DP disputed the outcome. Obote, who was the leader of UPC, went on to form a government and received the instruments of independence from the colonial governor on October 9, 1962. The first significant amendment to the constitution was made in 1963 when the position of a

constitutional president was created. The Kabaka (king) of Buganda, Sir Edward Mutesa II, was then elected head of state and first president of Uganda.

Whereas Obote had inherited power from the colonial administration on assuming the leadership of government, he did not acquire the necessary authority for exercising his power, for he had to contend with pre-existing “centres of institutional authority in the various components of Uganda and these centres commanded loyalty and conferred authority to a far greater extent than any new African government could ever hope to do” (Karugire, 1980, p. 189). The Kabaka, who also acted as head of state, naturally enjoyed the loyalty of his Baganda subjects.

Obote’s problems were compounded by the divisive legacy of religion in Ugandan politics and by the fact that his own party UPC, like the others, had fundamental weaknesses that undercut any basis for building a cohesive and disciplined political organization. To consolidate his authority, Obote and his party increasingly resorted to unprincipled, illegitimate, and unconstitutional methods of governance. Notable among these was the militarization of politics to the extent that “by 1965 all the politicians had given up even the pretence of appealing to the electorate and it was clear that it would be the army which would be decisive in the power struggle that was raging within the ruling party” (Karugire, 1980, p. 196).

The cycle of crises

The political crisis that engulfed the country in the mid sixties had the governing party, UPC, splinter into two factions, one led by Obote and the other by Grace Ibingira. Obote was a republican nationalist inspired by what he viewed as exemplary political developments in other African countries such as Ghana and Tanzania; whereas

Ibingira was a reformer with sympathies toward the traditional institutions and their leaders. Obote considered centralized rule as the solution to tribal and centrifugal forces in the country's politics; while Ibingira viewed centralized authority as totalitarian. To make matters worse, the Kabaka's government had been drained of much of its power and separatist adherents of his kingdom were left to nurse their nostalgia and hopes for the day the Buganda monarchy would reclaim its pre-independence status and prestige. But as Sathyamurthy (1986, p. 428) puts it, "the Uganda Government was not prepared to compromise Uganda's integrity for the sake of Buganda hubris."

Yet, by 1966 the political conflict in the country had swelled beyond the clash between Buganda and the central government. Schisms that especially took on religious and ethnic dimensions emerged within the UPC government and party organs and were echoed all over the country. However, disagreements based on such sectarian overtones and policy differences had always been festering within the government. For instance, there were ethnically-induced divisions between the Bantu (predominantly southerners) and Nilotic (predominantly northerners) members of Obote's cabinet. But there were also disagreements on domestic policy issues, on the foreign policy question of non-alignment, and on ideological grounds (Sathyamurthy, 1986).

Constitutionalism on trial

Amidst mounting opposition to Obote and the political tensions that inundated the government and the country between 1965 and 1966, matters came to a head when Obote, two influential ministers, and Idi Amin, who was the army's deputy commander, were accused in parliament of corruption by illegally trafficking in gold and conspiring to topple the constitution. Obote counter-charged by detaining five Bantu

(including three Baganda) ministers and with his own claims that a military coup intended to unseat him was in the offing and that the Kabaka, as president, was involved in the scheme. Accusing the Kabaka of infringing the constitution and making unilateral military decisions, Obote counteracted in early 1966 by appropriating all governmental and executive powers and by suspending all provisions of the independence constitution that applied to the presidency (Sathyamurthy, 1986).

The Kabaka's inherently contradictory dual role as Buganda monarch and Ugandan head of state had been a source of much friction between him and Obote as chief executive of the government (Kabwegyere, 1995). Obote's UPC faction had emerged with the upper hand and his next move was to present a new constitution to the National Assembly. With the backing of the military, the 1962 independence constitution was thus abrogated. Amidst a boycott by the opposition and KY, the governing party's coalition partner, MPs of the ruling party voted overwhelmingly to endorse the new constitution "during a hushed ceremony with no debate in parliament" (Kabwegyere, 1995, p.230). The new constitution, which came to be known in popular parlance as the 'pigeon-hole constitution' because legislators were asked to rubber-stamp it only after receiving copies in their mailboxes, abolished kingdoms and created the office of executive president to which Obote was sworn-in on April 15, 1966. But in large part, the 1966 constitution did not differ fundamentally from the independence constitution although it sapped the Kabaka and the Buganda government of most of their powers and withdrew the federal status that the other kingdoms enjoyed. Principally, however, it was seen as setting off Uganda's political transition from a federal to a republican state and unitary system of government (Sathyamurthy, 1986).

At the peak of the constitutional crisis, Obote had deposed the Kabaka from the presidency with the backing of loyal military officers led by his trusted lieutenant Amin (a man that would become his nemesis). The broader crisis that the political tensions engendered had prompted a confrontation between Obote and militant Baganda who were determined to resist the government. The state of emergency that had been declared ended in the Kabaka's violent removal following the army's attack on his palace and his subsequent escape into exile in Britain.

Nonetheless, the Kabaka's subjects were not necessarily united in their perspectives on, and reactions to, the situation during the face-off between the central administration and the Buganda government. Actually, many ordinary and elite Baganda opted to accommodate themselves to the new reality, and what Sathyamurthy (1986, p. 440) describes as "the implicit acceptance of the situation by the Baganda" prompted Obote's government to come up with another version of the constitution in June 1967. Sitting as a constituent assembly, the National Assembly spent three months in exhaustive and vigorous deliberations about the proposals and the controversial provisions they entailed. The proceedings seemed at least to placate the worries and concerns of the leaders of DP, the dominant opposition party, who had harbored deep-seated reservations about the 1966 interim constitution.

The new constitution that was adopted on September 8, 1967 eradicated federalism in all its manifestations including the monarchies and the ceremonial district figure heads. The country was carved up into administrative districts and unified under one system of local government overseen by the central government. As Sathyamurthy,

(1986, p. 441) sums it up, “an era was brought to an end,” and according to Gukiina (1972, pp. 6-7):

The violent transfer of political power from the hands of tradition-bound leaders to Dr. Obote’s nationalist regime did much more to shape the country’s political system than any other issue in Ugandan politics. The transfer of power swiftly led Uganda from a loose federation to what some political scientists refer to as a “one man dictatorship.”

It is to this over-centralization of power in an ethnically diverse political environment that Barongo (1989) ascribes the cycle of political conflict and violence that seized Ugandan politics after independence. While the basic structure of Ugandan society was ethnically pluralistic, with manifold axes of interests, identities, loyalties, as well as patterns of action and power, the dominant mode of organization was politically centralized.

Dictatorship and fascism take root

From mid 1966, UPC essentially ruled as a one-party, quasi-military regime after the disintegration of its alliance with KY. Obote’s first reign as president (1967 to 1971) was characterized by political repression, stifling of dissent, generalized restriction of people’s freedoms, harassment of the opposition, abridging of human rights, detention of political opponents without trial, manipulation of the military along ethnic lines, extra-judicial practices, and wide-ranging abuses of power.

However, in the process of all his shenanigans and power schemes, Obote had planted the very seeds of his own demise; for on January 25, 1971, Amin mounted a coup that would lay him off into exile in Tanzania. Against the backdrop of Obote’s excesses, Amin’s accession to power initially appeared like a godsend to many Ugandans, certainly quite a few Baganda. But in no time, he descended upon the citizenry and broke

new ground with a brand of peerless fascism. To shore up his base, he purged the leadership and ranks of the army by systematically killing officers and imprisoning soldiers from Obote's home region in northern Uganda, specifically the Langi and Acholi. Amin then recomposed the bulk of the army by recruiting from the West Nile region (among the Alur, the Bari, and the Lugbara nationalities), from what were essentially mercenaries from southern Sudan (among the Anyanya/Nubians), and from the Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire at the time). Rising instability in the military would only invite fresh purges of the officer corps and the ranks. With so many soldiers perceived to be from potentially disloyal or hostile nationalities eliminated or otherwise killed, Amin flooded the army with officers and soldiers from his own nationality, the Kakwa (Sathyamurthym, 1986). Although estimates vary widely, it is believed that up to 300,000 Ugandans were killed at the hands of the Amin regime (Barya, 2006). Amin ruled chiefly by decree and made not even the slightest pretense about observing constitutional procedures.

But as political miscalculations go, Amin in 1978 attempted to annex a part of Tanzanian territory adjoining Uganda's southern border in what turned out to be an ill-fated military invasion in pursuit of soldiers who had fled to the Kagera region to escape reprisals after a failed mutiny. Tanzania had become a sanctuary and staging ground for anti-Amin groups and activities throughout the course of his dictatorship. His invasion of the country added momentum to efforts aimed at dislodging him, for his territorial ambitions made Tanzania the ally that the forces opposed to his regime had always been looking for. A meeting of anti-Amin exiles in Moshi on March 21, 1979, during which the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) was formed legitimized

Tanzania's invasion of Uganda. Thus, what the exiles "had mounted alongside the Tanzanians as opposition to an attacker turned into a war of liberation" that terminated in the overthrow of Amin on April 11, 1979, with the Tanzanian army spearheading his routing (Kabwegyere, 1995, p. 220).

A failed political experiment

Now, even though the Moshi gathering was romantically dubbed a unity conference, the conferees were at odds on many issues, including the re-establishment of democracy, the forcible removal of Amin, military and political strategies, ideology, and on the fundamental question of leadership. The 22 assorted organizations that convened at the so-called unity conference represented delegations and participants with divergent political outlooks and long-term interests. Inevitably, this triggered "an elite conflict over and above deeply entrenched opposing political views on the future of democracy in Uganda" (Ocitti, 2000, p. 246). Instead of activating the impetus to re-institute democracy, the conference and the anti-Amin war ignited long-standing divisions among the exiles. It should be noted that many, if not most, of the delegates who came to Moshi had been active in the pre-Amin politics of the sixties. Hence, negotiations concerning the future of the country were largely undergirded by the familiar politics of exclusion and factionalism as different groups plotted against each other and maneuvered for power in the post-Amin government. Their alliance would crumble once they got into government (Ocitti, 2000; Mamdani, 1995).

Yusuf Lule, who had been the consensus candidate to lead the UNLF, assumed the presidency on April 13, 1979. His government was a motley collection of political parties and groups in the UNLF coalition, which was governed by five organs:

the National Consultative Council (NCC); the National Executive Committee (NEC); the Military Commission (MC); the Political and Diplomatic Commission; and the Finance and Administration Commission. As the supreme organ of the UNLF, the NCC exercised legislative authority as a quasi-parliamentary body. The military, or military wing of the UNLF, would be known as the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA).

However, just 68 days into his administration, the NCC forced Lule out of office following disagreements over the scope of presidential powers, among other things. Godfrey Binaisa was then installed as president on June 20, 1979. When he too got himself ensnared in a conflict over military appointments, the MC, which wielded immense power, removed him from the presidency on May 12, 1980, and constituted itself into the core government authority led by Paulo Muwanga as chairman and Museveni as vice chairman. Binaisa basically shot himself in the foot by his efforts to neutralize opposition to his policies and political moves. He had attempted to consolidate the UNLF into a single umbrella organization that would bring all political groups under its roof. To pave the way toward that objective, he imposed a two-year moratorium on all organized political activities except those involving the UNLF. Yet another political crisis had exploded. The five-man MC proclaimed itself the new government and assumed the functions of the NCC. Governing mostly by decree, it appointed a Presidential Commission of three civilians and assigned it to perform the largely ceremonial functions of the presidency, while it reserved the substantive executive power for itself.

The MC, whose vice-chairman was Museveni, organized the first multi-party general elections on December 10, 1980. Four parties contested the elections: UPC

fielded Obote as its candidate; DP fielded Paul Ssemogerere; Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM) fielded Museveni; and the Conservative Party (CP) fielded Jehoash Mayanja-Nkangi. UPC won 73 of the 126 parliamentary seats and returned Obote to power. DP won 52 seats, UPM one, and CP none. Obote's controversial return to power marked what became known in public parlance as the Obote II regime.

The persistence of terror

There is wide agreement that the 1980 general elections were marred by extensive irregularities and fixed in favor of UPC. Whereas all losing parties disputed the results, DP opted to join parliament as the opposition party. Museveni, on the other hand, opted to mount an armed rebellion against Obote's UPC regime. In February 1981 he led a group of guerillas who formed the Popular Resistance Army (PRA). The PRA eventually merged with another group, the Uganda Freedom Fighters, which was led by the former president Lule. Out of this merger, the National Resistance Army (NRA) was born along with its political wing, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), with Lule as the overall chairman and Museveni as the vice-chairman and overall military leader. Aside from the NRA, Obote's government was mired in a multi-pronged war with several guerilla armies, including the Uganda Freedom Movement led by Andrew Kayiira; the Federal Democratic Movement co-led by George Nkwanga; and the Uganda National Rescue Front led by Moses Ali. According to Kabwegyere (1995), the proliferation of guerilla groups controlling all but a third of the country made the task of governing unfeasible and would eventually unhinge Obote's hold on power.

Besides, with the government perennially fighting for its mere survival, the country's basic functioning as a state was emasculated: insecurity and civil disorder

were rampant; countless lives were lost; the military was uncontrollable; the rule of law collapsed; the public service system broke down; violence became the norm; and the economy slid deeper into the doldrums it was plunged into by Amin; not to mention the government's willful neglect of its responsibility to protect private and public property.

The ongoing insurgencies exacerbated the ethnic divisions within the army, especially pitting the Langi, Obote's nationality, against the Acholi, the nationality of the two top military officers, Tito Okello and Bazilio Okello. The Langi and the Acholi dominated the army that was created virtually from scratch after Amin's departure. The Obote II regime finally imploded on July 27, 1985, when it was thrown out in a coup masterminded by the Okellos; and Obote was once again consigned into exile. Following in the footsteps of their predecessors who had forced their way to power, the Okellos did away with provisions of the (1967) constitution relating to legislative and executive power. Instead, they formed a Military Council of 12 members to act as the ruling organ, including members co-opted from some of the rebel groups that had been fighting Obote.

The Okellos attempted to engage the NRM/NRA – which was by all accounts the preeminent guerilla organization – in peace negotiations through the arbitration of Kenyan president Daniel Moi. Although a peace agreement was signed in December 1985, the fighting would continue, with substantial parts of the south falling under the NRA's control. The hostility-cessation talks apparently never had a chance because, as Kabwegyere (1995, p. 221) notes, Okello's regime “could not emerge from the terroristic and anarchic regime of his one time Commander-in-Chief, Obote; nor could he convince Museveni and the world that he would be a reliable partner in a formulated peace accord.”

The birth of the Movement system

The NRA⁵ finally swept the Okello regime out of power on January 26, 1986, and Museveni was accordingly installed president on January 29, 1986. The NRM legalized its government through Legal Notice No. 1 of 1986, whose effect was to freeze the 1967 constitution and to blend the organs of the NRM with those of the state. The NRM originally committed itself to staying in power for a four-year interim period up to January 1990. But within a year of the expiry of this transitional period, the NRM took steps to inaugurate the first representative and conventional legislative branch of government and, rather conveniently, followed it up by amending Legal Notice No. 1 to further extend the interim period to January 1994. Among other reasons, the government used the constitution that was in the works to rationalize the extension. By 1994 the constitution-making was ongoing, and it would take another two years more or less, so the whole idea of the NRM as a government in the ‘interim’ became as moot as it was predictable.

Yet, in most of its rhetoric and many of its deeds, the NRM government at its inception exemplified a commitment to democratic rule and norms that was apparent in its record on the elimination of systematic abuses of power, state-sanctioned violence, and inter-ethnic animosities as well as respect for the rule of law, human rights, and freedom of expression. Additionally, civil society got a new lease on life as did other core democratic institutions such as the judiciary and local governance systems at the grassroots.

⁵ The NRA became the country’s official army which was subsequently renamed the Uganda People’s Defense Forces (UPDF).

On attaining power, the NRM introduced the concept of the Movement as a model of government and as a system of political organization. It was the idea of a no-party form of democracy in which candidates interested in elective political office would compete as individuals on the strength of their personal merit. In addition to the principle of individual merit, other pivotal canons of the Movement doctrine were the ideas of inclusiveness, consensus, popular participation, and broad-basedness. According to Wapakhabulo (2000, p. 82), who was one of the standard-bearers⁶ of the Movement doctrine:

This broad-based and inclusive system was justifiable because the NRM government needed a breathing space (initially an interim period of four years which was later extended to ten) to stabilize the situation, rehabilitate the economy, revitalize the civil service, the police and the judiciary and, above all, to establish a legal and institutional framework that would allow for solid and sustainable democratization.

To create the atmosphere it supposedly needed to carry forward its agenda, the government, through an administrative instrument introduced by the attorney general, banned political party activities but permitted the parties to remain as legal entities. Party members were free to take part in the Movement system purely as individuals all the way from the grassroots through the districts to the national level “without formal sponsorship from their respective parties” (Wapakhabulo, 2000, p. 82). Specifically, until the referendum to determine their destiny, parties were barred from carrying out routine and traditional political party activities like recruiting members, holding rallies and delegates’ conferences, setting up branches or offices upcountry, as well as campaigning and displaying party symbols.

⁶ He served as a cabinet minister in different portfolios from 1986 to 1996, he was the chairman of the constituent assembly from 1994 to 1995, he was the speaker of parliament from 1996 to 1998, and finally national political commissar at the Movement Secretariat.

Contrasting the Movement model and one-party systems, Ssempebwa (1994, p. 135) asserted that the NRM was different because it was not controlled by a bureaucracy and that the Movement Secretariat was there but to superintend the government's minimum program. Most importantly, "There are no restrictions on political participation and no organization from which to be expelled." Also in contrast to past regimes, the NRM had permitted a measure of openness in the discussion of public affairs and the media could, to a certain extent, vigorously criticize the government. In parliament too, debates were fairly unfettered and decisions were in large part arrived at by consensus.

Despite the massive support it had in the southern half of the country and parts of the north in the first couple of months, Kasfir (2000) observes that the NRM was essentially a military and primarily southern regime. Having recruited from and based its guerilla force in the south, it was perhaps inevitable that southerners dominated its leadership and rank and file in both its military and civilian domains. Before it could consolidate its power, the NRM found itself embroiled in two civil wars that were launched by some remnants of the armies it had defeated and some new rebel groups. The insurgency in the east was snuffed out in a short time, but the war in the north with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has persisted to this day and defied many attempts at a peaceful settlement.

Participatory democracy

At the same time it put the parties on ice, the NRM embarked on a radical experiment in popular and participatory democracy by setting up what was then referred to as the Resistance Council (RC) system of local government at the village (RC1), parish

(RC2), sub-county (RC3), county (RC4), and district (RC5) levels. The policy of decentralization and the reforms in local government that were launched in the nineties did away with the term ‘resistance’ and changed RCs into *Local Councils/Committees*, referred to hereafter as LCs. In a sense, the re-branding of RCs would also serve a political marketing purpose by watering down the perception that they were institutionally wedded to the NRM. Their essential structure and role remained the same. Every citizen was deemed to be a member of the primary LC where she resided and all adults were eligible to vote and to be elected. Each LC1 was headed by a directly elected executive committee of nine – each holding a specific portfolio⁷ – that acted as the government of the locality. Beyond the LC1, members of the executive committee from LC2 to LC5 were elected indirectly in a system whereby the elected committee members at a lower level constituted the electoral college for office bearers at the next rung.

The role of the LC committees then, as it is today, was to develop and implement policies governing the local communities and to handle communal issues including the resolution of conflicts and settlement of simple legal disputes. Additionally, they assisted the law enforcement agencies in maintaining security and law and order within their jurisdictions; oversaw government policy; vetted candidates for the army and the law enforcement agencies; and also served as a communication link between the local population and the government (Ddungu, 1994).

At the summit of the original RC system was the National Resistance Council (NRC). The NRC performed the legislative function, but it was in effect a political organ of the NRM given that it was originally composed exclusively of the 39

⁷ Chairperson; Vice-chairperson; General secretary; and secretaries for Defense; Youth; Women; Mass mobilization and education; Information; and Finance.

founding members, the so-called 'historicals,' of the NRM/NRA. These were civilians and soldiers who had participated in various combat and non-combat capacities in the NRM/NRA guerilla war. The NRC was subsequently transformed into a nationally representative body in 1989 when its membership was expanded to 278 via an elective process of electoral colleges composed of LC4 committees in each district.

Under the Movement system, candidates competing for office were forbidden to identify themselves with any political party or association and were not allowed to campaign except to make their cases at joint rallies or public meetings attended by all their competitors. With the doors open for anybody to stand for office, the system allowed people of different political opinions to serve on the same committee. At the center and in the grassroots LC structures, the NRM crafted what it purported to be a broad-based government out of people with disparate political outlooks and interests. As at the grassroots and in the executive branch of government, the expanded NRC brought into its fold individuals who traditionally owed their allegiances to political parties but were legally prohibited to conduct their politics as an institutional opposition.

The problem though, as Mamdani (1994) saw it, was that the NRM had come to conflate the right of association with the right to participate in the LC system. In an apparent attempt to prove to the population its credentials as a liberation movement, a promise that in the first place endeared it to many Ugandans even before it came into power, the NRM tended to see its system of grassroots participatory democracy as an end in itself and as an ultimate measure of its success. The ramification of this was a glaring contradiction in which the same government that had created an enabling environment for people to participate in their own governance at the local level would also become

culpable for imposing draconian restrictions on the right of association in other areas of civic and political life and organization.

Constitutional renewal

To secure a stable future for the country, the NRM set up a Constitutional Commission in February 1989 that would organize a nation-wide consultative process through which citizens would “discuss, evolve and promulgate a constitution according to their aspirations” (Ssempebwa, 1994, p. 130).

The mandate of the commission was to collect citizens’ views and ideas through public forums, to collate the people’s views into a set of proposals, and to write a draft constitution that would be debated and ratified by an elected national Constituent Assembly (CA). The making of the constitution was not a mechanical gathering and compilation of views. It was an educative encounter in which the participants learned about the history of the country and about basic constitutional affairs in a process designed to encourage informed debate and discussion of the issues. A diversity of methods and tools was employed to inform the public and to gather their views: memoranda, oral submissions, testimonies, the media, position papers, public meetings, seminars, workshops, school essay competitions, and meetings with civil society and professional organizations, special interest groups, and educational institutions, to name a few (Mukholi, 1995). Going by the numbers, the public was earnest about its involvement in the making of the constitution and the 25,547 written submissions⁸ that

⁸ Summary of submissions to the Constitutional Commission:

District seminar reports	-	33
Institutional seminar reports	-	53
Sub-county seminar reports	-	813
Individual memoranda	-	2,553
Group memoranda	-	839
RC5 (district) memoranda	-	36

the commission received spoke to the high degree of citizen engagement with the process and the citizens' sense of their own stake in the outcome.

The commission presented a draft of the constitution to the president in December 1992. The CA was formed and elections to the assembly were held from March to April 1994. The membership of the CA comprised 284 delegates⁹ representing a range of social and interest groups, political interests, and constituencies. Deliberations started in May 1994 and the new constitution was promulgated and came into effect on October 8, 1995.

The commission of about two dozen generally eminent citizens had a judge of the high court, Justice Benjamin Odoki, as its chairman. Despite the appearances of impartiality and representation for the different political tendencies, religions, and ethnic groups in the country, Oloka-Onyango (2000) believes that the constitutional process was flawed in significant respects. For example, membership of the commission was dominated by people known to be Movement supporters who had a vested interest in perpetuating the status quo. Even the selection of those members representing the

RC4 (county) memoranda	-	13
RC3 (sub-county) memoranda	-	564
RC1 (village) memoranda	-	9,521
School essay competitions	-	5,844
Newspaper articles	-	2,763
Position papers	-	290
Total	-	25,547

Source: Mukholi, D. (1995).

⁹ Delegates to the CA and the interests they represented:

214	-	directly elected from constituencies
39	-	for women
10	-	for the army
10	-	special presidential nominees
4	-	for political parties
4	-	for the youth
2	-	for workers
1	-	for people with disabilities

Source: Mukholi, D. (1995).

traditional opposition parties was not done in a transparent manner as they were hand-picked by the president.

A particularly insidious element of the consultative process resided in the “guiding questions” that the commission prepared to provide a framework for debating the issues. In its guidelines, the commission offered three alternatives from which people could choose a future political system: multi-party, one-party, and no-party or Movement. However, whereas both the presumed merits and demerits of the multi-party system were enumerated, the commission did not list any shortcomings of the one-party and no-party systems (wittingly or unwittingly conflating the two). By focusing entirely on the assumed advantages of the Movement system, the subtext was that it was faultless and the message being conveyed to the unsuspecting public was that it was the only option (Oloka-Onyango, 2000).

With the composition of the commission skewed in favor of the Movement and with some of its methods failing to rise above reproach, the stage was set for a fractious deliberative process. Besides, while involving the citizenry in the constitution-making process might have served genuine educational and political socialization purposes, it also was an opportunity for the regime to advance, in some understated and some obvious ways, its politicization project.

Movement versus multi-party politics

In respect of the democratic issues that the framers of Uganda’s new constitution were to wrestle with in order to get the country back on track after being derailed by its tumultuous history, Ssempebwa (1994, pp. 138-139) laid out a few values to guide the deliberators, to wit: “national unity,” “democracy within the political actors,”

“wide accommodation and participation in governance,” “dispersal of political power,” and “enduring institutions to safeguard democracy.”

The crux of the matter in the debates about the appropriate political system was whether to retain the Movement or to revert to the multi-party framework. In the deliberations that ensued, arguably none was as impassioned and as divisive as the one concerning the fate of multi-party politics. For instance, on two occasions during the CA deliberations, supporters of the multi-party system walked out of the assembly when it endorsed a motion that gave the Movement system a five-year extension from the effective date of the new constitution. They walked out again when their motion to prevent the elevation of the Movement in the draft constitution to a political system in its own right was defeated. Their boycott lasted about three weeks. As Mugaju and Oloka-Onyango (2000) note, the transmutation of the no-party notion into one of the political systems available to choose from considerably upped the stakes in the debates about the trajectory of the country’s political future.

Advocates of party politics and pluralism in general saw this trend as a ploy by the NRM to monopolize power, and their discourse repertoire drew extensively on philosophical impressions to make the case for the unabridged existence of political parties. Ssemogerere (1994), who was the president-general of DP, argued that the case for multi-party politics hinged on the fundamental assumptions that free will and pluralism were innate to human nature and that they were universal. He believed that the question of multi-party politics should remain open-ended and approached dynamically, allowing for the possibility that the number and qualities of political parties could change in line with the challenges at a given time and in a particular place and in accordance

with the people's preferences. Mulozi (1994, p. 68), another DP leader, based his thinking on what he considered to be the virtues of multi-party politics: the freedoms of association, expression, conscience, and assembly; government by consent; peaceful competition; and accountability. He therefore contended that the multi-party system gave humans their "fullest freedom to fulfil [their] varied needs."

Reflecting on this issue, Ssempebwa (1994, p. 132), who was a member of the Constitutional Commission, wrote: "Talk about multipartyism and many Ugandans will recall rigged elections accompanied by violence followed by oppression of opponents and general political instability."

Undeniably, Ugandans by and large embraced the Movement system when it was instituted. When it seized power, the NRM demonstrated many real and positive differences between its styles of and approaches to governance and those of previous regimes that had left the country traumatized and without bearing. As a matter of fact, if Ssempebwa's (1994, p. 141) testimony is anything to go by, the majority of opinions during the nationwide solicitation of views for the new constitution favored the prolongation of the Movement system for a duration varying between five and 20 years:

The ordinary people did not make the choice in view of the fundamentality of the right to associate even after sensitization in educative seminars. Rather what was acting on the people's mind is the qualitative difference between the rule of the NRM and the governments of the past. The Movement system is associated with unity, peace, and greater observance of human rights (Ssempebwa, 1994, p. 141).

That notwithstanding, and the fact that he was favorably disposed toward the Movement system, Ssempebwa (1994) was cognizant of the fact that fundamental questions of democratization remained unresolved and that the political debate was far from over. While he believed that the Movement had the potential to realize the goals of

democratic renewal and political stability, he did not think that it was the ideal model for the country because the unique circumstances that brought it into being and under which it functioned could imperil its viability, if not its survival. In fact, by the mid 1990s it was clear to him as it was to other observers and participants that the democratization process was alarmingly decelerating.

The point is that by the beginning of the constitutional process in 1994, close to a decade since the NRM gained power, what had been sold to the citizens as an interim arrangement for the minimum goals of pacifying and stabilizing the country, instituting civil order and the rule of law, and constructing a foundation for economic recovery and growth, seemed to be getting entrenched as a long-term project. And to some observers and participants, distressing signs were already bubbling.

For one thing, the Movement was conceived, symbolically, as an umbrella to be shared by all and, in practice, as a platform for individuals and groups of all political persuasions to converge on a minimum national agenda for peace-building and rehabilitation of the country's battered social fabric and infrastructure. But gradually there was a budding feeling that the basic objectives of this implicit political compact had been attained, thus bringing to the surface the divergent views of the different parties with regard to the country's future. Naturally, political parties began to raise their demands for multi-party elections more forcefully.

Besides, steps designed to reinforce the Movement could have the effect, wittingly or not, of turning it into a one-party dictatorship. Opponents of the NRM had spotted tendencies in that direction, for example, the transformation of the Movement Secretariat from a body responsible for the political supervision of government programs

into an enforcer of the party line, as it were. To this add the rise in recruitment of youths, students, civil servants, and local leaders into military-style cadre training programs that were clearly politicized with the NRM's parochial agenda. An outstanding curricular feature of these programs was the demonization of political parties and multi-party politics in general.

Another bone of contention was that because of the North's historical association with past governments that were particularly oppressive from the South's point of view, Northerners would not fully embrace the Movement system. Indeed, as Ssempebwa (1994) points out, Northerners expressed greater support for multi-partyism whereas Southerners mostly supported the Movement system during the Constitutional Commission's consultations. Deep-seated suspicions toward the NRM among Northerners would contribute to the mushrooming of insurgent activities in that region. The most intractable of these rebellions, the one by the LRA, has been ongoing for nearly two decades and has left much of the North mired in a humanitarian crisis.

Finally, the notion that the Movement government was home to actors with all manner of political leaning existed more in myth than in reality. The coalition that passed for the NRM's first government was not crafted out of a negotiated process that was open to public monitoring; neither did it emerge from a process of genuinely free association based on a commonly agreed agenda. To all intents and purposes, this was a coalition of individuals and parties in a steeply lopsided power relationship; one in which the historical or original members of the NRM/NRA who were involved politically or militarily in the guerilla struggle were the major players as opposed to those who joined or were welcomed into the government after the NRM seized power.

Drawn against a political landscape of this kind, the Constitutional Commission proposed the continuance of the Movement system for another five years under the new constitution, after which a referendum would be held to determine whether the country would stay the course or change to a multi-party system. To the multi-party advocates, the continued suspension of parties negated what they believed was a non-negotiable and inalienable right of association.

Resolving the question of political systems

Leaving aside the academic question of whether Movementism and multi-partyism were political ‘systems’ at all (Barya, 2000, pp. 34-35), the idea of constitutionally privileging one system over others was, as noted previously, notorious in the view of some critics for the attempt to herd everybody under a single political arrangement. In his critique of this idea, Mamdani (1995, p. 128) submitted that the Movement was, and would remain, legitimate only to the extent that it was premised on a free-willing consensus rather than a legislated obligation. “The day the Movement becomes a constitutional requirement, a compulsion, it will suffer the same fate as did the single party of the 1970s: persuasion will give way to coercion and politics to administrative decision-making.”

The first constitutionally mandated referendum on political systems was held on June 29, 2000, but was boycotted by “all the established and credible political parties and organizations” and many of the groups that “suddenly emerged” to campaign for multi-partyism were under a veil of suspicion as Trojan Horses of the NRM regime (Barya, 2006, p. 33). The parties argued that the right of association was non-negotiable, so they would not legitimize a process that they believed undercut a fundamental freedom

because of the likelihood of illegalizing organized opposition. In the event of this happening, opponents of the Movement would have no legal, peaceful, and democratic remedies for their grievances. In Barya's (2000, p. 35) ominous take on the situation, multi-partyists would have committed "political suicide" had they taken part in the referendum. Moreover, given the access it had to state resources and the headstart it had on the issue after a decade and half ceaselessly decampaigning multi-partyism, the NRM had a clear advantage over its rivals.

The second referendum to decide the future political system took place on July 28, 2005, under no less controversial circumstances than its predecessor. The difference was that this time round, the NRM had become a convert to pluralism and none would spread the gospel, in a manner of speaking, more fervently than President Museveni himself. In a speech to the nation on the eve of the 2005 referendum, however, Museveni¹⁰ insisted that the referendum was not a contest between the Movement and multi-partyism and that it was not meant to determine whether the people preferred the one to the other. As far as he was concerned, the superiority of the Movement was a foregone verdict:

There is no doubt that the Movement is much better than the parties that we have ever known here in Uganda – past and present... There is nothing wrong with the Movement. It is the best. The question, then, is: "How long should we go on with trying to wrestle with the uncommitted who are forced to stay with us in the Movement because of the Constitution? Do you want us to continue with this lack of cohesion in our Movement? My answer is no.

Responding to the claim that the Movement had only now chosen to come out and tell the truth after 19 years of deceiving the people, Museveni brusquely retorted:

¹⁰ Presidential address to the nation on July 14, 2005 about the impending referendum.

This is nonsense! We have not been telling lies to the people on this issue. Our anti-sectarianism medicine has cured those who wanted to be cured. However, our patience with those who do not want to be cured has run out.

Specifically, Museveni tendered three reasons to justify the change of mind. First was the lack of cohesion within the Movement. This was especially apparent in the disloyalty and betrayal of Members of Parliament (MP) who had been elected on the basis of their perceived allegiance to the Movement, only to turn against the Movement once they got in parliament. In other words, “some inconsiderate elements were misusing the broad-based character of the Movement to fight the Movement and frustrate its objectives.” Second was the feeling among those who consistently rejected the Movement, though a minority, that they were being conscripted against their will. While the majority could regulate the quality and form of electoral competition, Museveni argued:

The majority cannot and should not, persistently, deprive a Ugandan of his/her right to, if necessary, organize independently and differently. The minority, for instance, may feel that the majority are not doing enough to fight corruption; they are handling education in a wrong way; etc. These are not sectarian issues. They are performance issues; service delivery issues. If the majority, persistently, stops the minority from doing this, then the majority are making a mistake also. The Movement had wanted everybody to be under one political roof. It would have been the best. However, if somebody refuses to come along with us, it is correct that we give him/her peace and we get our own peace.

Third was the misrepresentation of Uganda abroad by anti-Movement politicians who went outside the country alleging that they were being oppressed because they were not allowed to organize independently. According to Museveni, these were mostly associated with past criminal governments such as that of Amin and Obote, or with the DP’s sectarian politics. Besides, they would say nothing about their past crimes or those of the regimes they worked for.

In spite of the u-turn, the opposition parties and other politically-oriented civic organizations again opted to boycott the 2005 referendum on the grounds that since both sides were in concurrence about reverting to multi-partyism, it was a redundant and profligate undertaking. The referendum would go ahead as planned. The following question was put to the voters: “Do you agree to open up the political space to allow those who wish to join different organisations/parties to do so to compete for political power?” Regardless of the low voter turnout – 47.3 percent – the result was unmistakably in favor of changing to a multi-party political system.¹¹

Conclusion

I have been concerned in this chapter with the mosaic of historical, socio-cultural, and political factors and developments that would shape the discourse about Uganda’s future as a democracy and the reforms that were anticipated along the way. By describing the political maneuvers that punctuated the political process over the decades, I sought to demonstrate how the country’s democratic fortunes seesawed along with the interests and actions of elite actors.

¹¹ Final National Results of the Referendum on Change of Political System July 2005:

Yes side (in favor of changing to a multi-party system) - 92.4%

No side (against changing to a multi-party system) - 7.6%

Source: The Electoral Commission, The Republic of Uganda

CHAPTER 3

FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

Introduction

Although democracy is almost universally acknowledged and sought after as the quintessential standard for political governance and legitimacy today, its conception as an ideal and as a practice remains complex and is acutely contested. Even after Huntington's (1991) three 'waves' of democratization¹² that the modern world has undergone, the ebb and flow of events and transformations characterizing these waves have left a host of fundamental issues in democratic thought and practice unsettled. For example, just as the contradictory interpretations of the history of democracy have persisted, so has the blending of old and contemporary notions resulted in sometimes vague and often shifting versions and explanations of the core concepts of democracy (Held, 1996).

Naturally, the ideas that cement the various principles and models of democracy are products of particular assumptions – some empirical (seeking to deduce from the pragmatic or real world of politics) and some normative (seeking to define ideal values for democracy and to set standards for democratic performance). In both scholarly and popular discourses about democracy, these assumptions are by no means easy to

¹² Huntington describes a "wave of democratization" as a sequence of transitions, sometimes partial, from non-democratic to democratic government systems that unfold over a set timeframe. These positive transitions are far greater numerically than reverse changes during the same period, but each wave tends to be accompanied by a reverse wave from democratic back to non-democratic government. Though admittedly arbitrary, Huntington has delineated the following waves representing three regime changes from the early 19th to late 20th centuries:

First wave:	1828 – 1926
First reverse wave:	1922 – 1942
Second wave:	1943 – 1962
Second reverse wave:	1958 – 1975
Third wave:	1974 – todate

synchronize, if that were even possible to begin with. But for purposes of the present discussion, my approach to democracy is conceptually oriented toward Held's (1996, p.9) perspective:

While I believe that the most defensible and attractive form of democracy is one in which citizens can, in principle, extend their participation in decision-making to a wide array of spheres (political, economic and social), I do not think any one existing model alone provides a satisfactory elucidation of the conditions, features or rationale of this democratic form.

As implied here, the tendency to reify and to view specific models of democracy as though they were mutually exclusive and self-contained explanations not only glosses over their limitations but also ignores democracy's overriding principles that would provide the basis for general applications and comparisons. Although the transition from the articulation of the operative or defining principles of democracy to the identification of the institutions that exemplify those principles is an admittedly challenging task, it cannot happen without taking into account the concrete and unique situations one is bound to encounter when dealing with specific cases. Therefore, democracy has many different and competing justifications. These will determine what will ultimately come to be regarded or accepted as democratic practice.

My goal in this chapter is to establish some minimal conceptual foundation and analytical context for democratic politics. Although democracy is generally understood in terms of specific models, there are also important discussions in the field vis-à-vis the defining principles of democracy that transcend individual models. We can infer from these principles a basic understanding of what democracy means or, at least, the basis for its promotion. It is imperative to address the most enduring of these fundamental principles of democracy prior to settling on a particular model – in this case,

that of deliberative democracy. Preference for a given model should then depend upon the extent to which it satisfies the assumed requirements of the most valued principle(s) of democracy.

An exhaustive survey of the literature is beyond the scope of this work, however, because of my limited goal which is to introduce the context in which the discussion of deliberative democracy is to be appreciated. The foregrounding to be undertaken as outlined below is necessary in order to contextualize our focus on the deliberative justifications for democracy.

The first objective of this chapter is to spotlight the principle of equality in an attempt to decipher a small part of the answer to the all-important question of what it is that democracy aspires to achieve. Regardless of the realization that answers to this question will vary from one model of democracy to another, there are some fairly universal justifications for democratic government. “All types of democracy,” writes Gutmann (1993, p. 411), “presume that people who live together in a society need a process for arriving at binding decisions that takes everybody’s interests into account.” Any such process would at the least have to measure up to Lively’s (1975, p.35) proposition that “democracy has to do...primarily with political equality, equality of influence over political decision-making.”

My second objective is to explore the institutional framework that sustains democracy. Now, in institutional terms, what is implied by democracy here is Western democracy of the Anglo-American variety and its variants across the world including Uganda. As Held (1996) argues, there is a relationship between the development of various strains of democracy and the establishment of particular political ideas and

practices that took shape most vividly in Europe and North America. Although discussions pertaining to the nature of democracy have been especially intense within the intellectual traditions of Western liberal societies, “this is by no means to claim that everything of importance about the nature of democracy originated in, or was fully understood or expressed in, Europe and North America alone” (Held, 1996, pp.5-6). In Africa, rigorous debates about the liberal democratic tradition have occupied a great deal of the intellectual debates about democratization. The attention given to democratic values and practices under the terms of this research comes in the context of debates pertaining to the application of Western-type democracy in Africa, a subject that is directly addressed in chapter 5.

The third objective of the chapter is to introduce the various models or types of democracy and to explore their interrelationships. Democratic institutions are by-products of the assumptions that people hold about democracy and of the elements that distinguish and unify different models of democracy. Since theorists and analysts have approached the landscape of democracy in diverse ways, it is imperative to underscore the substantial volume of conceptual analysis devoted to the development of theoretical models designed to describe democratic systems and to explain how they work.

The democratic principle of political equality

Historically, democracy has been defined as “rule by the people” (Lively, 1975; Held, 1996). But this is no doubt a very loaded expression that has fomented boundless controversies about the very nature and basis of democracy: Who rules? How is rule exercised? What is the scope of rule? Who are the people? How do the people rule? Must the people agree on every aspect of their rule? Is there room for

political disagreement? Thus, the term democracy has been employed as a descriptor for a particular way power is distributed in a society. While its comparative terms like monarchy and aristocracy have been equated with monopolistic and oligopolistic distributions of power, respectively, democracy has been associated primarily with the principle of political equality.¹³

Yet, as Lively (1975) suggests, linking democracy with political equality gave democracy such an expansive connotation that any permutation of the equality principle could qualify any regime as democratic. This is why the notion of democracy as popular sovereignty and rule remains saddled with two thorny ambiguities: one centered on who the ‘people’ are and what to ‘rule’ is. For all the ambiguities, both concepts revolve around the notion of political equality and are understood less as ends in themselves than as means toward attaining the higher goal of equality in influencing the procedures and outcomes of the political process.

Assuming, as Lively (1975, p.16) does, that the goal of democracy is “the maximization of political equality,” its attainment is dependent upon two conditions: one is the presence of the requisite constitutional rules or arrangements that provide a framework in which citizens can influence public policies and officials; and the other is the possession of and access to the necessary political resources (intellectual, social, and material) needed to influence collective decisions. Typical lines of argument put relatively more weight on one or the other condition, and although the defenders of these arguments are critical of each other, the positions they represent are not inherently contradictory.

¹³ This discussion relies on the seminal work of Jack Lively (1975). He breaks democracy down into fundamental concepts that command the widest recognition, while paying due attention to the complexities of the phenomenon.

The emphasis on constitutional approaches is criticized, firstly, for ignoring the fact that enacting the appropriate constitutional provisions – such as universal suffrage and decision making rules – is inadequate to ensure even a semblance of political equality. This is because, on the view of the critics of constitutionalism, political equality is a function of an array of social arrangements that impact the manner by which influence on government is distributed in a society. In conceding this line of argument, Lively, 1975 observes that the level of political equality a community enjoys will be determined, one, by how widely the desire and capacity to use the rights of citizenship are shared; and two, by the degree to which resources apart from voting can be employed to influence collective decisions.

It might be tempting to conclude that equality of opportunity in political participation has been instituted with the enactment of constitutional and legal guarantees. Yet the individual level of involvement in political activity, ranging from the minimalist level of engagement like voting to the deep investment of personal time and energy, is far from a matter of personal disposition. It is conditioned by and varies with a number of factors including an individual's attitudes, resources, feelings of political efficacy, access to information and the aptitude to evaluate it, capacity and motivation to meet the costs of participation both in time and money, and experience with social organization (Lively, 1975).

Whereas it can be argued that the attitudes people bring to politics can be shaped by the political system itself and that willingness to engage in politics depends on experience of involvement, it is also true that the attitudes that nurture individuals' participation in politics and the material resources it requires are unequally distributed at

least in Western and Western-type democracies. People's capacity to engage in political activity is affected by family background, education, income, work experience, and social status. In other words, inequalities rooted in other social domains may engender political inequality. Likewise, given that wealthy individuals, corporations, and organizations as well as those who control the mass media are known to have direct influence over decision makers, such privileges of ownership and access to the means of political communication can in turn beget political inequalities (Lively, 1975).

But to argue that political equality is contingent upon equality in other domains of public life is not to discount the signal importance of constitutionalism. Despite the fact that constitutional frameworks can only go so far in conferring political equality, neither can equality be secured in the absence of such frameworks designed to give citizens ways to influence state policies and government officials. Lively (1975, p.29) sums up this point thus:

It is one thing to admit that within a formally democratic system political equality may be greater as other equalities are achieved, quite another to say that if those other equalities are present then political equality is necessarily established.

To be sure, political equality may well be compromised by extra-political inequalities, but the removal or reduction of barriers to political participation occasioned by such inequalities does not guarantee political equality as long as the "ruling elite can maintain itself without any reference or accountability to the people" (Lively, 1975, p.35).

The second criticism of constitutional approaches to political equality challenges the idea of treating citizens in the massive and sophisticated modern state as direct participants in collective decision making (Lively, 1975). On this argument, such is the complexity of contemporary government systems that for them to function

necessitates the unequal assignment of political roles, which inevitably leads to the creation of hierarchies. Because modern governments operate through specialization, bureaucratization, centralization of authority and control, and generally speaking, political division of labor, these alone would generate inequalities in political influence even if other disparities of a social and economic nature were non-existent or resolved. Hence, the result is a tension between the demands of bureaucratic efficiency and political equality.

The institutional framework for democracy

A political system must fulfill one or more of four conditions to qualify as democratic, and the logic behind these conditions is captured in the two conceptual categories of “direct democracy” and “responsible government” (Lively, 1975, p. 30).

Direct democracy, understood as the extent to which common citizens are involved in the management of public affairs, refers to political systems that comply with (either one or both of) two standards of democracy. The first states that, “All should govern, in the sense that all should be involved in legislating, in deciding on general policy, in applying laws and in governmental administration.” The second states that, “All should be personally involved in crucial decision-making, that is to say in deciding general laws and matters of general policy.”

Responsible government, understood as the degree to which government decisions are subject to public control, refers to political systems that also adhere to (either one or both of) two standards of democracy. The first states that, “Rulers should be accountable to the ruled; they should, in other words, be obliged to justify their actions

to the ruled and be removable by the ruled.” The second states that, “Rulers should be accountable to the representatives of the ruled.”

To render a political system democratic, the tenets of direct democracy and responsible government require the establishment of certain institutional arrangements. The mechanisms for direct democracy are evident in the different ways that political systems create opportunities for regular citizens to participate in public administration from which they gain “the experience of ruling and being ruled” (Lively, 1975, p. 33). In the U.S., the jury system offers citizens experience in the administration of justice, for example. In political contexts where systems exist for the decentralization and devolution of power through local governance structures, elected representatives get to exercise varying amounts of authority in different administrative roles and responsibilities. Uganda’s LC system is a case in point.

The essence of responsible government is that citizens or the electorate should be able to impose some control over government actions, policies, decisions, and officials. Whereas the actual magnitude and form of control are invariably arguable, what is seldom disputed and conventionally assumed is that responsible government necessitates a measure of popular control over government decisions and political leaders (Lively, 1975).

The institutional framework for responsible government must provide for at least three basic conditions that need to be present both in principle and practice. These are: free and fair elections; freedom of association; and freedom of speech (Lively, 1975).

First, by free elections is meant that the government in power or any other group seeking to replace the incumbent cannot influence the electoral outcome by any

other means except by indicating how it will govern if returned or voted into office. Coercion, intimidation, bribery, and fraud are inimical to responsible government. Second, freedom of association is not just about providing legal guarantees for association. The removal of legal barriers on its own will not give citizens the ability to associate as long as the costs (in a broad sense) involved are so high that only some groups can sustain them. Given that the availability of alternatives is central to responsible government, groups interested in competing for power would find it difficult or impossible to offer alternative programs, policies, and leadership without the freedom to organize in the first place and to articulate alternative agendas. Third, here too the legal guarantees for freedom of speech are of limited value if access to the means of public communication especially the media is costly and restricted.

The presence of freely competing political parties is singularly critical to responsible government because “it is largely through parties that coherent alternatives can be presented to a wide electorate and the voter can discern some relation between his vote and possible government action” (Lively, 1975, p. 44). How effectively parties alone can carry out the duties of articulating alternatives will depend on the system of government in place (for example, presidential and parliamentary). Similarly, it is open to debate whether different kinds of party system (for example, one-, two-, and multi-party systems) are uniformly favorable to public accountability as a component of responsible government.

Models of democracy

Democratic theory has generated an assortment of models each founded on specific justifications and standards of performance. Molded by historical experiences and emergent socio-political circumstances, the values that have come to be associated with different models of democracy have yielded distinct sets of norms and practical implications for various contemporary political systems and cultures. It will suffice to cite three conceptual schemes that scholars have employed to describe the various types of democracy and to represent the norms that define their political cultures. One, by Lively (1975), distinguishes four types of theory used in analyses of democratic systems: ideal types, empirical generalizations, deductive models, and utopian schemes. Another, by Held (1996), offers eight models divided into two theoretical categories: the classical models of Athenian, republican, liberal, and Marxist democracy; and the 20th century models of competitive elitist, pluralistic, legal, and participatory democracy. Yet another, by Gutmann (1993), presents a typology of six models of democracy: Schumpeterian, populist, liberal, participatory, social, and deliberative. This latter typology is adopted to guide the present analysis mainly because it explicitly recognizes deliberation as a form of democracy in its own right. Most significantly, it articulates deliberation as a model that assimilates and complements some of the values inherent in other democratic models. Indeed, the earlier focus on the underlying principles of democracy was in anticipation of the fact that the deliberative conception of democracy can account for the realization of those principles in ways that other models cannot. To put the emphasis on deliberative democracy in perspective, the other models in Gutmann's (1993) typology of democratic formations are summarized.

Schumpeterian democracy

According to Schumpeter (1943, p. 269), “the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.”

Schumpeter’s theory of the democratic process is founded on seven elements. First, democracy requires a mechanism to make political competition effective, which means that there has to be a procedure whose presence or absence can be empirically verified. Second, collective action requires political leadership, and political collectives can only function by accepting leadership. Third, even group interests remain latent until they are organized into a political force by a political leader who mobilizes these interests as part of the competitive agenda. Fourth, as is the case in the economic domain, political life involves competition for the people’s allegiance. In a democracy, the competition for leadership is about the “free competition for a free vote. The justification for this is that democracy seems to imply a recognized method by which to conduct the competitive struggle, and that the electoral method is practically the only one available for communities of any size” (Schumpeter, 1943, p. 271). And as with competition in the economic sphere, political competition occurs in an imperfect world. This means that any realistic view of democracy has to contend with these imperfections. Fifth, although there is an inherent connection between democracy and individual freedom, that relationship is a question of degree. The democratic method does not necessarily assure more individual freedom than would be allowed by another political method in the same situation, though the two are nevertheless related. Sixth, the primary function of the electorate is to produce and evict a government, which it does by accepting leaders and by withdrawing

its acceptance as the case may be. On this view, whereas the electorate endorses political leaders by casting its vote for them, voters do not ordinarily exercise control over leaders apart from denying them votes. Lastly, the will of the majority is not to be conflated with the will of the people. Majority decision making is more likely to misrepresent the will of the people than to bring it to fruition.

Schumpeter's position has been described as a very restrictive and minimalist concept of democracy that reduces it to a political method for selecting decision makers and containing their excesses (Held, 1996). Besides, while it acknowledges the importance of political competition to a democracy, it ascribes no substantive value to the competition for people's votes as a democratic process, thereby narrowing democracy down to a mere political procedure (Gutmann, 1993).

Populist democracy

Even many of the theorists who treat democracy primarily as a political procedure object to Schumpeter's position. They believe that there is a certain inherent value in democratic procedures – a value which is exemplified in popular as opposed to unpopular rule. Populist democracy is premised on the idea of people governing themselves as free and equal citizens as opposed to being governed by an external power or self-appointed elite. Yet, popular rule also necessitates that important constraints be imposed on the popular will in order to protect democracy. However, any such constraints must leave enough room for legitimate decisions to be subjected to popular decision making. Constraints such as freedoms of speech, the press, and association are put in place to secure political freedom; the rule of law is designed to protect citizens from the arbitrary will of leaders; equality is provided for in the formal sense of equal

voting rights though this is not the same as equality of actual influence over the outcomes; and enfranchisement is guaranteed for all competent adult citizens (Gutmann, 1993).

Whereas these constraints also reflect the substantive outcomes or content of the populist ideal, they do occasionally clash with the actual popular will as expressed through some of the procedures meant to secure popular rule. However justified they might be, constraints on popular rule could be considered undemocratic if viewed in the context of the populist ideal of the people governing themselves as free and equal citizens. Given the possibility of conflict, it is argued that democrats have three choices: either to accept that a certain degree of unpopular rule, judicial review, for example, is necessary to attain outcomes that are not backed by popular will, or that a genuinely democratic popular will is unrealistic and unattainable, or that both scenarios are possible (Gutmann, 1993).

Liberal democracy

In a departure from populist democracy, liberal democracy does not consider popular rule to be the ultimate political value. Instead, liberal democrats emphasize the primacy of the basic liberties deemed essential to the freedom and equality of human beings. These liberties are the freedoms of thought, speech, press, association, and religion; the freedoms to vote, to seek, and to hold public office; freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure in conformity with the rule of law; and the right to possess personal property (Gutmann, 1993).

By treating these basic liberties as more important than the democratic decision making mechanisms favored by Schumpeter and by giving populist democracy

less priority, liberal democracy “makes more principled room for judicial review, checks and balances, separation of powers, and other means of tempering popular will that are quite common in Western constitutional democracies” (Gutmann, 1993, p. 414).

All things considered, populist and liberal democracy are said to differ more in principle than in practice. Whereas populist democracy is devoted to both the processes that manifest the popular will and outcomes that protect it, these very outcomes, that is, the freedoms of speech, press, and association that are fundamental to the formation, expression, and aggregation of political preferences, also happen to be part of the very basic liberties that liberal democrats aim to safeguard from populist rule (Gutmann, 1993).

Participatory democracy

Participatory democracy puts a premium on direct participation in politics and raises questions about the relative emphasis that liberal democracy puts on defending individual freedom. It is argued that the reason democratic citizens are passive when it comes to political participation is that modern democracies present very inadequate opportunities for people to meaningfully participate in politics. Hence, if democratic societies offered citizens more opportunities to express their political views, they would readily exploit those opportunities and get involved in making the collective decisions that they presently delegate to their representatives (Gutmann, 1993).

Thus, participatory democracy tries to address the general recognition that many contemporary representative democracies are in virtual crises as a result of their citizens’ limited knowledge of and information about politics, declining voter turnout, as well as corruption and public officials’ infraction of democratic accountability. It is

argued that all these problems are caused by the fact that large-scale representative democracies are inherently non-participatory. And as long as the situation persists in which citizens are apathetic toward and uninformed about politics, liberal democracy's pursuit of institutional mechanisms to hem in the abuse of power by public officials is also doomed. The promise of participatory democracy is that getting citizens to participate directly in making political decisions will raise their understanding of and interest in politics (Gutmann, 1993).

Social democracy

Social democracy seeks to apply the premise of liberal democracy to domains of life that were regarded by traditional liberals as private and for that reason beyond the reach of democratic control. Notable among these domains are economic enterprises and the family. The rationale for democratization does not come from the inherent value associated with participation but from the need to prevent the tyrannical threat over personal lives that comes from situations of concentrated power (Gutmann, 1993).

In the economic sphere, the threat of tyranny arises from the unequal power that owners and managers of big enterprises wield, which gives them the leeway to determine the working conditions, earnings, and general welfare of their employees. Whereas some liberals will not vouch for mandatory economic democracy because they accept that owners reserve the right to govern, most would agree that the different rationales for the right to personal ownership of property, for example defending the conditions for individual autonomy, do not go as far as allowing owners of economic enterprises to exercise their control at the expense of employees' freedom. On this view,

protecting the autonomy of all citizens necessitates a certain measure of democratic control either over or within economic enterprises (Gutmann, 1993).

Those opposed to internal democracy in industry mainly argue that workers lack the competence to make the decisions needed to manage economic enterprises profitably and efficiently. The same logic is extended to democratic control of industry by the state, because excessive state control leads to state tyranny whose consequences are potentially more insidious than the tyranny an economic enterprise could impose over its employees or a democratic state. Although these objections do not rule out the need for some form and measure of economic democracy, they raise the issue of the need to examine property rights in order to figure out which rights could best be exercised democratically by employees in an enterprise; which rights are best left to be exercised over enterprises by public officials who are publicly accountable; and which rights could best be left to the discretion of owners and managers in the interest of competence, efficiency, or ensuring strong safeguards against the potentially tyrannical power of the state (Gutmann, 1993).

In the domestic sphere, the relationship between parents and children is the classic example of justified paternalism. However, this justification does not give parents absolute authority over their children's education nor does it apply to other parental powers that impede the freedom and equality of children as future citizens. Similarly, social democracy draws attention to the undemocratic implications resulting from gender inequality which allows men to exercise tyrannical power over women owing to unequal economic, social, and sexual power relations. In this domain, social democrats call for different types of reforms, such as in the legislative arena, designed to

enhance women's rights and to equalize opportunities for them. But at the same time, social democrats are wary of state intrusion into domestic matters that are considered so basic to the internal organization of family life. However, social democrats recognize that even such matters as the domestic division of labor over child care and the discretionary allocation of family income that are traditionally deemed to be private affairs impact the personal freedom and political equality of democratic citizens in a fundamental yet dissimilar manner (Gutmann, 1993).

Deliberative democracy

Given the value that populist democracy attaches to popular rule and liberal democracy to personal freedom, deliberative democracy responds by assimilating the ideals valued by populists and liberals. Personal freedom and political equality are viewed not as ends in themselves but as a means to individual autonomy, which refers both to people's willingness and ability to mold their lives by engaging in rational deliberation and their capacity for self-government. Thus, deliberative democracy operates through popular rule as a vehicle for expressing and supporting the personal autonomy of all individuals, and personal freedom and political equality are valued to the extent that they lead to individual autonomy (Gutmann, 1993).

The basis of populist democracy is the assumption that the expression of popular will is an ultimate good. However, under deliberative democracy popular rule is treated as a vehicle to foster public deliberation on matters that would be best understood if exposed to open, deliberative processes. The ideal of individual autonomy goes hand in hand with an ideal of politics whereby people routinely interact not just for the purpose of affirming their wills or struggling for and defending their predetermined preferences; but

rather by seeking to influence one another through argument, evidence, evaluation, and persuasion, all of which require the employment of reasons. Deliberation is a publicly valued process through which democratic citizens shape their own political lives using persuasion, which is considered a form of political power in itself (Gutmann, 1993).

For citizens to be able to assert their autonomy, deliberative democracy calls for a system of popular rule that encourages and offers people opportunities to deliberate upon political decisions. Hence, constant accountability rather than direct participation in politics is the basis of deliberative democracy. Whereas accountability is taken as a form of active political engagement, it does not necessitate ongoing and direct political participation. Accountability is analogous to the political division of labor between professional politicians and ordinary citizens that is typical of political systems in representative democracies. As Gutmann (1993, p. 418) points out: “Whereas participatory democracy strives for a polity in which all citizens actively participate in making decisions that affect their lives, deliberative democracy takes account of the burden of political action and the advantages of a division of political labor.” Deliberative theorists maintain that institutions of public accountability can indeed promote deliberation between citizens and their representatives on issues of public interest.

Conclusion

Mindful of the pre-stated caveat that an exhaustive treatment of all conceptualizations of democracy was neither called for nor practicable, this chapter has situated the concept of democracy in a discussion centered on one of its fundamental principles. It has elaborated in broad outlines the main democratic models as well as the institutional frameworks commonly associated with democratic systems, at least those

rooted in the liberal tradition. In discussing the general conceptualization of democracy, I have also touched implicitly on some of the philosophical grounds on which defense and criticism of democracy in liberal societies are based.

Scholars have created or chosen different theoretical models as frameworks to explicate how democratic systems work. Evidently, democracy is often conceived of in competitive and antagonistic terms; yet it is in equal measure defined in ways that are complementary and mutual. It is in the context of these tensions and affinities that the various models of democracy are to be understood – as alternative sets of ideas about what constitutes democracy, what its foundations are, and how to achieve it.

CHAPTER 4

THE DELIBERATIVE CONCEPTION OF DEMOCRACY

Introduction

The fact that democratic public deliberation and mediated political discourse are the primary interests of this research project reflects a focus on a particular justification and problem for democracy, which is “to find ways in which governmental decisions might be more openly arrived at and more subject to public debate and evaluation” (Held, 1975, p.149). And it is not just governmental decisions in a narrow sense of the term, but all decisions made in the public sphere. The deliberative model of democracy is the most consistent with this definition of the problem and is a critical part of the explanatory framework employed in the analysis of mediated politics in Uganda.

The objective of this chapter is to examine in general the principles of public deliberation and to cultivate the groundwork for the application of the deliberative conception of democracy to the study of mediated politics in the transitional democracies of Africa, with Uganda providing an empirical case study.

Deliberative versus aggregative conceptions of democracy

The deliberative conception of democracy, argues Shapiro (2003), is partly a reaction to what its proponents consider to be the limitations of the aggregative model of democracy. Dryzek (2000, p.1), for his part, has gone as far as to contend that “the essence of democracy itself is now widely taken to be deliberation, as opposed to voting, interest aggregation, constitutional rights, or even self-government.”

Although the aggregative and deliberative schools of thought have a shared idealism about the will of the people or the common good, Shapiro (2003) submits

that they recommend divergent paths toward attaining and securing those ideals. Deliberative democrats believe that the common good can be achieved by transforming people's preferences as opposed to aggregating their individual interests. On this view, deliberation helps to transcend the adversarial tendencies in democratic practice and, by implication, temper the competitive nature of contemporary politics. Elster (1998) specifically attributes the interest in deliberation to Jurgen Habermas's notion of the transformative public sphere, which is considered to be a more compelling understanding of democracy than the idea of preference aggregation favored by liberal thinkers inclined to constitutionalism (see for example Leet [1998] for an elaboration of Habermas's discursive concept of democracy).

While deliberative democracy is understood in different ways, there are discernible similarities across the various perspectives. The democratic aspect entails collective decision making that allows for the participation – either by direct involvement or by representation – of all those to be affected by a public decision. The deliberative aspect implies decision making through arguments that are presented by and to participants who have a commitment to rationality and impartiality. Notwithstanding the convergence along these terms, the promoters of deliberation adopt different stances in defense of its appeal. Whereas some are attracted to deliberation basically because of its intrinsic value, others are drawn to it because of its instrumental value as reflected in its capacity to foster consensus, to uncover the truth, and to raise the consciousness of the citizenry (Shapiro, 2003).

Generally speaking, there are two overarching differences in conceptions of deliberation and it helps to articulate them in a systematic fashion. Fundamentally,

these variations appear most readily as two distinctive sets of approaches that Dryzek (2000) describes as liberal or social choice and critical or discursive. Each approach has its own theoretical implications for our understanding of deliberative democracy.

To begin with, the essential difference between the liberal and critical approaches to deliberation, as Dryzek (2000, p. 21) puts it, is that “liberalism operates only on the surface of the political economy” on account of its focus on creating constitutional and legal arrangements – such as bills of rights, freely elected legislatures, and public financing of election campaigns – as a means to deal with the distortions of political dialogue in the deliberative process. The liberal view of deliberation is therefore informed by liberal constitutionalism, which Dryzek (2000, p. 9) defines as “the reconciliation and aggregation of predetermined interests under the auspices of a neutral set of rules: that is, a constitution.” Even so, Dryzek (2000, p. 21) notes that “what liberals fail to recognize is that getting constitutions and laws right is only half the battle,” for there are extra-constitutional sources of distortion in deliberation that cannot be solved constitutionally. Such distorting agents include dominant discourses and ideologies, some of which are often bound up with structural economic forces connected to the international political economy. As we shall see later, deliberation is also critically impacted by extra-constitutional forces unique to the deliberative environments of particular political systems.

In defending his discursive orientation to deliberation, Dryzek (2000) submits that the promise of democratic authenticity can only be fulfilled by fostering a discursive orientation to established power structures. For deliberation to be authentic itself, communication ought to allow participants to reflect upon their preferences and to

make decisions without being coerced into specific choices. This requires that discourses be contested in the public sphere as opposed to sole dependence on the deliberative institutions of the liberal state. While deliberation can thrive within the structures of the state, a vital civil society in which there is an active contestation of discourses is invariably necessary.

The pursuit of democratic authenticity, that is, “the degree to which democratic control is engaged through communication that encourages reflection upon preferences without coercion” (Dryzek, 2000, p. 8), is regarded as an enduring goal of deliberative democracy. Yet, democratic authenticity is doomed for as long as deliberation is dominated by efforts toward interest aggregation in place of persuasion. Possibilities for authentic democracy exist only in the absence of domination based on the exploitation of power and reliance on coercion, manipulation, propaganda, indoctrination, deception, self-interest, threats, and the imposition of ideological conformity.

Moreover, apart from undermining “the extent of equality in deliberative competence across political actors” (Dryzek, 2000, p. 8), these distortions are also most likely to prosper under liberal constitutionalism because it underrates deliberation and puts a premium on voting, interest aggregation, constitutional rights, and self-government as modes of democratic politics.

As a social process, deliberation differs from other forms of communication in the sense that participants in the deliberative enterprise can change their judgments, preferences, and views as they interact. Whereas deliberative democracy is fundamentally open to the transformation of preferences in the process of political

interaction, its liberal permutation is primarily concerned with the reconciliation and aggregation of preferences defined and formed before the interaction (Dryzek, 2000).

It should be noted, however, that because liberal constitutionalism accepts political deliberation just as long as it serves instrumental and strategic goals, the liberal constitutionalists' tendency to borrow some of the ideals of deliberation has provoked suspicions from scholars such as Dryzek (2000) who profess to the discursive character of deliberative democracy and insist on treating the liberal and discursive perspectives as distinct. This skepticism is shared by Bohman (1996, p. 5), who asserts that "all deliberative models of democratic legitimacy are strongly normative in the particular sense that they all reject the reduction of politics and decision making to instrumental and strategic rationality."

But being such a flexible doctrine, liberalism has attempted to accommodate some essentially discursive elements of deliberation especially the potential that deliberative persuasion offers or the possibility for incorporating persuasion into the constitutional aspects of liberalism. In fact, the context of modern public deliberation is by and large shaped by liberal notions of democratic politics. With respect to deliberation, the liberal perspective defines it too narrowly within the confines of interest aggregation as moderated by the procedures, structures, and institutions of the liberal constitutionalist system.

This, however, is not to say that the purposes of deliberation as propagated by those who favor a discursive approach and by those who prefer a liberal outlook are irreconcilable. On the contrary, it is evident that the two sides are united by their underlying commitment to pluralism and the common good. The main sources of dispute

appear to originate in their antithetical positions on the notion of rationality: “They revolve around the question whether the classic democratic notions of a ‘will of the people’ or ‘common good’ have any coherent meaning” (Shapiro, 2003, p. 10).

In fact, the different responses to the question of how to rationally actualize the common good epitomize the fundamental differences between the deliberative and aggregative conceptions of democracy. Nevertheless, some scholars have crafted ways to move the debate beyond these conceptual disagreements in order to establish common ground. For instance, just as rationality is singularly crucial to democratic deliberation, writes Benhabib (1996), so is the value that deliberation adds to the rationality of collective decision-making.

First, deliberative processes “are also processes that impart information” (Benhabib, 1996, p. 71). People get informed through the procedures of deliberation; and their opinions, beliefs, and wishes cannot coalesce into actual (policy) preferences unless they exchange information and ideas and reflect upon their options. Participants in political deliberation do not come to deliberate with a coherent set of pre-established preferences. Their preferences emerge from deliberation, a process in which positions can be revised and re-examined as information is received and recast to deal with changing realities.

Second, given that social life is by definition composed of conflicts of values and interests, deliberative procedures help secure the values of mutual cooperation as legitimate in their own right, even when the outcomes of deliberation are against the interests of particular individuals or groups. Even individuals or groups who are inclined to disagree with the deliberative outcome need to be convinced that it is in their own

good to strive to articulate their grievances and conflicting interests under conditions of social cooperation that are mutually acceptable to everybody.

Third, public deliberation need not be tied down to what Benhabib (1996, p. 73) calls “the fiction of a mass assembly carrying out its deliberations in public and collectively.” Whereas the size of the deliberative forum will affect the quality of discourse, a deliberative conception of democracy favors a multiplicity of forms of association through which all those affected or those who have concerns can articulate their points of view. The range of possible associations includes political parties, social movements, citizen groups, voluntary associations, consciousness-raising groups, and so forth. There are multiple platforms for opinion formation and dissemination that impact each other freely and spontaneously through communication. As Benhabib (1996, pp. 73-74) says:

It is through the interlocking net of these multiple forms of associations, networks, and organizations that an anonymous “public conversation” results. It is central to the model of deliberative democracy that it privileges such a public sphere of mutually interlocking and overlapping networks and associations of deliberation, contestation, and argumentation.

Approaching deliberation as rational discourse in this way may not necessarily blunt the conceptual clash between the liberal and discursive schools, but it certainly opens up room for harmonizing elements of the theory that are uniquely instructive in explaining the processes of deliberative politics in contemporary democratic practice.

The principles of deliberation

D’entreves (2002, p. 49) has argued that all theories of deliberative democracy emphasize the important role that dialogue and deliberation play in building a liberal society that is more inclusive and just. In the normative literature on deliberative democracy, Bohman (1996) and Gutmann and Thompson (1996) are widely credited for

their methodical articulation of the principles considered to be the bedrock of deliberation. And a sizeable body of literature has been devoted to expounding, critiquing, and conceptually retooling these principles, namely: non-tyranny, equality, publicity, reciprocity, and accountability. The values ascribed and roles assigned to each of these principles of deliberation are briefly explored here.

Non-tyranny

Non-tyranny means the absence of coercion or advantage that gives some groups undue influence. It is a guarantee that the majority will not simply brush aside the interests of the minority. Non-tyranny is the idea that in the process of public deliberation, decisions will be made on the basis of broadly convincing reasons instead of power differentials. Non-tyranny also ensures that decisions are generated out of a genuinely deliberative process, such that no group automatically succeeds in advancing its interests without reasoning them out publicly, and that no group will accept to be bound by a decision that imposes an exclusive burden on it.

Equality

Equality is the idea that if decisions are to be based on debate and discussion, every citizen must have an equal chance to speak and to use the whole range of expressions available to all other participants. It means that every potential participant must have access to all forums relevant to the debate and discussion. This goes along with equal opportunities in decision-making. Equality in deliberation also presupposes equal rights to freedom of expression, conscience, and association. It discourages undue pressure, threats, and private bargaining, as well as other forms of influence outside the deliberative realm, such as power, wealth, and social inequalities.

Publicity

Publicity as a standard for public deliberation refers to the social space in which deliberation is conducted and to the nature of reasons that the participants offer. In practical terms, publicity means that every contributor's intentions must be 'avowable.' In other words, it should be possible to make those intentions known. In a political context, this implies that any attempt to influence deliberation outside the main forum, such as agreements reached through bargaining on the side, should be known to everyone. And in the deliberative context, publicity ensures that all participants in the dialogue have an effective voice. Another dimension of the publicity principle is that the reasons that officials and citizens advance to justify specific political actions as well as the information needed to evaluate those reasons must be public. Democratic societies take measures to guarantee this kind of publicity by instituting legal and constitutional provisions such as sunshine laws, freedom of information acts, and the First Amendment. Journalistic traditions like investigative reporting are also publicity mechanisms in so far as they facilitate access to information and full disclosure of the reasons behind publicly-binding decisions and actions. These are designed to ensure that "citizens have access to more information about, and reasoning by, public officials and public agencies" (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 95).

In spite of these commitments to publicity, the reality and the ideal are often out of sync because, as experience shows, governments and public officials are often intent on concealing valuable information. Secrecy is inimical to democratic politics and one incentive that corporations and public agencies might have for desisting from engaging in unacceptable conduct is that they will be required to defend their

actions in public. Hence, “the obligation to justify policies to those whom it affects provides the moral basis of the publicity principle” (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 99).

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is grounded in the belief that because the outcomes of democratic deliberation are mutually binding, citizens should aim to engage in political reasoning that can be mutually justified. In practice, anybody participating in deliberation is expected to present reasons that others can accept on the understanding that they too are equally motivated to seek reasons that others will accept. There is no assumption that the reasons tendered through this process will necessarily be accepted. It may well be that the political and social conditions are not conducive to the exercise of reciprocity. Neither is it to be assumed that reciprocity will inevitably generate agreement. Agreement may remain elusive even in circumstances where the social and political conditions are favorable. Factors like scarcity of resources, self-interest, and inadequate understanding may present barriers to deliberative agreement. Nevertheless, even when deliberative disagreement occurs, the principle of reciprocity demands that citizens persist in the search for “fair terms of cooperation among equals.” Reciprocity, on the basis of its motives, processes, and goals, functions as “the regulator of reasons in democracy” (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 53).

Accountability

Accountability is considered to be a cornerstone of democratic deliberation. Citizens and officials are obliged to justify their decisions to whoever is bound by those decisions and those who might be affected by those decisions. This is what reason-giving is all about in deliberative democracy. As a form of accountability,

political representation is an indispensable element in deliberative democracy. Gutmann and Thompson (1996) suggest that representation makes deliberation better or, at the minimum, more sustained.

As normative conditions for deliberation, non-tyranny, equality, and publicity, from Bohman's (1996) perspective, operate equally as standards for and as constraints on the process and outcome of deliberation. Bohman (1996) contends that public reasoning, a process through which individuals test their interests and reasons in the public domain before they arrive at decisions, is at the heart of deliberative democratic theory. This is entirely different than the approach favored by liberals, which puts the emphasis on individual aggregation of interests and on political competition as the primary mechanisms of democracy. The deliberative process requires that collective decisions be justified by public reasons that every participant in the deliberation will find generally convincing.

Likewise, the essence of the deliberative process, from Gutmann and Thompson's (1996) standpoint, is that citizens and public officials must justify public policies and decisions by providing reasons that are acceptable to all the citizens who are bound by those decisions and policies. This exchange of mutually justifiable reasons, referred to as reason-giving or justification, is premised on the basic principles of reciprocity, publicity,¹⁴ and accountability. As Gutmann and Thompson (1996, p. 53) observe, each of these standards correlates, in that order, with an aspect of the

¹⁴ Bohman (1996) and Guttmann and Thompson (1996) both employ the term 'publicity.' Although they give it slightly different conceptual flavors, they point to the same core idea.

justification process, that is: “the *kind* of reasons that should be given, the *forum* in which they should be given, and the *agents* to whom and by whom they should be given.”¹⁵

Deliberative theory versus practice

Having said that, while there is no denying that deliberation can engender some of the democratic ideals and standards for which it is celebrated, it nevertheless raises the key question of how deliberation might fare under the realities of democratic politics as it is practiced. These realities are often far removed from the ideal conditions of democratic politics postulated by deliberative theorists.

The position taken in this study is that a workable conceptualization of public deliberation must be at once normatively informed and grounded in the realities of the deliberative environment in question. Thus, it is imperative that the standards of deliberation as theorized be interrogated to determine the strength of their theoretical bases, on the one hand, and whether and how they might hold up in practice, on the other.

For example, Gutmann and Thompson (1996, p. 51), argue that “by making democracy more deliberative, citizens stand a better chance of resolving some of their moral disagreements, and living with those that will inevitably persist, on terms that all can accept.” But deliberation does also come with certain costs such as the “unfair control of agendas” (Shapiro, 2003, p. 22) by those who wield power. It would also be erroneous to conflate the problems caused by the unequal power relations that characterize the conditions under which deliberation is conducted with a “deliberative deficit” (Shapiro, 2003, p. 10).

Furthermore, deliberation may not always lead to its assumed benefits. Stokes (1998, p. 123) teases out those instances in which deliberation brings about

¹⁵ Emphasis in original.

outcomes that are harmful from a democratic theory point of view. She notes that “these pathologies of deliberation, like their physiological counterparts, must be understood if we are to immunize ourselves against them.” Public communication or deliberation may induce people to embrace causal beliefs that are inaccurate and serve the interests of the originator of the message. Thus, discussions of deliberation must pay attention to the fact that the manipulation of causal beliefs and induced preferences is a potential pathology of the democratic process.

Deliberation may influence citizens at a deeper level by shaping their very sense of who they are and what their capabilities are. Champions of deliberation usually celebrate this transformative effect on the self. Conversely, deliberation can also have the opposite result, which is seldom acknowledged, of undermining subjects’ sense of their capabilities or to impose upon them a sense of the self that is out of sync with their real needs and interests. In that sense, “without consideration of the potential of public communication to induce beliefs that appear contrary to our more authentic interests, and identities that undermine our capacities, discussions of deliberation ring hollow” (Stokes, 1998, p. 124).

Another potential drawback of deliberative democracy originates from the concerns of identity and difference democrats who are wary of what they perceive as the oppressive and hegemonic tendencies of deliberation because of the premium it places on rational argument. For instance, Dryzek (2000, p. 167) wonders: “Should deliberation be restricted to rational argument, or admit other kinds of communication?”

It is important to recognize that not all deliberative democrats believe in rationality and consensus as the engines of deliberation. We can grapple with this elite

problem by turning to Fearon (1998), who conceptualizes deliberation in terms that are admittedly less abstract. In this particular conception, deliberation is taken to be a particular form of discussion that revolves around careful and serious assessment of reasons in favor of or against a given proposition. It could even be an internal mental process. At the same time, discussion does not always have to be logical, serious, rational, or carefully thought out. This is a crucial observation because construing deliberation in terms of logical and rational debate tends to privilege elite participants in the deliberative process. It also presupposes that only those who are well informed and educated can participate in deliberation. By focusing on discussion, we can locate some space in the deliberative process for those participants who may be equally animated about public discourse, but who may not be sophisticated contributors.

Elitism and populism pose challenges for deliberative accountability. Because deliberation puts a premium on rationality and moderate discourse, some of its critics argue that its elitist character favors those who are privileged at the expense of the disadvantaged. By excluding irrational and extremist discourse, according to this argument, deliberation is biased against underprivileged participants.

Gutmann and Thompson (1996) have rebutted this criticism with the contention that the alleged bias is not so much against the purveyors of irrational discourse as it is against irrational deliberation per se. Moreover, to argue that the preclusion of irrational deliberation will harm marginalized participants is to assume that disadvantaged groups are more likely to be unreasonable or that they have a monopoly over irrational discourse. That assumption may actually be the real source of elitism. While differences in deliberative skills may be correlated with socio-economic

differences, this does not mean that these socio-economic disadvantages necessarily diminish the abilities of disadvantaged groups as deliberative participants or even as observers. In fact, deliberative accountability may help to neutralize these differences.

The presumed deficiencies of modern democracy are substantial, including the dubious quality of political decision making, inadequate levels of popular participation in politics, erosion of government legitimacy, ignorance of the citizenry about public affairs, and the dearth of deliberation (Shapiro, 2003). In particular, deliberation as a democratic norm and practice is said to have been seriously compromised by the preponderance of the media as primary vehicles of political discourse. The recognition of these problems has yielded a number of recommendations to shore up the volume and quality of deliberation. Suggested solutions have come in varied forms, such as town meetings and deliberative polls. Some believe that these alternative deliberative forums should complement current practices, yet others think that they should supplant the traditional deliberative institutions in order to pave the way for authentic participatory politics.

Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated the deliberative conception of democracy by explicating its theoretical premises, normative justifications, and the motivations behind its ascendancy as a model of democratic politics. Some key assumptions behind this conception will be evaluated in the concluding chapter in light of the empirical evidence presented. But in a nutshell, democratic deliberation as a norm and practice is the idea that public discussion and debate are fundamental to the development and authenticity of individual judgments about politics and public affairs in general. The values associated

with democratic deliberation are, in both philosophical and instrumental terms, the building blocks of a model of democratic politics rooted in discursive processes for the formation, growth, and expression of public opinion and collective political consciousness.

CHAPTER 5

DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS IN AFRICA

Introduction

While the political transition in Uganda was shaped and is distinguished by its own peculiarities, the broad outlines of its progression are in some important respects consistent with the experiences of other sub-Saharan African nations during their evolution from authoritarian to democratic systems of governance. The democratic transformation in Africa is often traced to Huntington's (1991) third wave of democratization – a series of trends that either started or took root from 1974 through the 1990s in various countries. The fact that the reforms witnessed in Africa overlapped with and seemingly sprung from larger global developments compelled some observers to view them as microcosms of a worldwide democratic revival “which signaled the historic triumph of liberal democracy” (Szeftel, 1999, p. 5). The record on the ground, however, demonstrated that the changes were neither as sweeping and clear-cut nor as potent and predictable as theorized. Huntington (1991) himself took note of the patchy pattern left behind by the democratic tide, conceding that as with its forerunners, the third wave was attended by a reverse wave at the macro level although the reversal never wiped out entirely all the democratic gains of the preceding democratic wave.

This chapter aims to establish the theoretical and political contexts for the practice and understanding of democracy in contemporary Africa. It discusses the application of the concept and the legacy of its practice in the context of Africa's democratic transitions as well as the current and highly contentious debates surrounding the democratization processes. The first objective is to examine the conceptualization of

African democracy and to explore the general experiences with the various transitions to democratic politics. In so far as liberal platforms have had a dominant and controversial influence on the direction of change in Africa's democratic transitions, the second objective is to discuss the paradox of the liberal model in debates about African democracy. The third objective is to underline the value of political agency in the democratization process, closing in especially on the part played by elite political actors in Africa's democratizing nations.

Conceptualizing African democracy

The political systems and cultures that emerged in post-colonial Africa and those that continued as holdovers from colonialism exemplify the tenuousness of the transitions to democracy. Some of the countries that set out with pluralistic political systems and constitutional orders at independence over the years degenerated into authoritarian states. Typically, dominant-party states (e.g. in Tanzania, Malawi, Kenya, Zambia, Ghana, Sierra Leone) mutated into one-party civilian or military authoritarianism.

In Uganda's particular case, because those excluded from the political process represented a substantial and strategic segment of the citizenry, the conflict and instability that ensued had within a decade of independence totally swamped civil politics. Ironically, by the onset of the third wave of democratization in the early 1970s, liberal pluralism based on multi-party politics had all but vanished in the former British colonies of Africa except Botswana. These regimes held onto power by largely ditching the values commonly associated with liberal political culture such as civil liberties and the rule of law (Szeftel, 1999).

Democratic performance

Leading up to and during the 1990s, pressures to democratize were brought to bear on most African regimes. The mounting demands for political reforms and good governance had international and domestic dimensions, but the results they yielded varied greatly in the magnitude of success and failure, or both, within and across different countries. Some regimes allowed only superficial changes as they found alternative strategies to maintain their authoritarian stranglehold on power, while others went down the path of institutional collapse, civil disorder, and violence. But there were also glimmers of hope in quite a few countries that made notable progress toward democratic rule as in those nations where multi-party elections were successfully concluded, thus ushering a new crop of elites into power. These positive trends made it possible to revisit previous assessments that had painted a predominantly bleak picture of the prospects for democracy in Africa (VonDoepp & Villalon, 2005).

The reality of democracy in the African context therefore requires new and different ways of thinking about the traditional concepts employed in studying democracy. In the case of the very notion of democracy, democratization is largely thought of in terms of a discrete or bounded process that has precise start and end points. On this notion, the yardstick for democratization is the degree to which a country is relatively democratic, which implies the advancements it has made toward achieving the particular goal of consolidating its democracy. Based on this logic, evaluations of African democracies typically characterize them with labels such as ‘feeble,’ ‘tenuous,’ ‘quasi,’ or ‘limited’ in order to describe the inadequacies and problematic nature of these democracies (VonDoepp & Villalon, 2005).

Characterizations like these are founded on the assumption that the countries in question are marching to democracy and have only been momentarily interrupted; but that otherwise they are en route to the familiar destination. Assigning countries to specific points on the democratic scale rather obscures the critical trends that are in fact unfolding in different nations. VonDoepp and Villalon (2005) concluded from their analysis of the outcomes of democratic experiments in sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s that most transitional countries had made only limited progress toward establishing democratic norms of fair and open political competition and participation. Furthermore, developments in many of these countries showed that the viability of democracy was doubtful in the long-run.

Yet the gist of what is going on in these countries defies simple labels and easy categorization. Amidst the setbacks and obstacles to sustaining democracy, many countries have been able to significantly liberalize their politics, thereby dismantling old pillars of authoritarianism and installing new political orders that are also being contested on a recurrent basis. The terms of politics have been transformed in such a way as to create new prospects for political and civic engagement. Citizens have different expectations of their leaders, demanding of them to rely on the performance record of the government to justify why they should stay in power. Political discourse itself reverberates with references to the importance and relevance of democracy as a normative principle (VonDoepp & Villalon, 2005).

Hybrid democracies

Against that background, it has been argued that democracy in Africa is essentially in a state of hybridity. This is a condition whereby aspects of democratic behavior and liberal politics co-exist with neo-patrimonial and authoritarian tendencies. Although the persistence of authoritarian rule has to be acknowledged, current developments likewise indicate that there is very scant possibility that the countries now shifting toward more liberalized politics will slide back wholesale into the unbridled dictatorships of an earlier era. “If democracy seems difficult,” argue VonDoepp and Villalon (2005, p. 6), “the liberalization of politics seems irreversible.”

Africa so typifies the complex, multi-dimensional, and hybrid nature of democracy that the conventional conceptualization of democratization, which assumes a state of progress toward a specified end, appears conceptually insufficient. In many countries, pro- and anti-democratic forces are present simultaneously and the resultant tension calls for a different way of looking at democratization – less in terms of a discrete phenomenon and more in the context of a complex and variegated system and set of behaviors.

Democracy is traditionally defined in terms of, and necessarily implies, a certain amount of citizen control over the decisions that impact their lives (Dahl, 1956). But if this ideal is hard to realize in practice, so much that its tenability is also questionable in countries with long democratic traditions, then its application to Africa’s transitional democracies, and the labels associated with it, raises even more problematic issues. For instance, the newly democratizing countries had their transitions certified by holding competitive multi-party elections that ushered in new leaders, thus culminating in

new configurations of power among political elites via new democratic institutional arrangements. However, the transitions these new democracies experienced did not go far enough, if at all, in transferring meaningful power to the people. The citizenry remains gravely constrained in its ability to affect policies and to exact serious public accountability from political elites. In circumstances like these, democracy looks like a fragile idea to begin with (VonDoepp & Villalon, 2005).

But the myriad and formidable shortcomings of democratization in Africa do not warrant underestimating the opportunities for enhanced popular control that have been opened up by, and are integral to, the emergent political arrangements in the transitional democracies. Every country that saw its transition come to fruition embraced the kinds of institutional frameworks that at least in principle had the potential to produce more accountable forms of government. It would be erroneous to discount the presence as well as long-term promise and pertinence of these fledgling democratic institutions. If democracy is in part a system whereby elite behavior is subjected to institutional dictates, then the enactment of these new institutions created room for more authentic and wide-ranging democratization. The larger point here is that formal democratic institutional mechanisms, however imperfect, can with time overcome their limitations and grow into substantive and constructive democratic systems. Put differently, the mere survival of these systems is a precondition for consolidating democracy (VonDoepp & Villalon, 2005).

As noted, a key pattern in the picture emerging out of Africa is one in which political change is marked by the prevalence of many different tendencies and hybridities, sometimes happening in succession and often contemporaneously. Regimes

in transition may exhibit liberal and democratic trappings to the extent that they have in place some basic institutions and formal practices; yet their democratic credentials may be very suspect in other respects. As VonDoepp and Villalon (2005) have noted, elections have not always fundamentally altered the distribution of power where they have been held; nor have the new regimes always managed to impose serious and durable constraints on office bearers. In many instances, informal and neo-patrimonial political methods take precedence over formal rules in public governance.

The liberal paradox

In many different ways, the democratic transitions taking place in Africa are on the whole justified on grounds consistent with core liberal principles that have long been entrenched in Western democracies. However, there are long-standing cautions regarding the transferability of liberal or Western models of democracy generally to the African context. For instance, Adam (1993) thinks that democratization debates and reforms in Africa should at the end of the day proceed on the basis of indigenous political theories. Similarly, in looking at the appropriateness of the idea of civil society in Africa given its Western origins, Karlstrom (1999) calls for constant alertness to, and painstaking consideration of, the limitations of such ideas when adapting them to unfamiliar situations.

Clearly primed by such warnings, Berger (2002) submits that much scholarship about the media and democracy in Africa is informed by taken-for-granted liberal pluralist notions of the media as instruments of democracy. On this criticism, the liberal paradigm is inappropriate for Africa because not only is its value being contested

in the West, but also because it is based on assumptions that hardly measure up to the political realities and nature of the media environment in Africa.

Hence, liberalism is in some circles considered too narrow to be useful as a universal framework of analysis and as a normative ideal. Yet Adam (1993), despite his own injunction, adopts a concept of democracy that is decidedly liberal to the extent that it revolves around such principles as free competition for power through political parties, political participation via regular and fair elections, as well as civil and political liberties. In the absence of these principles, the integrity of political competition and participation remains dubious. Adam (1993, p. 500) endorses this liberal definition of democracy because it “captures many of the demands made by the current African opposition groups, parties, and movements.”

Feasibility of liberal democracy

Cognizant of the criticisms leveled against Western democratic models, Sandbrook (1988, p. 251) nevertheless contends that Africa’s objective conditions do not necessarily preclude the feasibility of liberal democracy because “the structural-determinist thesis seems indefensibly negative.” He points to some possible outcomes of liberal democracy, such as the potential to provide defenses against tyranny and despotism and to open up political space so that those opposed to the dominant groups can assert their claims.

To be sure, many of the positive initiatives and advances toward democratization on the continent have been secured by and large through the creation, revival, and promotion of institutions, principles, practices, and behaviors typically associated with the liberal model of democracy. As they went through their democratic

transitions, many countries across the continent witnessed vibrant agitations for political goods whose demand was inspired by essentially liberal values, for example: elections held regularly and in predictable cycles; competing political groups; independent parliaments and judiciaries; autonomous civil societies and public spheres; accountability and transparency in government; protection of human rights; freedom of expression; free media; the rule of law; equal protection under the law; the right of access to public information; and checks and balances on power (see also Diamond, 1997).

The disconnect between theory and practice notwithstanding, experiences with democracy on the continent compel us to examine more closely the appeal, if not of all, but certainly of some aspects of the liberal model however uneasy their accommodation might be (Makinda, 1996; Decalo, 1992; Sklar, 1983; Kawonise, 1992; Szeftel, 1999; Wiseman, 1990).

Popular conceptions of democracy

As a case in point, Bratton and Mattes (2000) have reported that popular conceptions of democracy in Africa are indeed liberal. According to data from the *Afrobarometer* series of opinion surveys, 34 percent of respondents (N = 10,398) in six English-speaking countries – Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe – associated democracy with civil rights and personal freedoms more frequently than with other conceptions of democracy. This figure represents an understanding of democracy that emphasizes individual rights as opposed to the less than 0.1 percent of respondents who referred to group rights. This led Bratton and Mattes (2000, pp. 4-5) to conclude:

Contrary to those who would have us believe that Africans conceive of democracy and associated rights in a different way than Westerners, our survey respondents are telling us that they place individual rights uppermost. And, to the extent that they claim such rights as a means of resisting repression at the hands of an authoritarian ruler, Africans are beginning to think more like citizens of a constitutional state than clients of a personal patron.

Political agency and the role of elites

It is taken as a given in this study that democracy operates, in a manner of speaking, with many different levers at once. But it is impossible to imagine a useful conception of democracy that does not account for the part that elite political actors play in the democratic process. In his model of transitions to democracy, Rustow (1970, p. 355) contends that a country does not become a democracy arbitrarily, but rather through a conscious process that entails “a deliberate decision on the part of political leaders to accept the existence of diversity in unity and, to that end, to institutionalize some crucial aspect of democratic procedures.”

Given that the specific terms of the democratic contract must be negotiated and that serious risks about the future have to be borne, it is inevitable that a narrow group of participants representing the various interests at stake will assume a superior role in the bargain process. This is the basis for giving elites special attention. But the emphasis given to elite players is not at the expense of the vital role of the mass public or citizenry in building a democracy. The multiple levers that enable democracy to function suggest an interplay of forces that should be treated as complementary to one another.

Within the larger debate and literature on democracy and democratization, various scholars have been inclined to emphasize different issues. For some, the role of

political elites is not considered as decisive as are other factors that contribute to the success or failure of democracy. An established school of thought has for long attached greater weight to cultural, structural, and economic variables as having the most critical influence on the possibilities for democratization. Specifically, that school has ascribed the success of democracy to factors like a supportive mass political culture, civil society, a viable state, the rule of law, and economic development.

But while these perspectives tend to downplay the impact of elites on democratic development, they do not disregard their actions. The crux of the matter is one of emphasis, in the sense that most scholars have traditionally viewed elites as playing a minor role in entrenching democracy compared to other factors. To explain this variation in emphasis, VonDoepp and Villalon (2005) argue that most of the studies that have relegated the importance of political elites are based on a large sample of countries with dissimilar experiences that stretch back over different historical periods. By concentrating on national economic or cultural components, these studies attempted to come up with generalizations about the factors responsible, or preconditions, for sustaining democracy.

However, VonDoepp and Villalon (2005, p. 13) maintain that such is the unique transitional character of the African countries that started to democratize in the 1990s that traditional socio-structural analysis is largely unhelpful. In transitional democracies, where “patterns of interaction remain highly fluid, institutions are untested, and the efficacy of the democratic political process is undetermined. . . elite actions deserve special attention as the primary variable shaping political trajectories.” It is reasonable to assume that over the long haul other factors may emerge to determine

whether these regimes will survive or measure up to expectations in performance. But as far as transitional dynamics are concerned in Africa's democratizing nations, the all-important question is to ask how the political elites have reacted to regime changes, especially in regard to the extent to which they have acted either as champions or as saboteurs of the newly created democratic institutions.

For analytical purposes, the role of elite political actors in the process of democratization will be explained by distinguishing two relationships between elites and democracy: one institutional the other deliberative.

Institutions and elites

The institutional relationship is informed by a definition of democracy that seeks to account for the role of elites on the basis of the institutional frameworks that set the boundaries of their actions. "In a purely formal sense," VonDoepp and Villalon (2005, p. 2) note, "democracy can be characterized as a system in which institutions constrain the behavior of political elites." In an assessment of the more successful democratic transitions that took place in sub-Saharan Africa in the mid 1990s, these two scholars identify and underscore the different trajectories through which the relations between elites and institutions have developed.

The varied courses followed by the present democracies as well as their experiences and regime character can be described by exploring the dynamics of how the elites interact with the institutional setting in which they operate. In other words, the success of democratization can be measured by looking at the degree to which the elite respect, manipulate, or erode the institutions of governance. Beyond the descriptive function, a focus on the elite-institution interaction also serves an explanatory purpose by

revealing why the elite have chosen to behave in specific ways toward the governing institutions. In other words, elite behavior cannot be understood without reflecting on the very institutions put in place to regulate it. Ultimately, the nature of the institutions and their performance carry fundamental implications for success and failure in democratization. “In some cases,” VonDoepp and Villalon (2005, pp. 2-3) contend, “institutional arrangements have given elites important incentives to support the democratic system; in other cases, they have undermined possibilities for elite habituation to democratic rule.” Evidently, the outcomes of elite involvement have been varied, ranging from situations where the elite subverted democratic institutions that undermined their interests or their hold on power, to those in which democratic rule survived because the elite largely played by the rules.

Deliberation and elites

The deliberative relationship comes into play principally because not only are elites at the frontlines of specific causes, issues or campaigns, but they also typically are the originators of important public discourses on politics. While the interests of the different elites, on the one hand, and the citizenry, on the other, may converge on some issues at some point, they may also diverge on the very same issues, or on other issues, at other times in the democratic struggle.

The character of elites

VonDoepp and Villalon (2005, p. 12) draw a contrast between the sociological tradition in which elites are defined and conceptualized as comprising an exclusive social stratum, and their own approach that attends to the roles of the elite as “individual political players.”

As such, in the sociological tradition the elite are more or less a homogeneous social group that propagates itself by exerting its dominance over the political process. Sociologists have therefore been mostly interested in the patterns by which the elite dominate politics, focusing on how they maintain and extend their grip on power by subordinating other social classes and groups, and on the effects of their efforts to perpetuate themselves in power. On the other hand, VonDoepp and Villalon (2005) in their individually oriented approach are primarily interested in the elite as autonomous political players and in how their choices and actions influence the course of national political life. In pursuing this line, these scholars have only secondary interest in how the elite as a social group achieve their dominance over less empowered classes.

According to Burton, Gunther, and Higley's (1992, p. 8) definition, elites are "persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organizations, to affect national political outcomes regularly and substantially." Because of their positioning, the elites of any society are at the forefront of decision making in the most significant political, governmental, economic, military, professional, communications, religious, ethnic, cultural, social, and civic organizations and movements. Consequently, elites may differ extensively in their attitudes toward the prevailing social, economic, and political order, and also toward the leadership of influential opposition and dissident groups.

To distinguish elites by the fact that they can impact political outcomes regularly implies that their personal stances and possible actions are considered by their counterparts to be so significant that they must be taken into account in deciding matters affecting a given regime and its policies. But whereas the typical elite member is not in

position, and may not even desire, to affect each element of the operations and policies of a regime, that individual is nevertheless capable of taking influential actions regarding particular issues in which she has a stake. Similarly, distinguishing elites on the ground that they can impact political outcomes substantially means that in the absence of their support or opposition, an outcome that critically affects their interests would be different than if they had a say in determining the issues.

Thus, it is by virtue of the strategic positions they occupy in powerful organizations coupled with their capacity to regularly and substantially determine key political outcomes that sets elites apart from other members and sectors of a society. As Burton, Gunther, and Higley (1992) declare in a very instructive example, a political assassin acting solo can change outcomes substantially but not regularly, whereas a citizen voting in an election has the ability to change outcomes regularly but not substantially. Following this conceptualization of elites, it is clear that they are individuals with the power to mold the very character of a country's political life and its experiences with democratic governance (VonDoepp & Villalon, 2005).

Elites and the democracy movement

The various elite actors involved in political discourse in Uganda are neither a homogeneous entity nor do they necessarily share a coherent ideology or agenda. Regardless, they can be classified by adopting Ake's (2000, p. 127) typology of the democracy movement in Africa. Generally speaking, this movement comprises the governing elites, the counter-elites, the challengers, and the citizenry. All the participants in the democracy movement, however loosely related and organized, actively seek out and use the media to assert their political claims.

As construed in this study, the governing elites are those in control of government and the state. The counter-elites are those in the opposition and others contesting for state power in different ways including as dissidents. The challengers are those whose interest is not to acquire state power but to influence the behavior and decisions of the governing and counter-elites. These include public bureaucrats, the diplomatic community, international donors, the business class, civil society organizations, professionals, intellectuals, and organized/activist groups advocating all sorts of social and political issues and causes. The citizenry are the population at large who constitute a force by virtue of their power as an electorate.

Viewed as a single category, the governing and counter-elites can be described in broad terms as the power elite. Elites in general may act as individuals and as part of organized interests or interest groups. Besides, elites stand in different strategic positions in relation to one another. For example, whereas it is conceivable that the governing and counter-elites may be in short- or long-term agreement over certain policies and issues, by definition they reside in antagonistic, or at least opposite, political universes. In contrast, the challengers and the citizenry consist of individuals and collectives whose allegiances and support are contingent upon, and shift with, the degree of harmony between their own interests and those of either the governing or counter-elites.

Now, in his analysis of democratic transitions in Africa, Ake (2000) observes that historically there have been two basic types of strategies that the governing elite have adopted in response to the pressures to democratize. Under the preventive strategy, the governing elite tend to resist outright the pressure to democratize. They

resort to repression as the case was, and remains, in the previous and current military, quasi-military, one-party, and pseudo pluralist regimes.

Under the accommodationist strategy, the governing elite have, to a certain degree, accepted a measure of democratization and its merits, “if possible without losing power” (Ake, 2000, p. 52). Accommodation, of course, hardly guarantees democracy since the governing elite’s interest in maintaining power at all costs means that the accommodationist leaders have accepted democracy only on their own terms. Such are the complexities of democratization in Africa that there are countries like Uganda that have pursued a hybrid strategy that is as preventive as it is accommodationist.

The potential for democracy in Africa depends to a significant degree on the willingness of the elite to lead the requisite initiatives in the transitional process and on their commitment to political reform. Their values, skills, and decisions can determine the success or failure of democratization. In fact, in a discussion of the democratic transition in South Africa, Kotze and Toit (1995) submit that “a consolidated and stable democracy is possible only if there is a high degree of consensus among the elite on the rules of the game and if they are unified in defense of democratic institutions” (p.34). The role of the elite is even more critical as a country transitions from an authoritarian to a democratic system: “The attitudes of these groupings in society, and especially the degree of change and overlap in attitudes of opposing elites, can provide an indication of the potential success of the transition process” (Kotze & Toit, 1995, p. 35).

Conclusion

Despite the widespread appeal and adoption of Western liberal institutions and structures, some analysts have warned that it would be misleading to conflate the democratization processes in Africa with globalization and similar developments in the international arena. The impact of these external forces is critical and undeniable, but a thorough comprehension of the democratic transformations of the watershed period of the 1990s – in which the demands for pluralism and for the liberalization of politics culminated in multi-party elections in several countries – must take into account, on the one hand, the importance of the struggles and contributions of key national political actors who have faced up to those in power and, on the other, the actions of the ruling elite who have fought to resist the mounting challenges (Szeftel, 1999).

I have attempted to show that although there are theoretical constraints on the applicability of the liberal paradigm in Africa, practice and the political reality on the continent reveal a demonstrable interest in values and institutions that are essentially liberal. Another central point has been that because politics is largely elite-driven, the character of elites and their behavior as social actors are pivotal elements in the democratization processes in Africa. Perhaps no social class is as collectively critical to the democratic transition and institutionally better located to affect public life than the political elite.

CHAPTER 6

THE DELIBERATIVE CONCEPTION OF THE MEDIA

Introduction

Most previous assessments of the media-democracy relationship in Africa have paid no attention to the deliberative norms upon which that relationship ought to be justified. In order to incorporate the theory of deliberative democracy into thinking about the media in Africa, we need to engage the normative and practical issues as well as the constraints that the theory raises. This would also provide the basis for locating the media's role in democratization processes on the continent. Public deliberation is fundamental to democratization in Africa and it is to be defended regardless of the preferred model of democracy.

The goal of this chapter is to expound the deliberative conception of democracy and to apply it to the analysis of mediated politics in the general context of Africa's transitional democracies and the specific case of Uganda. Appraisals are made of the deliberative environment in Africa; of mediated discourse as a resource for deliberating on public issues; and of the media as tools for collective political mobilization and consciousness-raising.

Amidst the reservations that have been expressed about the reproduction of what are essentially liberal concepts in Africa, Berger (2002, p. 21) has specifically referred to the indiscriminate usage of Western concepts of media and democracy under African realities. But he believes that such cautions, justifiable as they are, do not rule out the larger normative question of whether democracy as understood and practiced in Western societies is relevant in Africa. As far as he is concerned, "it is a matter of

standards of explanation and description rather than moral prescription.” Thus, the way forward is via concepts that lend themselves to universal applicability; concepts that are appropriate and have explanatory value for the media-democracy relationship in Africa and which also specify general processes and functions as opposed to particular institutions.

Deliberation as a model of democracy for the most part remains unexplored in as far as it applies to the media in Africa; yet it promises interesting insights in the search for universally applicable principles. As noted earlier, deliberative democracy contains within its theoretical landscape a debate between those who prefer to define deliberation in discursive terms and those who favor a liberal orientation (Dryzek, 2000). In light of these competing conceptions of deliberation, it can be argued that liberal outlooks to the media-democracy relationship also accentuate the instrumental-strategic aspects of that relationship. Likewise, the media tend to take on an aggregative rather than a discursive role when viewed narrowly through the instrumental-strategic lens.

But the differences in outlook toward deliberation and in views about liberal democracy’s relevance should not detract from two important questions: whether public deliberation per se is relevant to democratization and whether the media are relevant avenues for democratic political deliberation in Africa.

The case for democratic deliberation

The absence of public deliberation has been implicated as one of the drawbacks to policy making in Africa. The introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in the early 1990s, which was done in an authoritarian fashion because the democratic climate at the time was bleak, exemplifies some of the most glaring deliberative deficiencies witnessed on the continent. African leaders, whose policies had necessitated economic adjustment in the first place, were not used to the culture of subjecting public policy to democratic decision making. In particular, they were unwilling to open up their performance to scrutiny through public debate. The Western backers of the SAPs, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the major international donors, were not confident either that SAPs, given their austerity, would survive exposure to public deliberation (Ake, 1996).

In view of the dismal performance, if not failure, of the SAPs, Mkandawire and Soludo (1999, p. 133) submitted that Africa needed a post-adjustment approach to policy making that was based on “a negotiated social contract in which various interest groups have a stake.” The key issue here is negotiation, a process that can best be achieved by actively seeking public participation in policy discourse. As Mengisteab (1996) has observed too, it is imperative in a democracy that the general population takes control of the process of public decision making.

Many policy failures have been attributed, if partly, to the lack of public involvement in policy formulation. This underscores the relevance of democratic discourse and the importance of developing open and effective deliberative environments. However, there can be no constructive and meaningful deliberation as long as

authoritarian tendencies persist in the governance structures. Deliberative democracy implies vigorous and unconstrained debate on matters of collective interest. This is as critical to Africa as it is to liberal pluralist societies.

Pursuing a deliberative conception of the media-democracy relationship opens up a different view that allows us to look beyond specific institutional forms and to focus on the functions and norms that can be ascribed to the media as deliberative institutions for democratic politics in Africa. It also opens up another window through which to explore how democratization processes relate to and affect the media as vehicles for democratic political deliberation and as platforms for elite-driven media discourse.

According to Best (1991, p. 326), political players have “vested interests in bringing attention to an issue and/or promoting a particular image of a problem.” Where deliberative opportunities exist, the attentive public as well as the active and potential supporters of a collective political cause will presumably be tuned or exposed to the elite discourses that are readily available in the public media. The media provide the elites with a platform to communicate their values and policy preferences to each other and to the population. Those elite groups that are successful at getting their collective voice heard, at articulating their positions, and at getting their messages across through the media ultimately dominate the debate about the issues of the day. In turn, the frames they sponsor tend to filter into public opinion and citizens’ judgments about matters of collective interest.

Although the African democracy movement is neither a homogeneous entity nor one with a coherent ideology and agenda (Ake, 2000), most of its constituent groups claim to be in the struggle for democratic values and practices through discussion

and engagement in public deliberative forums. “Sound political judgment, “as Page (1996, p. 2) would say, “requires exchanging knowledge and ideas with others.” For these exchanges to be meaningful, it is presumed that citizens need access to quality information and constructive political deliberation, and that government and all political actors should pay attention to the public’s policy preferences. Granted this presumption, Lumumba-Kasongo (1998, p. 58) notes that while democratic discourses are integral to the processes of democratization, the problem in Africa is that they “have not yet been conceived and practiced as objective and rational discourses” because opposition to government and differences in political opinions are barely tolerated.

Whereas some deplore the activist and overt political roles of the media as a problem, Hyden and Okigbo (2002) have, on the contrary, proposed that because social forces such as the bourgeoisie and the working class movement that led to political reform in other parts of the world have made no significant contribution to democratization in Africa, the potential of the African media to initiate and encourage political reform has to be considered positively.

In the absence of a legal or effective opposition, the media tended to become the surrogate opposition, thereby shouldering a burden that in a functional pluralist democracy would have been the prerogative of the organized opposition and other collective interest and action groups. Hence, the media often took up causes that ordinarily would be for the opposition to initiate, articulate, and advance.

Not surprisingly, for as long as the media appeared to be playing increasingly activist roles, the elite, depending on their relationship to the power structure, came to view journalists as their rivals and enemies or as advocates for their causes, thus

putting the media and governments on a direct collision course. This could also explain the reluctance of many governments to repeal the many draconian media laws, some of them dating back to colonial times. Such was the case in Uganda until multi-partyism was reinstated, with the media acting as the opposition by proxy. But even with a fledgling institutional opposition in place, the challenges the media face may have diminished only quantitatively; the jury is still out on the qualitative improvements. So, on account of their overtly political role, the media in Africa are as much a part of the deliberative fabric as the other representative institutions of the liberal state and they possess potentialities that the elites have been quick to exploit.

The media as a deliberative resource

The question as to whether the mass media offer a realistic possibility to foster democratic deliberation has for long engaged scholars and commentators even in Western liberal societies where media penetration is deep and access to diverse informational resources is pervasive. The notions that public deliberation is pertinent to democratization and that the media are vital deliberative agencies suggest that any possibilities that the media might offer have to be cast in the context of the media as deliberative resources.

To begin with, the media have largely been ignored as creators of a deliberative realm in the struggles for independence during the 1950s and 1960s, a period often regarded as Africa's own first wave of democratization. Historically, independence movements in Africa were constituted by many different social movements. Within these movements, there were deliberative or discursive communities through which nationalists actively participated as they articulated the agendas and strategies of the anti-colonial

struggle. These debates were conducted in public and particularly through the press, which played a considerable part “in keeping the discursive realm of the emerging nationalist community alive” (Hyden & Okigbo, 2002, p. 35).

The nationalists were able to construct a non-hierarchical deliberative domain through which the participants acquired communicative competence. By giving the nationalist leaders a platform upon which to propagate their causes and to project their vision beyond those directly involved so as to attract other participants, the media contributed to buttressing the emergent deliberative realm. In this situation, “the notion of a discursive realm implies the existence of a community that shares a sense of belonging without necessarily agreeing on every facet of what they discuss” (Hyden & Okigbo, 2002, p. 36).

The apparent lack of visibility and discussion of deliberation in much of the contemporary writing about the media and democracy in Africa may lead to the erroneous impression that deliberative ideals are less important than the structural and institutional dimensions of the media-democracy relationship. Without a doubt, viewing the relationship between the media and democracy in largely instrumentalist terms seems to obscure the equally critical discursive dimension of this relationship.

Mediated political discourse is a mode of public deliberation in which elite political actors and citizens share information and talk, form, and express opinions about public affairs. Some discourses involve only those elites engaged with a particular issue, say, as professionals or decision makers, and discourses of this kind are normally carried on through specialized outlets and closed forums. But the public may encounter a variety of discourses, including aspects of elite discourses, via targeted outlets and open forums.

In any case, the deliberation that is conducted through these avenues represents only a portion of the discourse that an interested or active participant in public deliberation has exposure to. Mediated discourse plays a central role in public deliberation in a democratic polity, because citizens depend considerably on the mass media to sift through various contested policy issues and to figure out their political choices and collective preferences. The discourse that circulates constantly in the media is a vital deliberative resource for democratic politics in general and political cognition in particular. The deliberative experience as a whole is a learning experience, one in which individuals learn from personal discussions and conversations, from their own thinking about and reflection on the issues, and from information and opinion cues picked up from the media (Gamson, 1992).

Accordingly, Schoenbach and Becker (1995) consider deliberation to be the thrust of public opinion, which in this sense is treated as a deliberative public process, rather than an aggregate of individual opinions, through which citizens gain awareness of and seek to comprehend and to formulate judgments on collective issues. This deliberative process of public opinion is moderated as much by the strategic calculations and collective motivations of organized participants in their chosen political projects as the construction and framing of issues.

Given that policy making is complex and replete with uncertainties, an individual member of the public cannot depend merely on personal experience and private reflection. Because of the big number of participants in the massive and complex polities of this age, coupled with the enormous extent and complexity of public affairs in modern societies, political deliberation would have to cover a vast amount of issues and

consume a colossal amount of time and energy. Moreover, it would demand of the citizen to become knowledgeable about the details of practically every matter of public interest (Page, 1996).

Not only would it be a tall order to manage society, it also would be impossible for citizens to have a handle on public affairs under circumstances like these. Contemporary conditions therefore necessitate specialization that allows individuals to become experts on particular issues. It is for these reasons that Page (1996, p. 5) affirms the need for “a *division of labor* in political expertise, policymaking, and communication.” Similarly, deliberative labor is patterned in such a way that locates the elite at the center of the deliberative process while it situates the citizens at the periphery.

In the deliberative division of labor that Page (1996, p. 5) postulates, professional communicators¹⁶ are indispensable and their job is “to not only help policy experts communicate with each other, but also assemble, explain, debate, and disseminate the best available information and ideas about public policy, in ways that are accessible to large audiences or ordinary citizens.”

The problematic outcome of this kind of specialization or deliberative representation, contend Gutmann and Thompson (1996, p. 132), is its propensity to produce a class of professional political deliberators with the public participating only as spectators. This division of deliberative labor, as it were, is said to result in elitism, “the tendency of those who deliberate to dominate those who do not,” as well as in populism, “the tendency of representatives to pander to their constituents.” In one African example,

¹⁶ The term “professional communicators” is extended here to embrace the entire cast of public and political actors who are regularly and occupationally involved in the contest over public policy matters. They include journalists, public officials and bureaucrats, social and political activists, politicians and political operatives, legislators, advocates for organized interests, etc).

Good (2002) has documented the harmful effects of elitism and elite democracy in Botswana, a country that epitomizes the trappings of liberal democracy but also where the citizens are largely passive while the elite are empowered and accountable only to themselves.

In Africa as elsewhere, the political process is for the most part elite-driven. This raises the central question concerning the feasibility of public deliberation in deliberative environments that are not only mediated, but are also moderated and controlled by the elite. In environments in which public deliberation is inevitably mediated, elite discourses are far more privileged than are other discourses. Many observers bemoan the stranglehold that the elite have on the structures and processes of public deliberation. Critics of the importation of liberal doctrines into Africa usually cite the elitist features of the political communication systems in Western democracies as one of their gravest concerns.

Elite versus non-elite deliberation

One of the main criticisms leveled against the present structure of commercial media is that they tend to homogenize public opinion and to construct a superficial consensus, what the critics of deliberative democracy call universal rationality. In his work on mediated deliberation, Page (1996) examines how *The New York Times* typically sets the agenda on U.S. foreign policy for the rest of the media and, by implication, the public. Specifically, he examines the influence of official sources and an elite corps of experts on foreign policy. In his “theory of constructed deliberation,” Page (1996) looks at how the gatekeeping practices of the mainstream media, the *Times* in particular, help to regulate the intensity, range, and nature of commentary and opinion on

issues, often reflecting the parochial interests of media owners, stockholders, the corporate world, the power elite, and the ruling class. As in the U.S., these tendencies raise questions about the viability of extending the theory of deliberative democracy to mediated public discourse in Africa, given that the market model of journalism has become entrenched in media systems across the continent.

The democratic impact of opening up the deliberative arena to the non-elite and the so-called non-rational discourses comes to light when we consider public discourse through the newer media forms in Africa. In Uganda, nowhere is this impact more evident than in the popularity of public affairs talk shows on FM radio stations. With liberalization and the proliferation of affordable FM technology and mobile telephony, many more people have been brought into the deliberative arena, including illiterate, semi-literate, and low-educated individuals who were previously excluded from the public discourse conducted in the elite, urban, English print media (Baguma, Lugalambi, & Zawadi, 2000).

Though self-selected, a significant number of regular but highly politically conscious citizens can call into live radio talk shows in English and in their indigenous languages and vernaculars to voice their views without the constraints of having to construct careful, logical arguments. The political elite have realized the potency of these media and have been quick to exploit them in attempts to influence the public's collective preferences in ways that are consistent with their own values.

The media are by their nature suited for the function that Norris (2000, p. 29) refers to as "mobilizing agent." She contends that "the roles of the news media as civic forum and as watchdog essentially ensure the appropriate conditions for

maintaining political competition at the elite level.” The elites as a social category in transitional democratic systems, as elsewhere, perform a pivotal role in shaping politics and in directing a nation toward stable, effective, and democratic transformation in political systems and structures. Therefore, the mobilization functions of the media are crucial for delivering elite values and outlooks to the rest of the population. Given their privileged status and access to political and other resources, the elite occupy a strategic position that allows them to exploit the mobilization functions of the media in order to shape public discourse and the public’s collective preferences.

An engaged citizenry is essential for democratic politics to thrive. Citizens and those seeking to shape public life and policy must provide reasons through “an ongoing process of mutual justification” to prove why certain decisions should be made (Gutmann & Thompson, 2000, p. 161). Page (1996) invokes the normative justifications for deliberation to analyze how the media and professional communicators influence public opinion and policy. He asserts, for example, that even if citizens were capable of a high degree of rationality and good sense, public opinion is likely to depend significantly on the quality of the political information and ideas presented to the public. If the information the public gets is complete, accurate, truthful, and properly interpreted, citizens will be in a position to make informed decisions about their policy preferences and in conformity with their basic values and interests. This would also guard against the undermining of democracy that could happen if governments or public agencies and officials were to respond to false preferences.

The information age, on the other hand, poses unique challenges for public deliberation. In countries where the deliberative environment is to a large extent

electronically mediated, more people access political information via TV and the Internet than via contact with other citizens in face-to-face deliberative forums. TV and most electronic modes of communication are largely uni-directional. While several innovations such as call-in shows have made interaction possible between audiences and the originators of messages, the principle of deliberative equality is still undermined since control over the deliberative process is not equally shared, and there is little opportunity for an individual participant to directly address other participants.

The deliberative principle of publicity is perhaps the most vulnerable to the overwhelming public dependence on electronic media. The publicity assumption posits that having to articulate one's interests in public compels participants in the deliberative process to keep parochial interests out of public discourse and to deliberate in the best interests of the collective. Internet-based forums are the closest that electronic media can get to the standard of publicity. In fact, as Benhabib (1996) points out, the idea that public deliberation can only happen in massive social spaces where large numbers of people come into contact with one another is a historical anachronism. How best the available and ubiquitous electronic forums, such as talk shows, Weblogs, and newsgroups can contribute to meaningful deliberation is still subject to debate.

Mediated deliberation in Africa as elsewhere has also to contend with the media's excessive dependence on official sources for news and commentary. To the extent that public officials dominate the news and crowd out other voices, citizens may get far less than a full picture of the reality. Public deliberation is vulnerable to lopsided discourse particularly in those domains, such as foreign policy, in which governments typically have a monopoly over relevant information. In Uganda as in most African

countries, access to information in the public domain is still limited even where freedom of information laws have been enacted or where such access is guaranteed by the constitution. Under these circumstances, government officials and the political elite may be tempted to suppress information or to distort it if that will advance their interests (Page, 1996).

Conclusion

While the public deliberation that is politically consequential in all African societies today is inevitably mediated, the media suffer a host of constraints ranging from limited capacities occasioned by structural problems beyond their control to the lack of socially-enabling environments due to poor levels of literacy, a dearth of mass education, small middle classes, and low purchasing power for the majority. These limitations do seriously hamper the effectiveness of the media as deliberative sites and it would be short-sighted to not acknowledge them in analyses of the media-democracy relationship in Africa.

Just as they do in the industrial democracies, the media in Africa function as deliberative institutions which the elite use to shape political reality and public policies and to advance their agendas. Engaged by and straddling all sides in the political struggles, the media have been crucial actors in democratic transformations modeled on liberal ideals, though these ideals are widely contested.

CHAPTER 7

THE FRAMING OF POLITICAL ISSUES IN THE MEDIA

Introduction

In employing the notion of frame analysis, defined as “the examination of the organization of experience,” Goffman (1974, pp. 10-11) was interested in the organization or structure of day-to-day social experience. His seminal proposition that “definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them” has inspired research on framing by scholars in disparate disciplines and with diverse theoretical orientations. Framing is the idea that subjective readings of a situation are based on frames of reference anchored in the individual or group’s culture. Based on ideas derived largely from symbolic interactionism and elements of cognitive psychology, frame analysis posits that people process and organize information systematically, guided by extant or newly developed frames of reference. These frames help people make sense of the world around them, build their expectations, order their memories, map out their actions, and interpret feedback (Goffman, 1974; Lemert & Branaman, 1997; Snow, 2001).

A central assumption of the present research is that some of the frames that people invoke in their efforts to navigate these cognitive processes do originate from the news media where issues are basically framed to convey specific versions of political reality. Because media-based public deliberation is an integral element of collective political experience today and, as such, a mediated form of participation in the political process, political elites typically use the media to construct and frame issues in the pursuit of their political goals. In so doing, elite actors become important suppliers of

meaning about political events. So this chapter weighs up the question of how issue-framing transpires in the press and the news media generally and also prepares the ground to consider the outcomes of the framing process.

My first objective therefore is to explore the theoretical perspectives that have informed researchers' varied approaches to the field of frame analysis. I employ a taxonomical method here, because the vast body of work on framing in communication and allied fields can be most productively categorized by the paradigm in which it is conceived. D'Angelo (2002) identified three such framing paradigms that he labeled 'cognitive,' 'critical,' and 'constructionist.' The three are discussed in turn, but the emphasis is reserved for constructionism insofar as it is the most applicable to the type of frames on which this study is centered.

The second objective is to explicate the various types of frames and to spell out how researchers have approached them in frame analysis. It is by looking closely at the conceptualization of frames that researchers can focus their attention on the varied ways and dynamics of how communicated texts work to exert their power (Entman, 1993).

My third objective is to apply the constructionist model of framing by using the case history approach to analyze public discourse on Uganda's political transition and to highlight the origins of the issue frames that were prevalent among elite deliberators.

The fourth objective is to put forward a set of research questions to guide the content analysis designed to validate and confirm the issue frames uncovered from the case history of public discourse on the key issues of the transition. In elaborating the

research questions, I expound the main concepts of constructionism relevant to this research. These will be applied to the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data obtained from the content analysis. The content analysis entails quantitative assessments of various discourse properties of news about the key political issues in the transition debate, including the distribution of and relationships among issue frames and trends in press coverage.

Frame analysis and research paradigms

For all the different theoretical, empirical, and methodological directions followed, frame analysis is bound together by the common notion of the frame. The identification and measurement of frames is the core analytical task. The units of observation or analysis commonly used are the message (news, campaign rhetoric, and arguments); textual components (words, sentences, and paragraphs); the individual (recall of information and opinion about an issue); and the social system (behavior and attitudes of institutions and audiences). Likewise, the different conceptualizations of framing also tend to point toward global questions concerning how public and social discourses are defined; how messages are constructed; how meaning is deciphered; and the premises upon which the interpretation of social reality is built. Hence, framing is largely operationalized by measuring the effects, occurrence, location, nature, structure, usage, and interpretation of frames in various forms of media and public discourses (Solomon, 1992; Rhee, 1997; Neveu, 1999; Ettema, 1990; Reese & Buckalew, 1995; Goshorn & Gandy, 1995; Parisi, 1997; Iorio and Huxman, 1996; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Gamson, 1996; Hull, 2001; Solomon, 1992; Durham, 1998).

Under the cognitive paradigm, it is assumed that framing effects are related to individual information processing. This microscopic view of framing draws on an essentially psychological conception of how individuals cognitively process and structure the information they receive. As seen from this view, individual judgments and perceptions are influenced by cognitive factors and take place in the context of a given relevant frame of reference.

Under the critical paradigm, it is assumed that frames are narrative devices that help to symbolically structure reality for those who control communication and their audiences.

Under the constructionist paradigm, it is assumed that framing is a function of social processes including a society's political culture of values, ideologies, and collective experiences. This is essentially a macroscopic view of framing that treats frames as socio-cognitive outcomes and processes related to broad and diffuse collective discourses on a range of social, political, cultural, and economic phenomena. It is in fact a more dynamic and comprehensive framing model because it productively merges the micro and macro dimensions of framing by incorporating important aspects of the cognitive and critical paradigms. For instance, Scheufele (2000, p. 308) argues that in research on the individual-level outcomes of framing, the literature on social movements is illustrative of attempts "to find an explicit and direct link between audience frames as independent variable and individual information processing or political action." But while researchers on social action working in the sociological tradition acknowledge, if implicitly, the cognitive drive behind the framing process at the individual level, they tend to stress the social manifestations of frames in the realm of collective action.

As will become evident, the case for these paradigms as autonomous sets of explanations should not be overstated. To the extent that all models attempt in their different ways to explicate how people process information, they share some basic notions of how that process works. For instance, Katz (1995), on the one hand, points to people's use of cognitive frames of reference to deal with the ambiguities of social reality as well as the complexities and contradictions inherent in the flurry of messages that individuals receive. Bennett and Edelman (1985, p. 162), on the other, contend that "the analytical focus on individual realities neglects the ecological problem of how people in collectivities can present and reconcile competing truths." The idea of frames as narratives, for example, can be traced across different models of frame analysis yet it is essentially related to the critical model. So is the idea of schemata, which is mostly associated with the cognitive model. Commonalities in the theoretical foundations of framing as an information processing phenomenon have led Rhee (1997) to suggest that studies of the dynamics of message interpretation and reception should be integrated with studies of message effects; and the socio-cognitive approach to framing that he pursues responds in that fashion to the construction of political reality.

We can infer therefore that the territory of framing is marked by a cognitive frontier and a social hinterland. The implication for public opinion is that whereas individual framing outcomes manifest themselves cognitively, the way people individually and collectively position themselves in relation to reality is socially rooted.

The most significant point of divergence among the different models of framing revolves around each model's specification of the locus of the frames. This implies that the appropriate model for explaining a given framing process should be

determined by the type of frame in question. This study focuses on issue frames, and the constructionist paradigm is uniquely suited for explaining the deliberative processes under investigation. To put the whole analysis in context as well as to introduce some common concepts and theoretical premises, the cognitive and critical paradigms are discussed in broad outlines before turning the full attention on constructionism.

The cognitive paradigm

Cognitively-driven approaches to political communication have an abiding interest in information processing as do other psychologically-oriented inquiries into how individuals process information. For example, inquiries based on information processing models have articulated socio-cognitive explanations for the processing of social information and the functioning of the cognitive system in the natural social context using concepts such as information availability, accessibility, and heuristics. This line of research has focused on the ways that individuals process information in the construction of judgments based on social information (Shrum, 2002; Wyer & Srull, 1986; Shrum & O'Guinn, 1993; Higgins & King, 1981; Wyer & Radvansky, 1999).

To approach framing from the cognitive perspective means attending to the information processing dynamics involved when individuals encounter and engage with media messages. People use the schemas available to them to access and interpret the relevant information and to make judgments based on media content.

The social variant of the cognitive paradigm is instructive for framing analysis and for the realm of political discourse in particular because the psychological or mental dynamics involved in the construction of social reality are essentially analogous to the dynamics that shape the construction of political reality (Fiske & Kinder, 1981). By

extrapolating from the literature on social cognition and social psychology and applying it to political information processing and political cognition, Fiske and Kinder (1981, p. 172) examine how individuals, given their different abilities, use social schemata, that is, “the layperson’s social theories,” to form judgments about political and other issues.

Entman (1993, p. 53) highlights the role of schemata in the framing process. He defines schemata as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information.” He then argues that although the presence of frames does not necessarily guarantee their influence, they have the power to select and spotlight some aspects of reality while ignoring, omitting, or de-emphasizing others. Thus, a frame is important insofar as it can determine whether people notice, understand, and remember an issue. It can also determine how people assess and decide to act upon an issue.

A traditional cognitive approach to framing in the media is the one pioneered by Iyengar’s (1991) study of television news in which he examined the effect of episodic and thematic news frames or formats¹⁷ on how viewers attribute responsibility for political issues and how these news frames indirectly affect public opinion. To frame news episodically is to concentrate on isolated events or cases, whereas to frame news thematically is to present issues and events within their broader context. The media’s emphasis on episodic framing of news particularly affects the way news is selected for television and how the public assigns responsibility for given political issues. According to Iyengar (1991, pp. 2-3):

¹⁷ It is necessary to make a distinction between what I refer to as structural and substantive frames. The former are the kind that Iyengar calls episodic and thematic frames. They are structural because they define the format by which news is packaged. Substantive frames, on the other hand, are derived from the content of the news. This distinction allows for the possibility of overlaps between the two frame types.

[E]xposure to episodic news makes viewers less likely to hold public officials accountable for the existence of some problem and also less likely to hold them responsible for alleviating it. By discouraging viewers from attributing responsibility for national issues to political actors, television decreases the public's control over their elected representatives and the policies they pursue.”

The attribution of responsibility is considered essential for citizens to exercise civic control over those in power, and Iyengar (1991) demonstrated experimentally that the way issues are framed in TV news significantly impacts such attributions when measured at the cognitive level.

Pursuing the same program of research, Iyengar and Simon (1993) used content analysis to study the ways that news coverage through agenda-setting, priming, and framing shaped Americans' response to the Gulf crisis. As regards framing, they specifically looked at one variable – public attribution of responsibility. They distinguished between two types of responsibility: causal and treatment. Causal responsibility is about the origin of the issue or source of the problem, while treatment responsibility is about who has the power or means to solve the problem or deal with the issue.

Hypothetically, Iyengar and Simon (1993) expected that “respondents reporting higher rates of exposure to television news will express greater support for a military as opposed to a diplomatic response to the crisis” (p. 373); but they concluded that “exposure to episodic news programming strengthened, albeit modestly, support for a military resolution of the crisis” (p. 381). The public perception of issues and public affairs on TV depends ultimately on whether the news coverage is framed thematically or episodically (Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Valentino, Beckmann, & Buhr, 2001).

Valkenburg, Semetko, and Vreese (1999, p. 555) carried out an experiment to investigate the impact of news frames on readers' thoughts and on their ability to recall the information presented to them in a story. In answering their research question – “Does exposure to differently framed news stories influence readers' ability to recall the information presented in these stories?” – they discovered that in the short-run, news frames can significantly affect readers' thoughts about and recall of issues in the news. Besides, they found that claims about framing effects could be generalized across different types of issues, and that news frames map out for audiences the ways to conceive of certain issues or events. These researchers concluded their study with the observation that “the news media can have the capacity not only to tell the public *what* issues to think about but also *how* to think about them” (Valkenburg, Semetko, & Vreese, 1999, p. 567).

The critical paradigm

There are compelling reasons to infer that the generalized patterns observed in the packaging of TV news (Iyengar, 1991) apply to a substantial degree to the media universally. This is because there are commonalities in news patterns, production values, and journalistic practices across all media forms and systems (Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980).

Scheufele (2000), for his part, contends that the factors that determine the narrative packages used to frame the news – a process he characterizes as one of frame-building – include journalists' social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, reportorial and editorial routines, ideological dispositions, as well as interest group pressures.

The critical paradigm in framing research focuses on these common patterns. Critical scholars of framing argue that frames emerge from the newsgathering routines of journalists who provide information about issues and events in ways that privilege the viewpoints and values of the elite. Such frames dominate not only the news but also audience perceptions of the issues covered. By selectively determining what to include and exclude, journalists allow some frames to emerge at the expense of others, thus allowing the dominance of frames that support the status quo (D'Angelo, 2002).

Moreover, the framing of issues in mediated public discourse facilitates the coalescing of public opinion around a preferred “narrative frame” (Bennett & Edelman, 1985, p. 159), which is crucial for persuading and mobilizing citizens to engage in collective action. Such action may be political in the conventional sense of the struggle for power, for example, when political entities like government, parties, and interest groups mobilize the public and their supporters to contribute funds, sign up for membership, attend rallies, vote, or build consensus on a contested issue. On the other hand, intended action may be geared toward social causes that might not be overtly political but may well challenge the established power systems. This could happen when, for instance, activists in social movements and organized groups with interests to defend and issues to protest mobilize the public, their supporters, or affected individuals and groups to join them or to demonstrate, sign petitions, attend hearings/meetings, lobby, campaign for favorable legislation and policies, or just to generate consensus on the issue they are protesting or advocating. While the ‘critical’ tends to be conceptualized differently – some scholars emphasize the power element while others emphasize the

symbolic element – the idea of frames as narratives can be traced in different analyses of frames in mediated discourse.

Through a combination of textual and content analysis, Goshorn and Gandy (1995) investigated the ways in which different newspapers reported statistical evidence from two studies: one an analysis by the U.S. Federal Reserve Board of information concerning over 6.4 million loan applications; the other an assessment by a non-governmental organization of the varied experiences of white and black Americans in the mortgage market. The researchers attempted to answer two questions about the media portrayal of risk: “Are there identifiable tendencies that characterize the representation of risk in terms of the probability of gain versus the probability of loss?” and “Are these tendencies associated with the identification of victims or responsible parties in particular ways?” (Goshorn & Gandy, 1995, p. 143). The study was based on analyses of headlines, leading paragraphs, stylistic variation, and assignment of risk. Two important findings were that the language used in conveying statistical information was loaded with particular frames, and that reporters and editors were more inclined to portray the risks that black people face positively (“unlikely to win”) than negatively (“more likely to lose”) (Goshorn & Gandy, 1995, pp. 148-149).

In a study about the coverage of El Salvador by *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*, Solomon (1992, p. 65) argues that these magazines created and shared a package of frames for covering the El Salvador story based on the rationale that “U.S. policy was well meaning and honorable.” There were distinctive elements among the three magazines in their accounts of El Salvador, mirroring the different worldviews of each media organization. The conclusion that these differences were linked to the

different interests of America's ruling class and the power elite is at the core of the political-economic critique of the media. Viewed through the critical lenses of political economy, framing is the process of creating a hegemonic frame whose dominance has to be continually negotiated, defended, reasserted, and reproduced.

The constructionist paradigm

The essence of the constructionist paradigm, as articulated by Gamson (1988a), is that interpretive processes are central to political cognition. In studying public opinion, for example, constructionists differ from their cognitively oriented counterparts in that they treat the media not as environmental stimuli that only serve to activate existing predispositions, but rather, as components of the cultural system.

Although, as noted, research on framing processes and outcomes follows different theoretical routes, Gamson (1992) argues that traditional approaches to political cognition – those that are based on information processing models – have revealed more about the end product or content of individual opinions than they have clarified how people form these opinions, what meaning they attribute to issues, and how they formulate their judgments. This is because these approaches fail to capture the role that political culture plays in political cognition.

In the same vein, Althaus (2003, p. 101) contends that experimental settings in particular cannot capture the social milieu in which citizens obtain and use political information to figure out their opinions and preferences. The interpersonal linkages through which political information flows do filter and shape the way the participants involved in public deliberation engage this information in constructing their opinions. What are needed are approaches to opinion formation that “take into account

the social construction of needs, wants, and values and the cultural transmission of political knowledge.”

Similarly, Herbst (1998) calls for an approach to political cognition that shifts the focus from traditional information processing models to the idea that in politics the meaning of events, issues, and policies typically remains open to interpretation. Whereas people employ particular cognitive tools like heuristics and schemas to construct meaning out of political events, these tools operate in specific historical and cultural contexts.

Against that background, Gamson (1988a, p. 165) contends that the analysis of public opinion in the constructionist tradition calls for the investigation of political culture, that is, “the language and symbols of public discourse.” Typical studies influenced by this research tradition have examined the role that media frames play in shaping political discourse and in perpetuating the dominant political culture. What the constructionist approach does is to recast the relationship between the media and public opinion as an interaction between two mutually connected systems:

On the one hand, we have a system of media discourse that frames events and presents information always in some context of meaning. On the other hand, we have a public of interacting individuals who approach media discourse in an active way, using it to construct their own personal meanings about public events and issues.

In their research on the role of radio in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, for instance, Kellow and Steeves (1998, p. 111) used framing analysis along the lines described above to inquire into the contribution that radio made to the conflict. Empirically, the researchers applied what they called “macrotextual narrative analysis” whereby “the researcher typically identifies and interprets the ways in which a dominant

(hegemonic) societal position is supported in a text.” As these researchers emphasize for this kind of study, it is essential to bring the social context into the picture because “texts have little meaning apart from their cultural and political-economic origins.”

In their approach to constructionism, Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992, p. 18) shifted the focus from public opinion to the phenomenon they referred to as “common knowledge,” which is about “what people think and how they think about public issues rather than narrowly defined valence-oriented ‘opinions’ concerning an issue or candidate.” The concept of knowledge underlines two points: one is the necessity for organizing information into meaningful structures; the other is that the process of structuring and framing information is not a solo undertaking by individuals but derives from shared worldviews and issue frames.

Arguing along the same lines, Herbst (1998, pp. 24-25) recommended a research strategy in which she argued for “a culturally informed political psychology” or “folk psychology” that lets people articulate what motivates their political actions and beliefs. This approach to political cognition focuses on individuals’ comprehension of reality by relating it to broader public discourses and to social structure. Key questions may accordingly be posed:

How do informants’ occupational constraints affect their mental models of political life? How are informants’ theories, definitions, and ideas linked to their expectations, to social pressures, and to the greater shifts in political culture we all learn about through the mass media?

Iorio and Huxman’s (1996, p.111) work illustrates this very idea. Through focused, in-depth interviews, they sought to ascertain how people frame their personal concerns and how those concerns interacted with the media and political issues. They tried to tease out the personal concerns that undergirded those issues. Their research also

examined the framing process that sits at the bottom of individuals' perceptions about current affairs. Three framing processes were derived from the data: "(a) linking, which involves organizing experiences by connecting and interrelating various concerns; (b) collapsing, which involves merging information, condensing, and eliminating details; and (c) colorizing, which is the interpretation of events and personalities from a personal standpoint."

Therefore, operating on the premise that collective public discourse is molded by social context and embedded in a society's political culture, analysis of the framing of mediated politics ought to be situated in "the meaning systems that are culturally available for talking, writing, and thinking about political objects: the myths and metaphors, the language and idea elements, the frames, ideologies, values, and condensing symbols" (Gamson, 1988b, p. 220). These meaning systems or cognitive frameworks are functions of a society's social experiences and especially its political culture, and they significantly influence the discourse on issues that affect people collectively. The constructionist approach to political discourse attempts to address the important role of social context and political culture and the general concerns raised above.

The framing of public discourse has implications for the formation of public opinion and the expression of collective political preferences. Focusing on the dynamics involved in the framing of political discourse is critical to our understanding of deliberative politics because frames help to anchor the cultivation of political consciousness. It is unlikely that an attempt at political mobilization through public deliberation that is not rooted in a solid political consciousness will have the desired

impact. Frames serve both to solidify and to distinguish political consciousness, which in turn drives and motivates elite political actors and the citizens they wish to mobilize behind their agendas.

In public life, citizens routinely encounter an assortment of judgment situations that typically includes those of a political nature. Faced with different issues that constantly invite them to apply their judgment, citizens are rarely at a loss because they can draw on readily available deliberative resources supplied recurrently through public communication. A singularly significant resource consists of the frames that populate the political discourses of day-to-day public life. Citizens who regularly engage with the public communications media are not necessarily beholden to the frames they happen upon, whether or not they recognize them; but neither can they escape the undercurrent of issue framing that pervades public political discourse. In fact, issue framing has come to be associated with the very character of political deliberation and is one of the principal mechanisms by which elite political actors influence public discourse on policy and political issues (Terkildsen, Schnell, & Ling, 1998; Simon & Xenos, 2000).

More often than not, to be sure, elite frames dominate the discourse surrounding an issue. Gamson (1992, p.xi-xii) contends that “the mass media are a system in which active agents with specific purposes are constantly engaged in a process of supplying meaning.” It was pointed out earlier that as a cultural system, the media are better understood not as sources of stimuli to which audience members respond, but as “the site of a complex symbolic contest over which interpretation will prevail.”

In short, framing analysis conceived through the constructionist model suggests that the issue frames available through the media are vital to the formation and

expression of judgments about collective political choices. This strand of framing research suggests a useful analytical strategy for investigating the framing processes evident in mediated politics. Political actors, like other activists engaged in collective causes, routinely construct frames around which to rally their supporters, attract new followers, and build consensus.

Thus, constructionist frame analysis explores the dynamics, mechanics, and outcomes of the framing process in the realm of public discourse and its effects on the individual interpretation of social and political realities. As meaning systems that are socially constructed, frames emerge from social interactions and evolve into vital elements of culture that are shared and passed on. Besides, the fact that frames originate from social interaction means that they are subject to contestation with different actors vying to assert their preferred frames in pursuit of their own interests (Schwirian, Curry, & Woldoff, 2001).

But while the constructionist paradigm has been credited for “calling attention to the crucial role of ideas and discourses in collective action,” an array of criticisms has been leveled against it as well, including: the lack of conceptual precision and clarity; reification of frames; failure to take into account the multiplicity of meanings that can be conveyed by and interpreted from discourses; and lack of clarity about the interface between frames as social constructions and the reality they claim to represent. Framing research has been faulted as well for weaknesses such as: being overly descriptive (naming without explaining); not doing enough systematic empirical studies; not studying negative cases (framing failures); the tendency toward reductionism; ascribing too much voluntarism to framers as strategic agents; and elite bias as in the

tendency to concentrate on the framing activities of elites at the expense of non-elites like the rank-and-file participants, potential members, and bystanders in collective action endeavors (Hull, 2001, p. 208).

Frame types and definitions

In the study of the media, scholars have proposed several definitions for the concept of a frame, each tending either to emphasize a particular framing function or process (such as the organization of knowledge about the world, the representation of reality, and the processing of information). For example, with regard to how media organizations, professionals, and audiences organize and make sense of events, Reese (2001, p. 11) defines frames at a macro level as “*organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world.*” From media and political actors’ perspectives, Entman (1993, p. 52) writes that to frame is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” From a journalist’s angle, Durham (1998, p. 113) says that “frames provide the bases for interconnecting facts. In the production of news, the role of a news frame is to define what is possible (and what is not) in the event’s presentation as news.” From the audience viewpoint, Valkenburg, Semetko, and Vreese (1999, p. 551) define a frame as “a schema of interpretations that enables individuals to perceive, organize, and make sense of incoming information.”

There possibly could not be a one-size-fits-all definition of a frame and of framing, though this has only propelled many to deplore the theoretical incoherence of

the field and to criticize the concept itself as nebulous and ineffectual. Although a survey of the field reveals many competing conceptualizations of the notion of framing, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p. 94) found some direction by exploring the literature for meanings of the commonly applied concepts of news frame, framing, and framing effects. Whereas there was no single definition for these related terms, their usage points to a number of theoretical attributes that are generally subsumed under the rubric of framing, namely: conceptual tools used to convey, interpret, and evaluate information; parameters for discussing public events; formula persistently used to select, emphasize, and exclude issues; perceiving reality in a way that enables specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, or treatment recommendation; mechanisms for locating, perceiving, identifying, and labeling information; and mechanisms for selecting among political alternatives.

For analytical purposes, there are fundamental conceptual distinctions that need to be drawn among the different types of frames: issue frames, collective action frames, decision frames, news frames, and audience frames (Nelson & Willey, 2001, p. 246).

Issue frames

Issue frames are discourse-specific and entail more or less coherent packages of ideas drawn from the political culture. Any such package has at its nucleus a central organizing idea whose function is to string events and experiences together so that people can think about them, make sense of them, and act on them in a structured manner. An issue frame does not have to be monopolized by a single claim and position. Different claims about and positions on an issue may compete over or within the same frame,

thereby making conflict and disagreement possible among people who subscribe to the same frame (Gamson, 1988b). The adversarial and contentious nature of most political discourse attests to this tendency.

Although issue frames are generally the manifest reflections of the meaning systems inherent in a political culture, the more latent frames function at a deeper level as cultural frames. These frames are widely shared in a culture and provide the context through which people absorb, internalize, and evaluate a vast range of information. Cultural frames often generate ideological commitments to the particular causes and policy arguments for which they are invoked (Schwirian, Curry, & Woldoff, 2001).

Collective action frames

Collective action frames are characteristic of the sociological view of framing. With its emphasis on the ideational role of frames, this view typically surfaces in the study of social movements, social protest, and collective action in general (Gamson, 1992; Kelley-Moore, 2001; Schwirian, Curry, & Woldoff, 2001; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986; Gerhards & Rucht, 1992; Williams & Kubal, 1999). In an extensive research program, Gamson (1992) has arguably gone farthest in conceptualizing and articulating the nature of collective action frames.

Decision frames

Decision frames are illustrative of the psychological view of framing which asserts that human behavior is governed less by the facts of the matter than the interpretations made of the facts. This view is premised on prospect theory, which posits that framing alternative choices either as losses or as gains leads to divergent

interpretations and decisions (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Goshorn & Gandy, 1995).

News frames

News frames can be categorized as exogenous and endogenous.

Exogenous frames are largely imposed externally on the news and are linked to the institutional and procedural dynamics of the media industry. These dynamics result in news frames that reflect organizational, marketplace, professional, and industrial influences on the news. Such influences appear in form of media practices and procedures that constrain the news as an industrial product.

Endogenous frames are mostly imposed internally on the news and are connected with the structural and production elements of news content. These elements typify the styles of news packaging and are conditioned by systemic reportorial conventions and routines (Gans, 2004; Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978).

Endogenous news frames also come in two varieties: generic and contingent. Generic frames are pre-determined because researchers have consistently found them present across different news discourses. In the line of inquiry focusing on the framing of news, research has established a set of frames that is common in news content (Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Shah, Domke, & Wackman, 2001; Tankard, 2001; Rhee, 1997). These generic frames are conflict, human interest, economic consequences, attribution of responsibility, and morality. While Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p. 94) have acknowledged that these five frames are by no means exhaustive because “there is not yet a standard set of content analytic indicators that can be used to reliably measure the prevalence of common frames in the news,” they nonetheless employed them to

analyze the framing of European politics in press and TV news. Contingent frames are associated with particular discourses; in other words they are domain- or discourse-specific frames (Kruse, 2001; Gorshon & Gandy, 1995).

Audience frames

Audience frames are the observable outcomes of framing processes as measured by individual perceptions. For instance, Nelson and Willey (2001) measured audience framing effects through an experiment to determine how the framing rhetoric surrounding the San Francisco pizza redlining controversy influenced opinion on the issue. Iyengar and Simon (1993) hypothesized that respondents reporting higher rates of exposure to TV news would be more favorable to a military rather than diplomatic response to the Gulf crisis, hence suggesting the success of one frame over another.

Frame packages in media discourse

As suggested by Gamson (1988a, p. 165), every political issue is surrounded by a relevant public discourse, that is to say, a specific set of ideas and symbols that are invoked in the process of constructing meaning about the issue. To be even more precise, every issue is debated within a set of interlocking discourses, for there are many deliberative forums via which meaning is constructed, each governed by its own rules. The mass media are just one among the deliberative avenues available to citizens, “but their content is both influenced by and influences what is said in other public forums.” Moreover, the raw material of public discourse comes from a catalogue of claims, metaphors, catchphrases, appeals to principle, and such other deliberative tools of persuasion. Because these ingredients of public discourse are structured, they are encountered not as individual elements but as interpretive or frame packages that define

the culture of, or discourse on, an issue. Participants in various deliberative forums draw upon these packages as aides for making sense of a relevant issue and the events affecting it.

According to Gamson (1988a, p. 165), a package has a structure to it, and at its heart sits “a central organizing idea or *frame* for making sense of relevant events. The frame suggests what the issue is about. It answers the question: ‘what is the basic source of controversy or concern on this issue?’” Besides, to reiterate a previous assertion, it is typical for multiple positions on an issue to inhere in a single frame. This in fact makes it possible for a certain measure of controversy to thrive even among claim-makers who share the same frame.

Conceptually, constructionist accounts of the framing of issues in public discourse situate frame packages within the political culture in which the issues are contested. That is why Gamson (1992, p. 25) insists:

Public discourse must be studied historically; the discourse of the moment cannot be understood outside of this necessary context. Media discourse on each issue is a continuing story that develops over time. Only in looking at the whole story can we see ways of thinking and assumptions, once taken for granted, that are now contested.

The case history approach to media discourse

In conformity with the conceptual orientation quoted above, constructionist researchers typically approach frame analysis using methods that allow for the examination of public discourse in social context. For instance, arguing that the framing process is at once discursive, political, and sociological, Pan and Kosicki (2001, p. 49) applied the case history approach to analyze what they described as “one of the

most intensively debated domestic policy issues in recent history” – the Clinton administration’s failed health care reform proposals in 1993/94.

In the case history method, researchers typically investigate the progression of a public issue or that of specific interest groups or social movements by scrutinizing in context the discourses of the collective actors involved. This contextual and historical way of analyzing frames makes it possible to focus on the dynamic interfaces between, on the one hand, the discursive and political dimensions of the issue framing process in public deliberation and, on the other, between and among different claims-makers and their discourses. A similar approach to framing is reflected in Gamson and Modigliani’s (1987, 1989) studies of the public discourse on affirmative action and nuclear power; in Marullo, Pagnucco, and Smith’s (1996) study of the U.S. peace movement; in Mooney and Hunt’s (1996) study of U.S. agrarian mobilization; and in Valocchi’s (1996) study of the civil rights movement.

Thus, for the purposes of the current study, the case history approach is employed as a strategy for discovering and deciphering the claims and frame packages that the elite involved in the deliberative struggle over the definition of issues concerning Uganda’s political transition used to communicate their preferences and versions of political reality to the public via the press. This approach permits us to analyze issue framing comprehensively as an evolutionary, concerted, and dynamic contest over the construction of meaning about issues of profound collective interest. A case history of Uganda’s political transition thus forms the basis for tracking the relevant political discourse on the issues under investigation and for mapping out the origins of the issue

frames or frame packages that will be examined in a systematic fashion through content analysis.

Political waves and critical discourse moments

Before turning to the case history itself, one particular conceptual matter needs to be clarified. This concerns the exact way the flow of public discourse is understood. In the first instance, all contested public issues have to be appreciated within the framework of the political environment, that is, “the aggregate of private and public beliefs, discourse, and behaviors concerning political matters within a particular setting and time” (Wolfsfeld, 2001, p. 226). As a subject of public discussion, Uganda’s political transition was the paradigm case of a “hot cognition” (Gamson, 1992; Zajonc, 1980; Abelson, 1963) – an emotive and highly contested subject that was as explosive in public deliberation as it was dominant in media discourse.

In a fundamental sense, the political process itself has been portrayed as a cyclical system in which the participants – leaders, citizens, and the media – concentrate on a few short-lived public issues and events. Referred to as political waves, that is, “sudden and significant changes in the political environment that are characterized by a substantial increase in the amount of attention centered on a political issue or event” (Wolfsfeld, 2001, p. 226), these chains of events and issues are typified by transitory upsurges in media coverage, public responses from political leaders and actors, and discussions among citizens.

When the waves hit their climax in public attention, they may simply dissipate due to loss of appeal or they may be supplanted by new waves. Yet, whereas the concept of political waves presupposes dramatic developments in the political

environment and implies a situation where the public agenda is dominated by particular events or issues for more than a few days, this is not always the case. On the contrary, the political process is so often punctuated by extended periods without a specific issue dictating the public agenda that not every wave is followed by another.

Although it is possible for a single issue to float over a series of different waves, rising onto and falling off the public agenda intermittently, the case of Uganda's political transition was such that the subject captured public attention for an extraordinarily lengthy duration. For the better part of a decade, circa 1999-2006, the subject never really peaked at a single point. However, the two issue domains that recurrently fueled public deliberation about the democratic transition – multi-party politics and presidential term limits – had the hallmarks of political waves. They are conceptualized that way in this study owing to the fact that they were launched onto the public agenda by the strategic actions of elite political agents.

In constructionist terms, political waves yield into what Chilton (1987) and Gamson (1992) refer to as critical discourse moments. These are developments in the political environment or periods in the political process that trigger intense public debate about a contested issue. The debate about Uganda's political transition was inevitably punctuated by a number of critical discourse moments in a very contentious and protracted deliberative struggle. Typically, these moments tend to provide the elite and other claims-makers with opportunities to intensify the framing of issues; and not just in the media, but also in the larger sphere of public discourse and in the diverse forums where it occurs. When a critical discourse moment presents itself, claims-makers are compelled to reassert the specific frames they sponsor and to reinterpret the new

developments in terms of the new framing context. In general, we would expect to see a correlation between political waves and critical discourse moments, though not every wave necessarily yields such moments.

The basic measure of the magnitude (size and duration) of a critical discourse moment, and hence its gravity, is the amount of coverage or volume of content devoted to an issue or event in the mainstream media, however defined. But this is not just a convenient indicator, for political actors are known to actively and consciously seek out the media in attempts to shape and to evaluate political reality.

The role of the news media is to amplify the political waves and the critical discourse moments and to give them structure. The media provide temporal structure by determining the lifespan of a wave or discourse moment; and they confer narrative structure by giving citizens a generally common framework of reference through exposure to a relatively universal depiction of the principal players, events, issues, and themes (Wolfsfeld, 2001).

In the next section, I follow the evolution of Uganda's political transition and the emergence of the key issues in public debate by tracking the critical discourse moments using the case history approach. It is from this case history that the issue frames that were prevalent in public discourse about the transition will be detected, defined, and subsequently subjected to an empirical examination.

A case history of Uganda's political transition

After a new constitution was promulgated in 1995, Museveni contested for the presidency in 1996 and was elected to serve his first constitutional term of five years after completing the first decade of his incumbency ruling without an electoral mandate.

Competing against what, at best, appeared to be token opposition, Museveni roundly defeated his challengers in the country's first direct presidential election.¹⁸

But in his bid for re-election to a second constitutional term in 2001, Museveni would come up against uncharacteristic competition. In a move widely considered to be of politically seismic proportions, Kizza Besigye, a retired senior army officer, declared on October 28, 2000, that he would challenge Museveni for the presidency. As *Time* magazine (2001, p. 42) reported, Museveni was “in the race of his life.” The state-owned newspaper, *The New Vision*, editorialized that Besigye's candidacy was “the most serious challenge to Museveni's leadership of the Movement.”¹⁹ After 15 years of Museveni's incumbency, the 2001 election assumed especial significance nationally and internationally for a number of reasons. Not least among them was that in his pioneering position as the national political commissar, Besigye had been the chief ideologue of the NRM and Museveni's confidante. He also had served in various portfolios in the NRM government as a junior cabinet minister.

Yet, it should be borne in mind that the 2001 election²⁰ only served to sharpen and intensify the differences that were long simmering inside the NRM. In fact, the public manifestation of the fallout between the hardliners and moderates in the NRM

¹⁸ Results of the presidential election on May 9, 1996:

Yoweri Museveni	- 75.5%
Paul Ssemogerere	- 22.3%
Muhammad Mayanja	- 2.2%

Source: The Electoral Commission.

¹⁹ *The New Vision*, October 29, 2000, “Besigye to stand for presidency.”

²⁰ Results of the presidential election on March 6, 2001:

Yoweri Museveni	- 69.3%
Kizza Besigye	- 27.8%
Aggrey Awori	- 1.4%
Muhammad Mayanja	- 1.0%
Francis Bwengye	- 0.3%
Karuhanga Chapaa	- 0.1%

Source: The Electoral Commission

erupted earlier in November 1999 when Besigye published his ground-breaking criticism of the NRM titled, “*The Evolution and Character of the National Resistance Movement (NRM), and the Movement Political System in Uganda.*” By going public with this critique of the NRM, Besigye triggered the critical discourse moment that is widely considered to have set the transition debate in motion.

By publicly censuring the NRM and purportedly denouncing the direction it was leading the country in, Besigye’s critique had a cascading effect on Ugandan politics; and not just because it presaged his presidential ambitions. Most crucially, to the extent that it broached a number of hitherto sensitive issues regarding the country’s political future, it helped position the political transition at the center of public discourse.

When he announced on October 28, 2000, his plan to contest for the presidency, Besigye sparked yet another critical discourse moment in the democratic transition. As an insider, his critique of the government and his decision to challenge for the presidency were utterly consuming for the media and the issues they engendered provided the motive force behind two symbiotic deliberative themes that appeared to dominate public discussions about the transition at the time: one centered on political reform and the other on political succession.

Beyond the public spectacle and media drama it engendered, Besigye’s contesting for the presidency became arguably the single most consequential development in Uganda’s political succession debate. To all intents and purposes, this event and its reverberations in public deliberation may well be credited for the coalescing and intensification of the national debate about the country’s democratic transformation.

In declaring his intention to challenge Museveni to the presidency, Besigye argued that he would stop “the endless and increasing civil conflicts, cronyism and sectarianism, pervasive corruption in government, selfishness and intolerance, restrictive political environment, personal and arbitrary rule, regional instability and increasing poverty and insecurity.”²¹ While launching his campaign, he promised to invigorate the democratization process by allowing organized groups to take part in the political process. His message appeared to resonate especially strongly among the middle class and the urban electorates, the moderate supporters of the NRM who favored a more pluralistic system, supporters of multi-party politics, as well as the opponents and critics of the regime in general. These anti-establishment groups would eventually form Besigye’s main voting bloc both in the 2001 presidential election under the Movement system and in the 2006 presidential election under the multi-party system.

In declaring his own candidacy, Museveni gave three reasons for seeking what presumably would be his last term in office: professionalizing the army (UPDF); ensuring smooth succession; and providing access to markets. While addressing the NRM’s National Conference, Museveni, in apparent reference to Besigye’s criticism of his government and the military, asserted:

Who can divide the UPDF? Anybody who tries to divide the UPDF will be six feet underground. You can play around with other things. You can abuse Museveni on FM stations. If you try to divide the army...Don’t waste your time and calories thinking about nonsense.

Evidently, the stakes were high. The national political commissar²² described Besigye’s challenge as a “plot” that was “part of a broader clandestine

²¹ Quoted in *The New Vision*, October 29, 2000, “Besigye to stand for presidency.”

²² James Wapakhabulo

conspiracy by anti-movement groups to unseat President Museveni.”²³ And in his first public reaction to his challenger, Museveni contended that “Besigye has gone about his intentions in an undisciplined and disruptive way. He has, without consulting any organ of the movement, launched himself as a movement candidate although it is well-known that he is in close collaboration with multipartists.”²⁴

Historically, as explained earlier, political parties were blamed for many of the crises the country was plunged into in the pre-1986 era. As it consolidated its power, the NRM was successful at framing parties as harbingers of anarchy. Museveni thus appeared to exploit the fears that many citizens harbored about the risk of sliding back into the social chaos often attributed to dysfunctional multi-party governments of the past, and linking Besigye with political parties seemed to play well into people’s misgivings about the past.

Despite radically breaking ranks with his own political base, Besigye would not be received unconditionally by the opposition, as the following claims can attest. One UPC official²⁵ observed:

We are still waiting to study his manifesto. As of now, it is the same old story of [a] monolithic Movement system. Unless Besigye declares that if he wins political parties will be free, we will not see him as different from Museveni.²⁶

²³ Quoted in *The New Vision*, October 30, 2000, “Besigye’s bid is a plot - Wapa.”

²⁴ Quoted in *The New Vision*, November 2, 2000, “Museveni hits out at Kizza Besigye.”

²⁵ James Rwanyarare

²⁶ Quoted in *The New Vision*, October 30, 2000, “Multipartyists not happy with Besigye candidacy.”

An MP²⁷ affiliated to UPC also noted:

Individual merit politics is dangerous because you end up creating an institution based on one person like Museveni who is the president, the chairman of the movement conference, the chairman of the army council and the minister of defense. This one-man system is dangerous.²⁸

What was arguably the most cogent articulation of the NRM's official line on Besigye's candidacy was supplied by the minister of local government²⁹ when he brought the claim of a smooth political succession process into public discourse. This idea was bound to appeal to many people in a country that had generally never experienced orderly changes of government in its post-independence history. On this thinking, Museveni's continuation in power was a guarantee of stability. As the local government minister argued:

Besigye is free to stand but if I had had the opportunity, I would have advised him to wait for five years...I would advise all those people aspiring for the presidency to devote the coming five years to prepare the country for the first ever peaceful transfer of power in Uganda.³⁰

The Movement Secretariat – the national headquarters of the NRM – sought to entrench the official line on Besigye's candidacy by arguing that his interest in the presidency was:

...the right that every Ugandan will continue to enjoy as long as the country is governed under the Movement political system...While nothing stops a cadre of his caliber from contesting any position of leadership under the Movement, he is expected to do so in a manner that does not put the system in which he says he believes, in contempt...His bid, while maligning a system that has managed to restore peace in this country, build the economy and provide hope for our people, gives an image that the Movement is split.³¹

²⁷ Cecilia Ogwal

²⁸ Quoted in *The New Vision*, October 30, 2000, "Multipartyists not happy with Besigye candidacy."

²⁹ Jaber Bidandi Ssali

³⁰ Quoted in *The New Vision*, November 1, 2000, "Wait, Bidandi tells Besigye."

³¹ Quoted in *The New Vision*, November 7, 2000, "Besigye can stand – Movt."

One official of the Secretariat³² put it bluntly: “President Museveni is not dying to stand but the Movement feels we need some stability.”³³

The idea of the benefits of continuity became a major claim in the NRM’s deliberative strategy to neutralize the impact that Besigye’s message of political reform would have on public opinion. To cement their claim of stability, pro-establishment claims-makers sent signals out that Besigye’s presidential ambitions were disruptive. For instance, the NRM leadership through its top policy organ, the National Executive Committee (NEC), took action by re-affirming and formalizing Museveni as their sole candidate. Likewise, members of the parliamentary Movement caucus, an organization of NRM legislators, endorsed Museveni as a candidate through a resolution in which they made claims about the importance of an orderly transfer of power. They called for “foresighted leadership, unity within the Movement and orderly succession to the highest office in the land.”³⁴

Although some among the pro-establishment political elites wanted the whip cracked on Besigye, there also were some voices that called for a less hardline response, such as the minister for the presidency³⁵ who observed that Besigye’s action was “a welcome move and an indication that democracy is fully operational in Uganda.”³⁶ Similarly, a presidential adviser³⁷ maintained that “Besigye is a Movement man. President Museveni is in the movement. The principle of the movement is individual merit. If he thinks he can challenge the president, let him try.”³⁸ This claim

³² Magode Ikuya

³³ Quoted in *The New Vision*, November 25, 2000, “NEC asks Museveni to stand.”

³⁴ Quoted in *The New Vision*, December 11, 2000, “Besigye free to come back – Museveni.”

³⁵ Ruhakana Rugunda

³⁶ Quoted in *The New Vision*, October 30, 2000, “Besigye’s bid is a plot – Wapa.”

³⁷ Kahinda Otafiire

³⁸ Quoted in *The New Vision*, October 30, 2000, “Soldiers silent on Besigye.”

came up repeatedly among those who felt that it was in fact good for the NRM to not appear incapable of taking a challenge to its power in a democratic fashion. And notwithstanding that the military was often criticized for its perceived partisanship toward the NRM, the military spokesman³⁹ too helped drive home this idea: “Any person should feel free to aspire for leadership positions including the presidency.”⁴⁰

Caught between the desire to appear accommodating of competing political tendencies and the political necessity of controlling the deliberative agenda, the NRM provided the anti-establishment claims-makers with fodder for their counter-claims. As a case in point, the endorsement of Museveni as the NRM’s sole candidate was framed by advocates of multi-party politics as a concentration of power. As one MP⁴¹ pointed out:

It goes to prove the Movement is a state party. It proves that he is not only the candidate but he is the Movement... The Movement is a one man show. There will be no Movement after Museveni and there can be no Movement without Museveni.”⁴²

Reflecting on political developments in the aftermath of the 2001 presidential election, Onyango-Obbo (2002) opined that wanting President Museveni’s job was “the leading political sin in Uganda.” Yet, irrespective of the risks, some strong voices advocating change materialized inside the mainstream of the NRM itself. The local government minister,⁴³ who also had served as co-chairman of Museveni’s 1996 and 2001 election campaigns, led by example. Not only did he stand up for his belief in transparent public debate about the future of the presidency, he also became the leading

³⁹ Phinehas Katirima

⁴⁰ Quoted in *The New Vision*, October 30, 2000, “Soldiers silent on Besigye.”

⁴¹ Norbert Mao

⁴² Quoted in *The New Vision*, November 29, 2000, “Is Museveni the sole Movement candidate?”

⁴³ Jaber Bidandi Ssali

champion within the NRM for opening up political space to the parties. In calling for an open public debate on the succession question in anticipation of Museveni's relinquishing power at the end of his second constitutional term in 2006, he asserted:

We should debate the succession of President Yoweri Museveni so that we can have a peaceful transition as we prepare for the elections in 2006... We should take advantage of our popularity to position the Movement as a party to compete with other parties.⁴⁴

To both the traditional advocates of party politics and moderates or progressives in the NRM who wanted more and meaningful political space ceded to supporters of pluralism, Besigye appeared to have generated the momentum they needed. Subsequently, Besigye's profile and the claims he articulated would form the nucleus of an alliance of reform-minded NRM loyalists (who effectively constituted a breakaway faction), old- and new-generation multi-party supporters, independents, and many of those who wanted an outlet to voice their dissent.

The question of political succession veered sharply into a new controversy on March 26, 2003 when a meeting of the top organs of the Movement – NEC and the National Conference – considered and adopted the president's proposal to lift the constitutional limits on presidential terms.⁴⁵ With the constitution under a 10-year mandatory review, the proposal to rescind the term limits was subsequently ratified by the cabinet in September 2003 and submitted to the Constitutional Review Commission for inclusion in the proposed changes and additions to the 1995 constitution.

⁴⁴ Quoted in *The New Vision*, December 7, 2002, "Let's debate Museveni's succession, says Bidandi."

⁴⁵ *The Weekly Observer*, November 4 - 10, 2004, page 23, "Museveni warned Ankole in 2003," reported that "the debate on lifting of the presidential term limits officially started on March 26, 2003 after President Museveni hinted on it in his address to the Movement National Executive Committee (NEC) at Kyankwanzi in Kiboga district."

At the same time that Museveni proposed lifting the term limits, he also retracted his long-held hostility to multi-party politics. Having argued insistently since becoming president that parties were guilty of sectarian politics and of plunging the country into violent conflict and civil strife, Museveni's change of attitude toward multi-partyism added fuel to the debate about the transition. To his critics, the lifting of the moratorium on parties was a trade-off that he needed in exchange for getting his way on term limits. In the media, it was interpreted variously as a scheme for a life presidency and as an illegitimate 'third term' in power. Parliament amended the constitution to remove the limits on the presidential term in May 2005. But the political wave that set all these events into motion had been kick-started when the president formally floated the ideas of abolishing term limits and giving political parties a free reign.

When read in the context of public opinion in Uganda and the country's political evolution as explained in chapters 1 and 2, the foregoing case history captures the essence of the discourse dynamics through which meaning was constructed and sense made of the issues that were at stake in the country's political transition. The mapping of this discourse sets the stage for further systematic inquiry into the frame packages that were used to interpret the unfolding events as covered by the press.

Research questions

1. What are the patterns and trends in press coverage devoted to Uganda's political transition?
 - a. What is the relative salience of party politics and term limits in news discourse?
 - b. Are there significant differences in coverage of the two issue domains?

Media discourse constitutes an autonomous meaning system, and every public and policy issue attracts, and thrives or withers in, a public discourse of its own, that is, “a particular set of ideas and symbols that are used in various public forums to construct meaning about it” (Gamson, 1992, p. 24). Despite the fact that media discourse is just a fraction of public discourse, it holds up a mirror to the wider collective deliberation on public issues. To the extent that members of the attentive public rely on mediated discourse to formulate their own judgments about competing perspectives on political reality, it becomes a crucible for collective political consciousness, mobilization, and action. Being a pivotal element of the reality in which citizens negotiate meaning, deliberate upon, and make sense of political events and issues, there is value in teasing out what media discourse reveals about public affairs. The starting point, however, is to look at the patterns and trends reflected in the way the issues in contention are covered.

2. What are the competing issue frames in media discourse about the political transition and what do they reveal about frame alignment?

- a. What is the relative prevalence of the competing issue frames?
- b. To what extent are issue frames associated with particular issue domains?

Claims-making is at its root a competitive process because “public attention is a scarce resource, allocated through competition.” As with social problems, the probability that competing issues and political claims, and ultimately frame packages, will attract sufficient attention to launch and sustain them on the public agenda depends on an assortment of factors. Key among these factors is “the way a problem is framed so as to attract media and public interest” (Pride, 1995, p. 5).

In mobilizing support for their activities, policies, and positions, social and political actors normally enter the public deliberative sphere by taking their cases to the media. According to Schwirian, Curry, and Woldoff's (2001, p. 4), the frames upon which they build their cases will be most effective if they can meet three basic conditions: (i) alignment with a general and widely valued cultural frame that places the actor within the socially accepted mainstream; (ii) alignment with the frames held by the actors' primary allies so as to raise their morale and motivate them to engage in the necessary action; and (iii) alignment with the frames possessed by the people whose support is sought. The attempt at mobilization will not succeed unless the political actor's frame is in sync with the people's perceptions, beliefs, values, and past experiences. Additionally, political actors usually engage in counter-framing the arguments of their opponents and reframing their own in order to outmaneuver and gain an advantage over their antagonists. In other words, "successful frame alignment, reframing, and counter framing form a repertoire of behaviors necessary for social actors' success."

Granted that framing is a dynamic process that requires adjustments to accommodate changes in social realities and perceptions, frame alignment and reframing occur regularly in a number of ways: frame amplification is the re-centering and clarifying of issues to ensure that participants, supporters or those targeted for mobilization better understand the urgency or importance of the issue; frame extension is the redrawing of the outlines of the original frame and expanding it to integrate new perspectives or to rework old issues into it; frame transformation is the incorporation of fresh ideas or the eradication of old meanings; and frame bridging is the generation of the initial momentum for collective action by linking groups of individuals and organizations

who claim the same grievances and share common ideological commitments and might, at least some, lack the organizational capacity or simply be too structurally disparate to voice their concerns and to mount sustained and potent action in asserting their interests (Snow, Rochford, Jr., Worden, & Benford, 1986; Kelley-Moore, 2001).

Furthermore, in politics as in all social action, constant frame construction and maintenance are necessary in order to nurture the loyalty of supporters and furnish a consistent ideology (Kelley-Moore, 2001) or narrative. Yet it is also inevitable that conflicts will occur in the construction and maintenance of frames. Disputes can arise over how to define problems, what action to take, or how to best represent reality, hence making the bridging of frames particularly tenuous.

Gerhards and Rucht (1992) have synthesized research on the framing of social action in a model built on three related general processes: (i) diagnostic framing, the identification of a problem and attribution of blame; (ii) prognostic framing, the specification of what needs to be done; and (iii) motivational framing, the call to arms for action. In public discourse, different frames can be distinguished functionally along the same lines; that is, whether they serve diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational functions.

3. What are the characteristics of frame sponsorship in media discourse about Uganda's political transition?

- a. Who are the sponsors of the various frames in news discourse and how do they vary in framing potency?
- b. What are the frame sponsors' attributes in terms of political affiliation, political orientation, and issue position?

- c. What are the relationships among frame sponsorship, political orientation, issue position, and issue domain?
- d. What is the relationship between press coverage and the political orientation of frame sponsors?

The elite who wield political power have the best chance of initiating political waves and critical discourse moments. Their strategic positioning endows them with significant political capital, given that the ability to initiate a political wave also translates in the capacity to influence changes in the political environment that will come in wake of the wave. Besides, the political environment is far from static. Its dynamic nature means that public issues can rise and fall or appear and disappear. In the process, as some political actors gain in prominence and others vanish from the headlines, so do the claims and issue frames under their sponsorship (Wolfsfeld, 2001). Although the deliberative universe is populated by many political actors operating in different forums, elite sponsors of frame packages are singled out for attention because of their dominant influence on political deliberation.

The constructionist paradigm suggests that when issues come onto the public agenda and into the deliberative arena, their definition and interpretation do not necessarily reflect objective conditions or facts about political reality. Conversely, political and social issues emerge and gain the attention of the public through the process of claims-making (Best, 1991; Pride, 1995). What's more, issues in public discourse are framed to deliver preferred meanings derived from the political culture in which elite claims are nurtured and contested. Thus, it is through the claims-making efforts of elite actors that certain issues are designated as politically significant and assigned cognitive

attributes that signal to the attentive public how to interpret their meaning. However, framing potency, that is, the power to define issues, is not shared equally and it varies among frame sponsors. Obviously, some elites possess a greater power or capacity to frame than other participants in public deliberation (Carragee & Roefs, 2004).

For clarity's sake, it is worth pointing out that there are two types of claims-makers or sources of claims: primary and secondary. Primary claims-makers are the originators of issues and problems and are usually, but not always, the elite. Secondary claims-makers filter the primary claims, such as the media in performing their traditional gatekeeping functions. The outcomes of this claims-making process as manifested in media discourse are a function of the interaction between the primary and secondary claims-makers. As Best (1991, pp.327-328) observes, "the resulting images of problems depend, in part, on the primary claimsmakers' interests and ideology, the constraints imposed by the media's routines, and the rhetoric adopted in making both primary and secondary claims."

Yet, the media's role is not always reactive and it need not be. Often the media may and actually do take on the role of primary claims-maker, "discovering and constructing social problems" on their own (Best, 1991, p. 328). By the same token, the media do not always simply repackage and relay to their audiences the secondary frames derived from the primary claims of elite political players. On some occasions the media might create their own primary frames and graft them onto the claims made by the primary claims-makers. As scholars who study the sociology of news and journalism suggest, media practices significantly constrain and at the same time shape the form, structure, content, and tone of the news and political discourse (Gans, 2003).

4. To what extent does the news discourse on the key issues in Uganda's political transition measure up to the norms of democratic deliberation?

My interest in this is normative rather than empirical. Although the ideal form of deliberation is face-to-face talk in small groups (Page, 1996), the classical Athenian practice of democracy is hardly feasible in modern, complex societies. However, whereas contemporary societies have come to rely on mediated deliberation to sift through various contested policy issues and political choices, public discourse is not channeled exclusively through the media. Indeed, deliberation takes place in "a set of discourses that interact in complex ways" (Gamson, 1988, p. 224). Some discourses involve only the elite engaged with a cause, issue, or campaign, such as specialists, professionals, and policy makers. These tend to be carried on through specialized outlets and closed forums. The public may encounter a variety of discourses, including aspects of such elite discourses, say, via targeted outlets and open forums. But in any case, the deliberation that is conducted through these avenues, whether closed or open, represents only a portion of the discourses that an interested, active, or prospective participant in collective political activities is exposed to. Typically, the active and potential participants in a collective political or social cause will be exposed to the discourses that are readily available in the public media.

Their constraints aside, the media in Uganda possess potentialities that the elite political actors are so keenly aware of. Hence, they regularly turn to the media as a springboard for defining the debate about their preferred issues and to raise their salience on the public agenda. In so doing, they provide audiences with opinion cues (Kuklinski &

Hurley, 1996) and interpretive frames that translate in particular constructions of meaning about political events.

But there remains the enduring question of whether the mass media offer a realistic potential to foster democratic deliberation. The deliberative quality of media discourse could then be evaluated on the basis of some of the standards applicable to public discourse as a whole. These standards are: non-tyranny, equality, publicity, reciprocity, and accountability.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the various theoretical approaches to the analysis of frames have been outlined and the different types of frames have been defined and explained. The constructionist paradigm in framing research has been adopted as the appropriate model for analyzing issue frames, which are the type of frames this study is concerned with. A case history of public discourse on Uganda's political transition has been developed as well, and it is out of this case history that the origins of the actual issue frames analyzed were traced. The procedures used to track and formulate these frames as measurable units are explained in the next chapter. Relevant research questions have been generated in response to the central theoretical propositions implicated by the constructionist paradigm in framing research.

CHAPTER 8

METHODOLOGY

A note about the nature of issue frames

As construed in this study, an issue frame is first and foremost discourse-specific. It is a contextually generated product of the particular issue object whose meaning is being contested. An issue frame is unique to the socially constructed meaning of events and developments in the political environment for which it is created and evoked. Alternately referred to in the constructionist literature as an interpretive or frame ‘package,’ it has at its core a central organizing idea that serves to link events and experiences in a way that enables people to make sense of them in a coherent fashion – hence the notion of a package. Because an issue frame functions as an interpretive package, it bears the connotation of a cognitive blender that allows for the same core meaning attributed to an issue to accommodate rival frame sponsors or claims-makers and their contending claims and positions.

Conceptually, issue frames are not necessarily mutually exclusive as one would expect of other types of frames. To the extent that in constructionist thinking the essence of issue framing is the struggle over which meaning will prevail, frames can and actually do overlap in the interpretations they engender even when the issue objects in contention are different. Furthermore, to say that issue frames are discourse-specific implies that they are not transferable across issue cultures. An issue culture is the whole gamut of public discourses on a particular issue such as the political transition in Uganda. For that matter, unlike news frames (see, for example, Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Iyengar,

1991) which can be applied to any news account regardless of issue culture, issue frames belong in a specific time, place, and political culture.

Political actors interested in shaping public opinion and influencing collective preferences generate issue frames by bringing their competing claims to the fore of public debate. These elite actors come in a variety of categories, such as government officials, party and opposition functionaries, dissident and protest groups, business people, policy-makers, professionals, civil society activists, and intellectuals. The frame packages upon which this inquiry is built were extracted from the claims that these and similar elites, in their various strategic positions, advanced in their efforts to construct meaning out of the issues that were at stake in public deliberation about Uganda's political transition.

The identification of issue frames

The issue frames that became the empirical objects of analysis and theorization were derived qualitatively from newspaper texts through “a grounded or emergent process of variable identification,” which is recommended as a practical strategy in the absence of research that fully accounts for the message pool. In this approach, the variables are extracted through a technique referred to as “researcher immersion in the message pool.” The researcher is assumed to be grounded in, or at least intimately conversant with, the context of the messages under observation (Neuendorf, 2002, pp. 102 & 127).

In the development of the case history of the transition debate as described in chapter 7, typical samples of the newspaper content targeted for analysis were selected by tracking stories published in *The New Vision* during periods when critical discourse

moments such as those highlighted in the case history were evident. The aim was to identify the frame packages that were available in the discourses of political elites. The frames would subsequently be validated systematically in a structured content analysis.

This procedure was helped along by van Dijk's (1988, p. 1) "discourse approach to media analysis," which gives useful directions for examining news texts in a systematic fashion. Under this approach, news is treated as a form of text or discourse with structural elements that distinguish it from other types of media discourse both within and across different media platforms and formats.

For instance, one of the most important textual elements of news is the topic or theme that constitutes the subject matter of the discourse. The topic is the foremost crucial element of news discourse and is the first textual property to look at when describing the thematic organization of news. In the particular case of newspapers, the headline typically signals and conveys the topic. By providing a summary of the news text, the headline articulates a 'macroproposition' or series of facts, propositions or points of view that assert a particular claim by a political actor represented in news discourse (van Dijk, 1988, p.35).

Having originally settled on political reform and political succession as the primary issue domains that the study would converge on, these two domains were initially adopted as the focal topics of inquiry. As the explication of the process will demonstrate below, the identification of frames started with a search for stories with headlines that signaled any kind of claim about the political situation in the country (pointing to questions of reform) and about the future of the presidency (pointing to questions of succession).

To extract the widest possible range of working frames, I created an index of keywords or archetypal terms associated with the discourse on the political transition. These included phrases, names of key figures, and terms (as well as their variants) like ‘Museveni,’ ‘Besigye,’ ‘third term,’ ‘multi-party,’ ‘NRM,’ ‘Movement,’ and ‘political party.’ These were used to search the online archives of *The New Vision*⁴⁶ for headlines to news stories that dealt explicitly with the political transition as defined by the focal topics. While the discovery and validation of the emergent frames entailed in-depth analysis of newspaper texts in their entirety, a single and determinate feature of news discourse, the quote, was adopted as the quantitative equivalent of a unit of observation. Quotes stand out as framing devices in much the same way as do other structural elements of newspaper content like headlines, pictures, sources, leads, captions, illustrations, and all kinds of graphical aids. As encapsulations of political actors’ claims, quotes are to be construed as frame signatures; that is, as conveyors of a claims-maker’s judgment on a contested issue.

Now, by purposively sampling from a collection of relevant articles, stories were selected and analyzed for quotes in which claims-makers made direct statements related to the political transition. To be considered, a statement had to be attributed to an identifiable political player. Quotes from a convenient sample of stories were subjected to an in-depth examination in order to elicit the potential frame packages that were manifest in the news texts. These quotes were scrutinized to uncover the implicit frame packages, as the examples in the case history in chapter 7 demonstrate.

Initially, as noted above, the message pool consisted of news stories and opinion pieces about the democratic transition as defined by the general themes of

⁴⁶ *The New Vision* had the only accessible online archives complete with the full texts of stories.

political reform and political succession that were referred to in the case history in chapter 7. Evidently, in the early stages of the political transition – before and after the first referendum on political systems that renewed the suspension of political parties and amidst the prospect of the incumbent president facing a challenger from within his own organization – public discourse in the country dwelled on the unpredictable political situation. This was echoed in media discourse especially during the 2001 political season, stretching from the period leading up to the presidential election campaigns, through the campaigns themselves, and the aftermath of the election. So deep was the tension in the country that President Museveni’s main challenger, Besigye, alleged that he was being harassed by the government and fled into self-imposed exile in South Africa a few short months after the election. He only returned four years later to an even more hostile political environment.

But over time, notably in the course of 2003, the discourse about the transition morphed into the themes of multi-party politics and presidential term limits. As such, the focus of the analysis inevitably shifted to reflect this change in the discourse. With this shift, the research strategy too was reconstructed and the pool of messages also restricted to news stories that addressed these two issue domains.

The emergent issue frames were considered tentative at this point. Though not definitive, they were functional in as much as they aided in structuring the content analysis. All but one of the nine working frames were generated from the qualitative analysis of news discourse. The ninth emerged during the pilot content analysis. These frames, though qualitative in essence, were operationalized as measurable variables and

accordingly adapted to the methods of content analysis. The nine frames are listed and described later in the data and measures section.

Selection of data sources

The mainstream newspapers in Uganda play a unique role in the political process. Typically, they are the conscience of the political elite. Politicians and political activists regardless of their political leanings seek out the press to build their profiles and to influence the public deliberative agenda. In turn, the mainstream press acts as the pulse of the nation's collective consciousness. While we recognize that the discourse transacted in the press is decidedly elite-driven and that radio is by far a more pervasive medium, there is reason to believe that the mainstream press is more effective than the ubiquitous radio in capturing the nation's political temper.

Mwesige (2004) concluded from his study of radio talks shows that the very attributes that make talk radio popular, such as its inclusiveness, interactivity, spontaneity, and loosely structured programming, also tend to degrade the quality of the discourse through naked distortions and misinformation. Moreover, notwithstanding that talk shows and radio in general have aided the diffusion of national political deliberation, elite actors enjoy privileged access by virtue of their status as legitimated sources. This benefit is accorded not just by radio, but by the media at large. As such, the profile of the typical elite claims-maker in the press would not be different than that of the typical radio deliberator who belongs to a "vocal minority" that comes to the media with an elevated level of political efficacy and knowledge and is highly engaged politically.

Uganda's two leading newspapers were ideal data sources because editorially and institutionally they are located on opposite ends of the editorial and

ideological continuum at least in theory, if not entirely in practice. By this fact alone, one would anticipate noteworthy variations in their coverage of the political transition and portrayal of the issues under public deliberation.

The Monitor promotes its being privately owned as a mark of its independence. It is radical in orientation and its journalism is decidedly anti-establishment. No wonder, its critics have often argued that it is a mouthpiece for the opposition. It certainly pulls no punches when it comes to reporting about the perceived excesses of the government and those in power. For its pluckiness, it has paid a high price in frequent head-on confrontations with the state, including rhetorical censure by government officials in public, detention of a few of its journalists, numerous criminal charges and prosecutions, raids on its premises and properties by security agencies, and business sanctions.

The New Vision is state-owned but its journalism is widely regarded. As a self-professed paper of record, it claims to be editorially autonomous and, to be sure, the government has usually allowed it a free hand to write and criticize what it chooses. It regularly reports stories about official corruption and abuse of power and office by politicians, military officers, and public officials. The paper has persistently made a philosophical distinction between ownership and control, insisting that the government has no control over its editorial content. That said, it has always been at pains to convince its critics that the appearances of editorial autonomy are not merely ink-deep.

Having relied exclusively on *The New Vision* for the original identification of potential issue frames, precisely because of the online availability of its content, it was essential to diversify the discourses available for analysis and to expand the message pool.

The introduction of *The Monitor* acted as a control on any idiosyncrasies and biases that could reasonably be expected owing to the editorial and institutional orientations of *The New Vision*. In effect, though, each newspaper would act as a check on the other.

Content analysis

A content analysis of news texts was conducted to examine public discourse on multi-party politics and presidential term limits. To reflect the long-term evolution of the debate, data for a five-year period from October 2000 through September 2005 was considered ideal for this purpose while taking into account the idea that the flow of public discourse is shaped by political waves and the critical discourse moments that accompany them. Besides, to capture and take account of the cyclical nature of issues in media discourse, a census was found more appropriate than a sampling of the content once the five-year timeframe had been determined. And to ensure consistency and maximize comparability, data was generated solely from news stories because of their structural similarities within the same media form, in this case the daily newspaper.

Message pool

The message pool consisted of a universe of 3,650 issues of *The New Vision* and *The Monitor* published from October 2000 through September 2005. Each newspaper accounted for 50 per cent (N = 1,825) of the issues. The final analysis of the content yielded a total of 889 news stories that met the criteria for inclusion. First, because of the study's primary interest in frame sponsorship, a claims-maker had to have an identifiable frame. Stories in which the claims-maker had no evident frame were left out of the final analysis. Second, although primary and secondary claims-makers were identified in each story and data obtained for the two sources designated as such, only

data pertaining to primary claims-makers was included in the final analysis. This was simply a pragmatic matter. Third, while the study allowed for the possible presence of more than one frame by a single frame sponsor, the analysis took only the first coded frame into account in those cases where a claims-maker expressed multiple frames. However, as a proportion of the message pool, stories in which more than one frame was apparent were too few to pose a serious bias due to the exclusion of the additional frames.

Unit of analysis

The story was adopted as the unit of analysis. Coding “whole units of meaning” as a way of engaging with holistic message texts was driven by sensitivity to Pride’s (1995, p. 11) criticism that by concentrating on textual artifacts like individual words, expressions or statements, ‘quantitative’ content analysis “often destroys the very meaning it seeks to reveal.” Gamson (1989, p. 2) also contends that such symbolic devices including a whole range of others like metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, and moral appeals are encountered “not as individual items but as interpretive *packages*.”

Development of the coding scheme

Having established the emergent frames in newspaper text, a coding scheme comprising two data collection instruments – a codebook and codesheet – was created (see Appendices A and B). Four coders were trained to independently execute the coding scheme. To gauge its validity, reliability, and effectiveness, a pilot content analysis was carried out on a randomly selected three-month sample of the message pool divided equally between the two newspapers. All units were independently cross-coded by the four coders. Pilot reliability assessments were done using a coder-by-coder matrix.

On this basis the results were iteratively compared and used to train, revise, and refine the coding scheme before its final deployment.

A fundamental reliability issue concerned the degree of agreement among coders with regard to the identification of codable units. This had to do with the extent to which the four coders, given the same message pool, were able to identify all and the same stories on a benchmark list of headlines pre-selected by the principal researcher.

Another series of pilot reliability checks was carried out to establish the extent to which the four coders, working with the same message pool, were able to assign the same codes to a selection of variables in conformity with pre-coded values on the principal researcher's benchmark list of stories.

Assignment of content

For the final content analysis, and with the timeframe determined a priori, the four coders were randomly paired and each pair was assigned to one newspaper. Every newspaper issue from the first and last six months of the coding period was cross-coded by two coders.

Coding procedure

The headline was used as the frame signature, such that stories with headlines that explicitly referred to or suggested a reference to party politics and term limits had their text analyzed in detail. Articles were selected for coding if the lead or a substantial part of the text explicitly addressed either of the topics.

Intercoder reliability checks

Basic decisions about the final assessment of intercoder reliability involved the selection and use of the reliability sample size and the sampling technique.

Although there are no hard and fast rules about the appropriate reliability (sub) sample size, 10 to 20 percent of the total sample is a common approximate guideline (Neuendorf, 2002). A decision was therefore made to use a reliability sample of 20 percent of the newspaper issues (N = 730), which was then apportioned equally between the two dailies, thus yielding two sub-samples of 10 percent (N = 365). Since 365 issues is the equivalent of a year's worth of daily newspaper issues, the sub-sample used to measure the final intercoder reliability for each newspaper was derived by constructing a systematic sample comprising the first and last six months of the five-year coding period. Intercoder reliabilities were computed for two critical variables – topic and primary source – using simple percent agreement. For topic, agreement between coders was 100 percent for both newspapers; for primary source, agreement ranged from 67 percent (*The Monitor*) to 85 percent (*The New Vision*).

Data and measures

Topic:

The issue domains of multi-party politics and presidential term limits in news discourse about the political transition. They were treated as mutually exclusive, in that each story could only be coded for the presence of either one of them and not both.

Source:

An individual to whom a claim or point of view about the political transition is attributed. Since there typically is more than one source in a story, the first and second identifiable individuals were designated as the primary and secondary sources, respectively.

Political affiliation:

The political inclination of the source as judged by the claims or views expressed in the news text. For this purpose, political affiliation was based not on the source's known political allegiance, but rather on the specific context of the views expressed in a story. For example, if a government operative made a claim that favored the opposition, that source's political affiliation would be coded as opposition or pro- opposition. In other words, it's not so much affiliation as inclination that we are talking about.

Party position:

Whether the source is for or against political parties.

Term position:

Whether the source is for or against presidential term limits.

Pro-party position:

The issue frame that best captures the idea(s) used by the source in supporting party politics.

Anti-party position:

The issue frame that best captures the idea(s) used by the source in objecting to party politics.

Pro-term position:

The issue frame that best captures the idea(s) used by the source in supporting term limits

Anti-term position:

The issue frame that best captures the idea(s) used by the source in objecting to term limits.

Issue frame:

A package of ideas that signal the way or terms in which people think and talk about a contested public issue. The frames described below were discovered qualitatively and newspaper stories that typify each are included as appendices:

- I. The people's choice: The idea that the people reserve the right to determine the systems of government and leadership they wish to have; and that it is within their constitutional and legitimate power to choose who their leader should be and what political system should prevail (see Appendix D: Story #1).
- II. Orderly transfer of power: The idea of a smooth change of governments and peaceful process of presidential succession (see Appendix D: Story #2).
- III. Pluralism: The idea of a competitive political system that allows individuals to compete for power in a multi-party system. Or the counter-claim that the Movement is non-partisan and more embracing of all political beliefs (see Appendix D: Story #3).
- IV. Concentration of power: The idea that the absence of political parties is synonymous with a monopolistic system of government; and that lifting term limits would lead to the monopolization of power and dictatorship (see Appendix D: Story #4).
- V. Individual merit: The idea that people should seek political office or compete for power and leadership positions on the strength of their personal credentials rather than because of the interests they represent; and that anybody who believes that

she is a competent candidate has a right to seek and stand for elective public office (see Appendix D: Story #5).

- VI. Stability: The idea that the absence of parties guarantees a stable political environment and that removing term limits ensures continuity in good governance. Or the counter-claim that stability can only be guaranteed by a pluralistic system and predictable term limits (see Appendix D: Story #6).
- VII. Anarchy: The idea that political parties are divisive and causes of civil unrest, political chaos, and social disruption. Or the counter-claim that the continued absence of political parties is bound to lead to similar outcomes (see Appendix D: Story #7).
- VIII. Constitutionalism: The idea that the constitution is supreme and that the existing constitutional provisions on party politics and term limits should prevail. Or the counter-claim that the people or their representatives have the right to change the constitution to meet their preferences (see Appendix D: Story #8).
- IX. The idea that dissenters should be allowed to leave the Movement and form their own political parties or join existing ones so as to ensure harmony and cohesion; and that the absence of parties and abandoning of term limits would enable the government and incumbent to protect their development agenda and secure their achievements (see Appendix D: Story #9).

Limitations of the study

The lack of comprehensive reliability statistics on all the variables used in the content analysis raises questions about the validity of the measures. Given the nature of the study, reliabilities could vary widely among variables designed to capture manifest content such as topic, those that are mid-way between manifest and latent such as source, and latent content variables such as the issue frames themselves. For example, as reported above, the two pairs of coders achieved widely differing levels of reliability on the same variable of primary source depending on the newspaper they coded. I can only speculate on what the case could be for variables that are intrinsically hard to capture such as the frame measures. The problem for this study is that although for reliability measurement purposes each pair of coders was assigned to cross-code a portion of the same message pool, frequently they did not locate the same coding units or stories. Because the instances where they coded the same items were often too few to be compared, it was impossible to carry out statistically meaningful reliability tests across the board.

Secondly, the fact that the frames studied were generated through the researcher's own interpretations of the claims apparent in news discourse invites a measure of subjectivity. The controversial nature of the topics being investigated and the researcher's subjective engagement with the debates that accrued could have influenced the very choice of events to highlight in the case history and affected the identification of issue frames. However, the content analysis was designed to mitigate the potential biases that could arise from the researcher's immersion in the message pool. Also, having independent coders do the coding was meant to inject a level of objectivity into the data collection and to insure against the most detrimental effects of the potential compromises.

Thirdly, although this analysis of newspaper content made it possible to determine the cumulative salience of specific frames and to detect the competitive nature of frame sponsorship, previous research suggests that frames evolve over time. This study does not go as far as measuring the framing process longitudinally. The consequence is that we have no idea how the frames and fortunes of different frame sponsors changed over the course of time.

Lastly, while frame sponsorship is at the heart of the study, there was no clear theoretically informed operational definition of elite political actors or frame sponsors. Frame sponsors should be expected to vary in their power to frame. This expectation warranted a better definition of elite actors because, as it turns out, all political actors appear to be treated implicitly as elite actors yet there are obvious power differentials between national and local leaders, for example.

CHAPTER 9

THE RESULTS

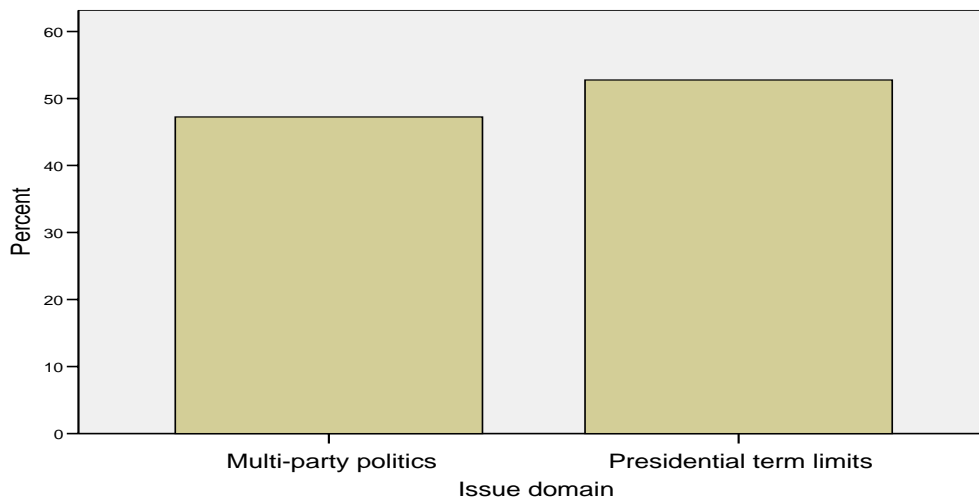
Patterns and trends in press coverage

The first research question sought to examine the patterns and trends in press coverage of the political transition in two dimensions: (a) the relative salience of party politics and terms limits; and (b) the differences in coverage of the two issue domains.

Salience of stories about party politics and term limits

The two issue domains on which public deliberation about Uganda's political transition hinged are generally comparable going by the amount of newspaper coverage they received over a five-year period. As illustrated in Figure 1, stories about multi-party politics accounted for 47.2% ($n = 420$) of the overall coverage of the political transition while stories about presidential term limits accounted for 52.8% ($n = 469$).

Figure 1 *Occurrence of stories about the political transition (N = 889)*



The volume of news stories published about these two issue domains is a measure of their salience on the media and public agendas within the context of public discourse about the political transition. Although an absolute measure of relative salience of these issues would have necessitated comparing their coverage with the number of stories published about other politically significant issues, any subject that attracts an average of 80 to 90 stories annually in the leading press, as did news about the transition, can be said to command an exceptionally high level of public attention.

Differences in press coverage of party politics and term limits

A 2x2 chi-square test was conducted to assess whether the two newspapers covered the political transition differently in terms of the amount of coverage they devoted to the issues of party politics and term limits. The two variables were newspaper (1 = *The Monitor*; 2 = *The New Vision*) and topic (1 = party politics; 2 = term limits). The test revealed that a significantly greater percentage of *The Monitor's* coverage was devoted to term limits (66.7%, $n = 292$) than to party politics (33.3%, $n = 146$). Conversely, a significantly greater percentage of *The New Vision's* coverage was devoted to party politics (60.8%, $n = 274$) than to term limits (39.2%, $n = 177$), $\chi^2(1, N = 889) = 67.03, p < .001$. Therefore, whereas *The Monitor* was more likely to pay attention to the issue of presidential term limits, *The New Vision* was more likely to focus on the issue of multi-party politics. Table 3 illustrates how stories about the two issue domains were distributed within and between the two newspapers.

Table 3 *Distribution of stories about the political transition by newspaper*

	Issue domain		
	Party politics	Term limits	Total
<i>The Monitor</i>	146 (16.4%)	292 (32.8%)	438 (49.3%)
<i>The New Vision</i>	274 (30.8%)	177 (19.9%)	451 (50.7%)
Total	420 (47.2%)	469 (52.8%)	889 (100%)

On the one hand, these differences in coverage between *The Monitor* and *The New Vision* reflect the fact that the two newspapers were editorially motivated by dissimilar and opposing political impulses. On the other, they instantiate the innate differences that separated party politics and term limits as issue domains. Judging from the case history of multi-party politics as a public issue, it is clear that a consensus emerged very early in public discourse about the need and desire to open up space for parties to compete for power. Most importantly, this view was legitimized, if ironically, by the very incumbent president and regime that had invested a lot of their political capital in debunking political parties as institutions and constraining their operations. Thus, for *The New Vision*, a government-owned newspaper, it could have been safer to pay greater attention to an issue that the governing elites had already endorsed. Yet *The Monitor* – a privately-owned newspaper that prides itself on its independence, feisty criticism of power, and dogged pursuit of sensitive subjects – would be more attracted than repelled by the editorial and political risks of focusing on the controversial issue of presidential term limits. Moreover, this is the one issue over which elite consensus practically failed to crystallize.

Competing issue frames in media discourse

The second research questions aimed to explore the competing issue frames in media discourse about the political transition in two dimensions: (a) the relative prevalence of various issue frames; and (b) the extent to which different issue frames are associated with particular issue domains.

Prevalence and visibility of issue frames

The frames that dominate the majority of claims are ‘the people’s choice’ (37.2%) followed by ‘pluralism’ (15.2%). Between them, these two frames were found in over half of all stories that bore claims about multi-party politics and presidential term limits. As shown in Table 4, the least frequently invoked frames are ‘concentration of power’ (2.4%) and ‘individual merit’ (1.0%).

Table 4 *Ranking of issue frames in news about the political transition (N = 889)*

1. The people’s choice	37.2%	(n = 331)
2. Pluralism	15.2%	(n = 135)
3. Constitutionalism	12.8%	(n = 114)
4. Orderly transfer of power	12.6%	(n = 112)
5. Stability	9.8%	(n = 87)
6. Anarchy	4.8%	(n = 43)
7.	4.2%	(n = 37)
8. Concentration of power	2.4%	(n = 21)
9. Individual merit	1.0%	(n = 9)

Relationship between issue frames and issue domains

As evidenced by the results in Table 5, the frames of ‘pluralism’ (29.8%, n = 125) and ‘the people’s choice’ (28.1%, n = 118) were the most recurrent among the claims associated with multi-party politics, competing equally to define the narrative of the discourse. But in the case of claims associated with presidential term limits, ‘the people’s choice’ (45.5%, n = 213) is by far the single most widely invoked frame,

followed way behind by ‘orderly transfer of power’ (17.7%, $n = 83$) and ‘constitutionalism’ 16.2%, $n = 76$).

Table 5 *Distribution of issue frames by issue domain*

Issue frame	Issue domain		n
	Multi-party politics	Presidential term limits	
The people’s choice	118 (28.1%)	213 (45.4%)	$n = 331$
Orderly transfer of power	29 (6.9%)	83 (17.7%)	$n = 112$
Pluralism	125 (29.8%)	10 (2.1%)	$n = 135$
Concentration of power	6 (1.4%)	15 (3.2%)	$n = 21$
Individual merit	1 (0.2%)	8 (1.7%)	$n = 9$
Stability	52 (12.4%)	35 (7.5%)	$n = 87$
Anarchy	32 (7.6%)	11 (2.3%)	$n = 43$
Constitutionalism	38 (9.0%)	76 (16.2%)	$n = 114$
	19 (4.5%)	18 (3.8%)	$n = 37$
Total	420 (100%)	469 (100%)	$N = 889$
% of total	47.2%	52.8%	

The characteristics of frame sponsorship

In the third research question, the study sought to investigate the characteristics of frame sponsorship in four dimensions: (a) who the frame sponsors are; (b) the attributes of frame sponsors; (c) the relationships among frame sponsorship, political orientation, issue position, and issue domains; and (d) the relationship between press coverage and frame sponsors' political orientation.

Number and categories of frame sponsors

In all, two individual (president and vice president) and 11 collective claimsmakers were identified. To rank the claimsmakers and to compare how vocal or visible they were in news discourse, the number of news stories in which each appeared as the primary claimsmaker was computed. The various political actors' relative prominence in public discourse was then determined as the percentage of news stories in which they were designated as the primary claimsmaker. As the results in Table 6 show, political actors in the opposition, LC leaders, and cabinet ministers collectively commanded the most attention from the media and were therefore most successful in pushing through their claims, while the president was the single most vocal political actor.

Table 6 *Ranking of frame sponsors represented in news discourse (N = 889)*

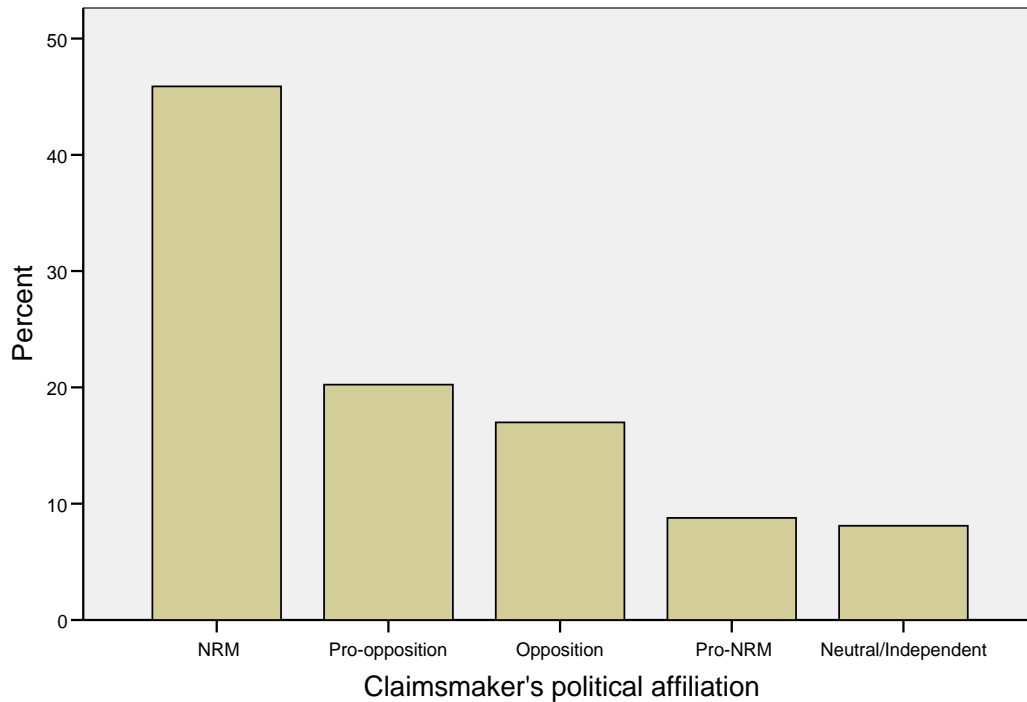
1. Opposition	16.5%	(n = 147)
2. Local Council (LC) leaders	16.4%	(n = 146)
3. Ministers	16.3%	(n = 145)
4. Public/Citizens	12.4%	(n = 110)
5. Government/Movement	8.8%	(n = 78)
6. President	7.1%	(n = 63)
7. Diplomats/Foreign government	5.8%	(n = 52)
8. Civil servants	4.7%	(n = 42)
9. Civil society	3.5%	(n = 31)
10. Religious leaders	2.9%	(n = 26)
11. Vice president	2.5%	(n = 22)
12. Foreign/International org'n	1.9%	(n = 17)
13. Military personnel	0.6%	(n = 5)
14. Indeterminate	0.3%	(n = 3)
15. Other	0.2%	(n = 2)

The fact that the claims of the president as an individual political actor feature in at least half as many news stories as those in which the claims of ordinary citizens appear demonstrates the extent of the incumbent's personal influence on public debate. As would be expected, the power to assert one's claims is theoretically related to the power to frame the issues associated with those particular claims.

Attributes of frame sponsors

In terms of political affiliation, as the results in Figure 2 indicate, primary claimsmakers in 45.9% (n = 408) of all news stories were NRM operatives; 20.2% (n = 180) were allied to the opposition; 17.0% (n = 151) were opposition operatives; 8.8% (n = 78) were allied to the NRM; and 8.1% (n = 72) were neutral/independent.

Figure 2 *Frame sponsor's political affiliation*



However, an analysis of the distribution of claimmakers by their political affiliations reveals two particularly intriguing crossovers that, at first sight, might appear paradoxical. The results in Table 7 suggest that the president and vice president, notwithstanding their individual capacities as claimmakers, appear to have multiple political affiliations that are in some cases inherently antagonistic. Counterintuitive as it might be, this finding implies that in public discourse these political actors occasionally made claims that allied them with claimmakers of varying and oft-opposing political persuasions. In general, this analysis of news discourse suggests that claimmakers are widely dispersed politically in terms of their claims about the political transition, often appearing to reach across the political divide in the deliberative process.

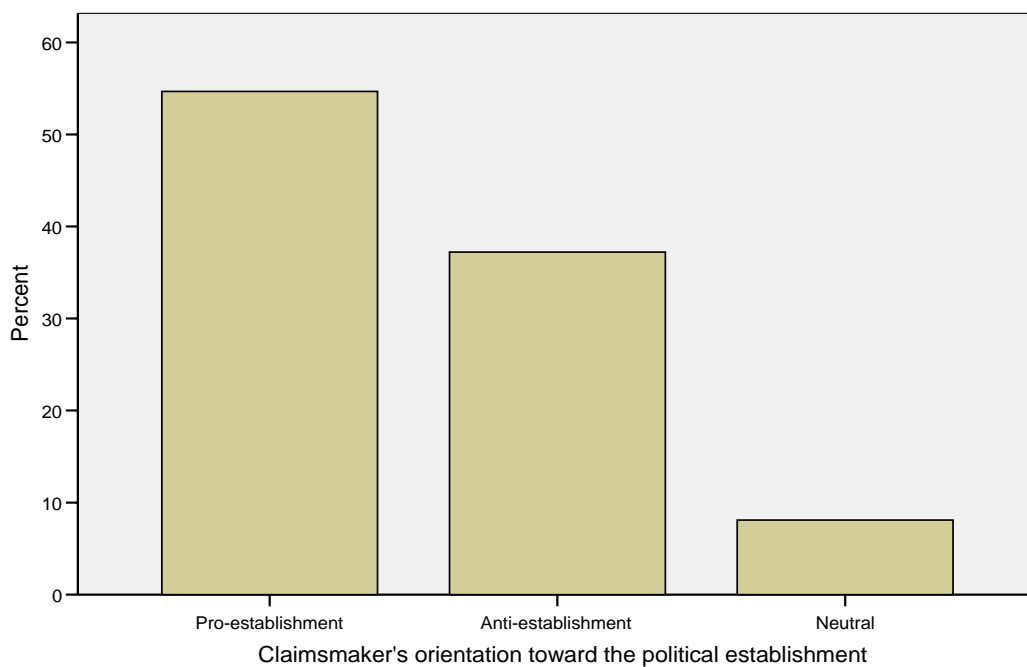
For instance, when we bracket the stories in which the president was inclined to the NRM (NRM + pro-NRM) in his claims and also do the same with stories in which he was inclined to the opposition (opposition + pro-opposition), we find that the president took almost as many stances that reflected the positions of his own party, the NRM, as those that reflected the positions of political actors in the opposition. Actually, the vice president took twice as many stances that were in line with the views of the opposition as those that mirrored the views of his own party, the NRM.

Table 7 Number and percentage of news stories by frame sponsor's political affiliation

Frame sponsor	Political affiliation										
	NRM		Opposition		Pro-NRM		Pro-opposition		Neutral		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
President	24	38.1	11	17.5	5	7.9	19	30.2	4	6.3	<i>n</i> = 63
Vice president	6	27.3	6	27.3	1	4.5	7	31.8	2	9.1	<i>n</i> = 22
Minister	66	45.5	23	15.9	14	9.7	28	19.3	14	9.7	<i>n</i> = 145
Local Council	67	45.9	23	15.8	13	8.9	28	19.2	15	10.3	<i>n</i> = 146
Military	2		1		0		1		1		<i>n</i> = 5
Civil servant	22	52.4	8	19.0	3	7.1	8	19.0	1	2.4	<i>n</i> = 42
Government/NRM	43	55.1	16	20.5	6	7.7	7	9.0	6	7.7	<i>n</i> = 78
Opposition	67	45.6	23	15.6	6	4.1	40	27.2	11	7.5	<i>n</i> = 147
Civil society	12	38.7	6	19.4	4	12.9	8	25.8	1	3.2	<i>n</i> = 31
Religious leader	15	57.4	5	19.2	2	7.7	3	11.5	1	3.8	<i>n</i> = 26
Citizen	55	50.0	18	16.4	15	13.6	13	11.8	9	8.2	<i>n</i> = 110
Diplomat	22	42.3	7	13.5	6	11.5	12	23.1	5	9.6	<i>n</i> = 52
Foreign/Int'nal	6	35.3	3	17.6	3	17.6	4	23.5	1	5.9	<i>n</i> = 17
Indeterminate	1		1		0		0		1		<i>n</i> = 3
Other	0		0		0		2		0		<i>n</i> = 2
TOTAL	408	45.9	151	17.0	78	8.8	180	20.2	72	8.1	<i>N</i> = 88

When claimsmakers' political affiliations were collapsed into a new variable to capture their political orientation (orientation toward the political establishment), the analysis as depicted in Figure 3 showed that slightly more than half of all claimsmakers (54.7%, $n = 486$) tended to be pro-establishment, while the rest were either anti-establishment (37.2%, $n = 331$) or neutral (8.1%, $n = 72$).

Figure 3 *Frame sponsor's political orientation*



Considering this result, pro-establishment claimsmakers dominated political discourse in the news and appear to have been more successful at raising their voices to assert their claims.

Issue position of frame sponsors

In terms of issue position, the analysis of the results, as shown in Table 8, found that of the 420 news stories that contained a claim about political parties, claimsmakers in 73.3% ($n = 308$) of those stories expressed support for political parties, while claimsmakers in 26.7% ($n = 112$) of those stories objected to the multi-party system. Furthermore, of the 469 news stories in which political actors asserted a claim about presidential term limits, claimsmakers in 60.8% ($n = 285$) of those stories supported the retention of term limits, while claimsmakers in 39.2% ($n = 184$) of those stories preferred to have no limits on presidential tenure.

Table 8 *Frame sponsor's issue position on the political transition*

Frame sponsor	Party politics ($n = 420$)		Term limits ($n = 469$)	
	Pro	Anti	Pro	Anti
President	31 (79.5%)	8 (20.5%)	10 (41.7%)	14 (58.3%)
Vice president	5 (62.5%)	3 (37.5%)	0 (0%)	14 (100%)
Ministers	48 (62.3%)	29 (37.7%)	15 (22.1%)	53 (77.9%)
LC leaders	31 (68.9%)	14 (31.1%)	67 (66.3%)	34 (33.7%)
Military	1 (50.0%)	1 (50.0%)	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)
Civil servants	14 (51.9%)	13 (48.1%)	7 (46.7%)	8 (53.3%)
Gov't/Mov't	23 (46.9%)	26 (53.1%)	6 (20.7%)	23 (79.3%)
Opposition	94 (95.9%)	4 (4.1%)	46 (93.9%)	3 (6.1%)
Civil society	7 (87.5%)	1 (12.5%)	20 (87.0%)	3 (13.0%)
Religious leaders	3 (60.0%)	2 (40.0%)	21 (100%)	0
Public/Citizens	16 (69.6%)	7 (30.4%)	60 (69.0%)	27 (31.0%)
Diplomats/Foreign	25 (92.6%)	2 (7.4%)	23 (92.0%)	2 (8.0%)
Foreign/Int'nal	9 (81.8%)	2 (18.2%)	6 (100%)	0
Indeterminate	1 (100%)	0	1 (50.0%)	1 (50.0%)
Total ($N = 889$)	308 (73.3%)	112 (26.7%)	285 (60.8%)	184 (39.2%)

Here again, the case of the president is particularly intriguing with regard to his position on term limits. He appears torn between support for and opposition to the retention of term limits. Of the 24 stories in which the president made a claim about term

limits, he supported their retention in 10 (41.7%) and favored scrapping term limits in 14 (58.3%). The vice president, in contrast to the president’s ambivalence, was unambiguous on this issue; for in none of the stories in which he made a claim about term limits did he support their retention.

Relationship between frame sponsorship, political orientation, and issue position

The results, as reported in Table 9, show that pro-establishment political actors (60.8%, $n = 285$) were more frequently represented in news discourse than were anti-establishment political actors (39.2%, $n = 184$).

Table 9 *Frame sponsor’s political orientation by issue position and issue domain*

Issue domain	Political orientation	Issue position		Total
		Pro	Anti	
Party politics	Pro-establishment	158 (37.6%)	66 (15.7%)	224 (53.3%)
	Anti-establishment	121 (28.8%)	39 (9.3%)	160 (38.1%)
	Neutral	29 (6.9%)	7 (1.7%)	36 (8.6%)
	Total	308 (73.3%)	112 (26.7%)	420 (100%)
Term limits	Pro-establishment	159 (33.9%)	103 (22.0%)	262 (55.9%)
	Anti-establishment	107 (22.8%)	64 (13.6%)	171 (36.5%)
	Neutral	19 (4.1%)	17 (3.6%)	36 (7.7%)
	Total	285 (60.8%)	184 (39.2%)	469 (100%)

Chi-square tests were then conducted to determine whether pro-establishment claimsmakers were more likely to oppose term limits than were anti-establishment claimsmakers; and whether anti-establishment claimsmakers were more likely to support party politics than were pro-establishment claimsmakers. The tests found that pro-establishment political actors (22.0%, $n = 103$) were no more likely to oppose term limits than were anti-establishment political actors (13.6%, $n = 64$), $\chi^2(1, N = 433) = 0.15, p = .69$; nor were anti-establishment political actors (28.8%, $n = 121$) more

likely to support party politics than were pro-establishment political actors (37.6%, $n = 158$), $\chi^2(1, N = 384) = 1.22, p = .27$.

Considering the extent to which the most dominant claimsmakers are associated with the most dominant issue frames, the results reported earlier revealed that the most dominant claimsmakers – those whose representation in news discourse accounts for 10 percent or more of all stories – were the opposition, LCs, ministers, and citizens, in that order. The most dominant issue frames – those invoked in 10 percent or more of all stories – were ‘the people’s choice,’ ‘pluralism,’ ‘constitutionalism,’ and ‘orderly transfer of power,’ respectively. After ranking and disaggregating the distribution of issue frames by issue domain, the results in Table 10 (issue frames on party politics) and Table 11 (issue frames on term limits) reveal a fairly consistent pattern: at least three of the four most dominant issue frames generally rank among the top four frames implicated by each of the four leading claimsmaker categories. Table 12 summarizes this pattern.

For example, with regard to party politics, ‘pluralism’ is the most frequently used issue frame by all four leading claimsmakers, followed by ‘the people’s choice.’ With regard to term limits, ‘the people’s choice’ is the foremost issue frame cited by all but one of the four leading claimsmakers. While the pattern of the distribution of issue frames holds on party politics at the first and second ranks, there is more variability in the distribution of issue frames vis-à-vis term limits.

Table 10 *Distribution of issue frames on multi-party politics by frame sponsor*

Frame sponsor	Issue frame									
	Peop	Orde	Plur	Conc	Indiv	Stab	Anar	Const	Conso	
President	16 (41.0%)	1 (2.6%)	6 (15.4%)	0	0	4 (10.3%)	1 (2.6%)	2 (5.1%)	9 (23.1%)	<i>n</i> = 39
Vice Pres	2 (25.0%)	0	1 (12.5%)	0	0	2 (25.0%)	1 (12.5%)	0	2 (25.0%)	<i>n</i> = 8
Minister	17 (22.1%)	7 (9.1%)	18 (23.4%)	0	1 (1.3%)	12 (15.6%)	10 (13.0%)	10 (13.0%)	2 (2.6%)	<i>n</i> = 77
Local	11 (24.4%)	3 (6.7%)	15 (33.3%)	0	0	4 (8.9%)	8 (17.8%)	4 (8.9%)	0	<i>n</i> = 45
Military	1 (50.0%)	0	0	0	0	1 (50.0%)	0	0	0	<i>n</i> = 2
Civil serv	4 (14.8%)	1 (3.7%)	10 (37.0%)	0	0	6 (22.2%)	2 (7.4%)	3 (11.1%)	1 (3.7%)	<i>n</i> = 27
Gov't	16 (32.7%)	0	9 (18.4%)	0	0	10 (20.4%)	5 (10.2%)	4 (8.2%)	5 (10.2%)	<i>n</i> = 49
Opposition	20 (20.4%)	10 (10.2%)	44 (44.9%)	6 (6.1%)	0	4 (4.1%)	1 (1.0%)	13 (13.3%)	0	<i>n</i> = 98
Civil soc	5 (62.5%)	0	1 (12.5%)	0	0	1 (12.5%)	0	1 (12.5%)	0	<i>n</i> = 8
Religious	2 (40.0%)	0	1 (20.0%)	0	0	1 (20.0%)	1 (20.0%)	0	0	<i>n</i> = 5
Public	5 (21.7%)	1 (4.3%)	9 (39.1%)	0	0	4 (17.4%)	3 (13.0%)	1 (4.3%)	0	<i>n</i> = 23
Diplomat	11 (40.7%)	4 (14.8%)	9 (33.3%)	0	0	3 (11.1%)	0	0	0	<i>n</i> = 27
Foreign	7 (63.6%)	2 (18.2%)	2 (18.2%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>n</i> = 11
Indeterm	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>n</i> = 1
TOTAL	118 (28.1%)	29 (6.9%)	125 (29.8%)	6 (1.4%)	1 (0.2%)	52 (12.4%)	32 (7.6%)	38 (9.0%)	19 (4.5%)	<i>N</i> = 420

Table 11 *Distribution of issue frames on presidential term limits by frame sponsor*

Frame sponsor	Issue frame									n
	Peop	Orde	Plur	Conc	Indiv	Stab	Anar	Const	Conso	
President	13 (52.4%)	0	0	0	1 (4.2%)	0	0	8 (33.3%)	2 (8.3%)	n = 24
Vice Pres	9 (64.3%)	0	0	0	1 (7.1%)	2 (14.3%)	0	0	2 (14.3%)	n = 14
Minister	36 (52.9%)	6 (8.8%)	1 (1.5%)	1 (1.5%)	2 (2.9%)	13 (19.1%)	1 (1.5%)	4 (5.9%)	4 (5.9%)	n = 68
Local	45 (44.6%)	19 (18.8%)	1 (1.0%)	5 (5.0%)	1 (1.0%)	4 (4.0%)	1 (1.0%)	21 (20.8%)	4 (4.0%)	n = 101
Military	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n = 3
Civil serv	6 (40.0%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	3 (20.0%)	0	n = 15
Gov't	14 (48.3%)	3 (10.3%)	1 (3.4%)	0	1 (3.4%)	2 (6.9%)	1 (3.4%)	4 (13.8%)	3 (10.3%)	n = 29
Opposition	21 (42.9%)	9 (18.4%)	2 (4.1%)	4 (8.2%)	0	2 (4.1%)	3 (6.1%)	8 (16.3%)	0	n = 49
Civil soc	11 (47.8%)	6 (26.1%)	1 (4.3%)	0	0	1 (4.3%)	0	4 (17.4%)	0	n = 23
Religious	7 (33.3%)	7 (33.3%)	0	0	0	3 (14.3%)	0	4 (19.0%)	0	n = 21
Public	36 (41.4%)	19 (21.8%)	1 (1.1%)	2 (2.3%)	1 (1.1%)	7 (8.0%)	2 (2.3%)	16 (18.4%)	3 (3.4%)	n = 87
Diplomat	9 (36.0%)	9 (36.0%)	2 (8.0%)	1 (4.0%)	0	0	1 (4.0%)	3 (12.0%)	0	n = 25
Foreign	3 (50.0%)	2 (33.3%)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (16.7%)	0	n = 6
Indeterm	0	0	0	1 (50.0%)	0	0	1 (50.0%)	0	0	n = 2
TOTAL	213 (45.4%)	83 (17.7%)	10 (2.1%)	15 (3.2%)	8 (1.7%)	35 (7.5%)	11 (2.3%)	76 (16.2%)	18 (3.8%)	N = 469

Table 12 *Ranking and distribution of the top four issue frames among the top four frame sponsors by issue domain*

Frame sponsor	Issue domain	
	Party politics ⁴⁷	Term limits ⁴⁸
Opposition	1 = Pluralism 2 = The people's choice 3 = Constitutionalism 4 = Orderly transfer of power	1 = The people's choice 2 = Orderly transfer of power 3 = Constitutionalism 4 = Concentration of power
Local Council	1 = Pluralism 2 = The people's choice 3 = Anarchy 4 = Constitutionalism/Stability	1 = Pluralism 2 = Constitutionalism 3 = Orderly transfer of power 4 = Concentration of power
Minister	1 = Pluralism 2 = The people's choice 3 = Stability 4 = Constitutionalism/Anarchy	1 = The people's choice 2 = Stability 3 = Orderly transfer of power 4 = Constitutionalism/Consol
Citizen	1 = Pluralism 2 = The people's choice 3 = Stability 4 = Anarchy	1 = The people's choice 2 = Orderly transfer of power 3 = Constitutionalism 4 = Stability

Regarding the extent to which the frame sponsor's issue frames relate to particular issue positions, the results shown in Table 13 reveal that while 'pluralism' (40.6%, $n = 125$) followed by 'the people's choice' (31.2%, $n = 96$) were the most extensively used frames to justify the claim in support of political parties, 'stability' (39.3%, $n = 44$) followed by 'anarchy' (24.1%, $n = 27$) were the most invoked frames to justify the claim in objection to political parties. On the other hand, whereas 'the people's choice' (35.4%, $n = 101$) followed by 'orderly transfer of power' (26.0%, $n = 74$) were mostly preferred as frames to justify the stance in support of term limits, 'the people's

⁴⁷ See figures in Table 10.

⁴⁸ See figures in Table 11.

choice' (60.9%, $n = 112$) was the overwhelmingly preferred frame in making the claim against term limits, followed at a distance by 'stability' (13.0%, $n = 24$).

Table 13 *Number and percentage of issue frames by frame sponsor's issue position*

Issue frame	Party politics			Term limits		
	Pro	Anti		Pro	Anti	
The people's choice	96 (31.2%)	22 (18.6%)	<i>n</i> = 118	101 (35.4%)	112 (60.9%)	<i>n</i> = 213
Orderly transfer of power	25 (8.1%)	4 (3.6%)	<i>n</i> = 29	74 (26.0%)	9 (4.9%)	<i>n</i> = 83
Pluralism	125 (40.6%)	0	<i>n</i> = 125	8 (2.8%)	2 (1.1%)	<i>n</i> = 10
Concentration of power	6 (1.9%)	0	<i>n</i> = 6	14 (4.9%)	1 (0.5%)	<i>n</i> = 15
Individual merit	0	1 (0.9%)	<i>n</i> = 1	0	8 (4.3%)	<i>n</i> = 8
Stability	8 (2.6%)	44 (39.3%)	<i>n</i> = 52	11 (3.9%)	24 (13.0%)	<i>n</i> = 35
Anarchy	5 (1.6%)	27 (24.1%)	<i>n</i> = 32	5 (1.8%)	6 (3.3%)	<i>n</i> = 11
Constitutionalism	28 (9.1%)	10 (8.9%)	<i>n</i> = 38	70 (24.6%)	6 (3.3%)	<i>n</i> = 76
Consolidation	15 (4.9%)	4 (3.6%)	<i>n</i> = 19	2 (0.7%)	16 (8.7%)	<i>n</i> = 18
Total	308 (100%)	112 (100%)	<i>n</i> = 420	285 (100%)	184 (100%)	<i>n</i> = 469
% of Total	73.3%	26.7%		60.8%	39.2	

Looking at the interaction between the frame sponsor's political orientation and the frames employed in deliberating on the political transition, the results reported in Table 14 reveal that 'the people's choice' (40.5%, $n = 197$) is the most frequently cited frame followed by 'pluralism' (14.4%, $n = 70$) among pro-establishment claimsmakers. The same pattern holds for anti-establishment claimsmakers, who also tend to justify their claims on the basis of 'the people's choice' (31.7%, $n = 105$) followed by the 'pluralism' (17.2%, $n = 57$) frames. A chi-square test found no significant relationship between claimsmakers' political orientations and issue frames, $\chi^2(16, N = 889) = 15.0, p = .52$.

Table 14 *Distribution of issue frames by frame sponsor's political orientation*

Issue frame	Political orientation			
	Pro	Anti	Neutral	
The people's choice	197 (40.5%)	105 (31.7%)	29 (40.3%)	<i>n</i> = 331
Orderly transfer of power	55 (11.3%)	43 (13.0%)	14 (19.4%)	<i>n</i> = 112
Pluralism	70 (14.4%)	57 (17.2%)	8 (11.1%)	<i>n</i> = 135
Concentration of power	9 (1.9%)	10 (3.0%)	2 (2.8%)	<i>n</i> = 21
Individual merit	5 (1.0%)	4 (1.2%)	0	<i>n</i> = 9
Stability	44 (9.1%)	36 (10.9%)	7 (9.7%)	<i>n</i> = 87
Anarchy	20 (4.1%)	19 (5.7%)	4 (5.6%)	<i>n</i> = 43
Constitutionalism	65 (13.4%)	43 (13.0%)	6 (8.3%)	<i>n</i> = 114
	21 (4.3%)	14 (4.2%)	2 (2.8%)	<i>n</i> = 37
Total	486 (54.7%)	331 (37.2%)	72 (8.1%)	889 (100%)

Relationship between press coverage and frame sponsor's political orientation

A 2x2 chi-square test was carried out to ascertain whether there were significant differences between the two newspapers in their attention to pro-establishment and anti-establishment claimsmakers. The two variables were newspaper (1 = *The Monitor*; 2 = *The New Vision*) and political orientation (1 = pro-establishment; 2 = anti-establishment). The test found that although the *The Monitor* covered pro-establishment claimsmakers (62.4%, *n* = 251) more frequently than anti-establishment claimsmakers (37.6%, *n* = 151) and that *The New Vision* too covered pro-establishment claimsmakers (56.6%, *n* = 235) more frequently than anti-establishment claimsmakers (43.4%, *n* = 180),

these differences were not significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 817) = 2.86, p = .09$. Table 15 compares the coverage of pro- and anti-establishment voices by the two newspapers.

Table 15 *Press coverage by political orientation of frame sponsor*

Newspaper	Claimsmaker's political orientation		
	Pro-establishment	Anti-establishment	
<i>The Monitor</i>	251 (62.4%)	151 (37.6%)	<i>n</i> = 402
<i>The New Vision</i>	235 (56.6%)	180 (43.4%)	<i>n</i> = 415
Total	486 (59.5%)	331 (40.5%)	817

CHAPTER 10

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I aim to discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the study's specific findings and to draw key inferences from the study as a whole. I begin by recapitulating the purpose for which the study was designed, the conceptual framework that guided it, the objectives I set out with, and the steps I followed to reach this final destination.

The study was designed to measure the prevalence of a range of frames in news discourse about the democratic transition in Uganda between 2001 and 2005, and to also take account of the climate of opinion and political culture in which the various issues were collectively deliberated. In exploring the political culture, the study was grounded in a historical profile of Uganda's political evolution and in a case history analysis of mediated discourse surrounding the vagaries of Uganda's transition to a democratic polity. This approach required harking back to Uganda's history in order to substantiate the opinion climate and the deliberative contest in which the various frames proliferated as interpretive packages rooted in the country's political culture. Because a case history is by definition interpretive, it offers the benefit of a nuanced portrait of the factors at play in collective discourse. For the specific purposes of the present study, it allowed us to trace the origins of the frame packages and to subsequently track them in news discourse. The study brought to light several findings appertaining to specific research questions about the various claims and deliberative dynamics inherent in news discourse about Uganda's political transition.

The study was developed through a conceptual framework that integrates framing analysis and public deliberation. To reprise this framework, as conceived by Pan and Kosicki (2003, p. 60): “Framing is a way to discursively organize public deliberation, allowing political actors to present their arguments and for others to understand and evaluate these arguments. That is the essence of public deliberation.” Central to this framework is Edelman’s (1988) idea that political reality is constructed from people’s beliefs about or the meaning they attach to political events, issues, problems, policies, leaders, and such other political objects. Issue framing is at the heart of the constructed meaning that comes into play when people attempt to make sense of politics and public issues. Beneath the content of public opinion sits the issue frames that serve to structure the perceptions and attitudes that citizens hold about political and policy issues.

Reprise of the objectives

The first objective was to investigate the content of and trends in media discourse about the political transition in Uganda, looking specifically at news accounts that appeared in the press between 2000 and 2005. Focusing on the themes of multi-party politics and presidential term limits as the primary issue domains of public discourse regarding the transition, the study has revealed the relative salience of news stories about the two issues and the differences in the coverage of these issues by the two newspapers from which data was obtained. Newspaper accounts of the debates about the transition were treated as a representative sample of the public discourse available on these issues both within the media and across the wider public deliberative sphere.

The second objective was to look into how political elites constructed meaning out of the issues at the core of public debate about the transition, as well as the

strategies they used to interpret the significance of events and to deliver their perspectives to the attentive public. The study unearthed the frame packages that were common in public discourse; the frequency of their occurrence and distribution; the relationships among the frames; the dynamics of the framing process; and the nature of frame sponsorship.

The third objective was to evaluate the quality of elite public discourse in the press within the context of Uganda as a democratizing nation whose experiences parallel those of countries at more or less the same stage in the process of democratic transformation. Relying on a yardstick calibrated against the principles of deliberative democracy, the gist of the matter on this question is purely normative, aiming to ascertain the extent to which issue framing in the media, as a strategy that participants in public deliberation employed to actualize their political agendas and to reach their communication objectives, augments or constrains the ideals and standards of deliberative democracy.

Summary of the chapters

In working toward the objectives of the study, I presented in Chapter One a series of findings from public opinion surveys about Ugandans' attitudes toward democracy and political institutions. The idea was to expose the climate of opinion that prevailed as Ugandans deliberated upon the key issues of the political transition. An appreciation of relevant public opinion on the issues that were at stake was considered essential to understanding the frame packages through which those issues were constructed and their meaning constructed.

I laid out in Chapter Two a historical perspective to the social and political forces that shaped the democratic transition in Uganda. To understand the political events and developments that became the subjects of intense public deliberation in the critical transitional period between 2000 and 2005, it was important to situate them in the context of the country's evolution as a polity from the era of British colonial occupation through the independence struggles and the futile post-independence efforts at nation-building. The overarching theme was one of a country bedeviled by systemic crisis, institutional failure, and fractious elite politics. The political interventions and democratic experiments initiated by the NRM government in 1986 effectively pulled the country back from a slippery slope on its way toward the status of a failed state. If the NRM's interventions were not entirely noble from a democratic standpoint, most Ugandans would still agree that their overall effect, catalyzed by the efforts of various groups of counter-elites, helped the country back on its feet in all facets of national life.

This ultimately being a study of democratic politics, Chapter Three provided the analytical context through a discussion of the conceptual foundations of democracy both as an ideal and as a practice. It examined the notion of equality as a central operative principle of democracy, the institutional framework upon which democracy is expected to thrive, and the different ways democratic systems are organized. The key theme of this chapter was that each model of democracy presupposes a particular set of values. On this premise, the norms of deliberative democracy were found particularly informative for understanding the critical role that public discourse is assumed to play in deliberative politics.

Chapter Four was devoted to expounding the deliberative conception of democracy. Pointing to the limitations of traditional liberal democracy, the central theme of this chapter was that deliberation is essential to democracy in all its permutations, and especially to liberal democracy, whose values have largely influenced the recent attempts at democratic transformation in sub-Saharan Africa. Far from endorsing a view that sees liberal and deliberative democracy as distinctive, incompatible models, I assumed the preeminence of liberal democratic institutions and values but argued for integrating deliberative norms into the systems of liberal democracy because of the unique qualities emphasized by deliberative democrats.

Although this study concentrated on the democratic transformation in Uganda, Chapter Five took a close look at the experiences and lessons learned from other democratic transitions especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The very concept of democratization and the contemporary practice of democracy in Africa were discussed. Special attention was given to the role of the elite as political agents and the influence they are assumed to have on the nature and survival of democratic institutions and political regimes. The theme that run through the discussion was that democratization processes even within individual African countries – Uganda being no exception – are quite complex, with progressive forces struggling alongside moves aimed at dialing back oft fragile reforms.

In Chapter Six, the deliberative conception of democracy was extended to the media. A case was made for approaching the media as deliberative institutions that serve fundamental democratic norms well beyond being instruments of traditional liberal politics. While acknowledging the constraints that the media face in Africa's transitional

democracies, it was argued that the elite nature of media discourse does not necessarily diminish their value as vehicles for public deliberation. Considering that most of the political debate that is significant is conducted through the media, the challenge is to make the media more responsive to the normative requirements of deliberative democracy.

Having established the conceptual bases for theorizing about and analyzing democratic politics, Chapter Seven turned to the mundane world of politics in which power is exercised and issues contested. The theme underlying the discussion here was that what is perceived to be the political reality is less about what actually happens than the interpretations made of actual developments in the political environment. In other words, the issues at stake are constructed and given particular meanings. Public deliberation is therefore a process of strategically framing issues with the goal of building discursive communities of participants in the political process who share more or less the same values and norms. This very conceptualization of politics was applied to the deliberative contest about Uganda's political transition. The nature of issue framing was analyzed and the constructionist model of framing was favored for its unique insights on how political elites use media discourse to promote their own perspectives on key issues and to push through their agendas.

Chapters Eight and Nine dealt with the empirical dimensions of the relationship between democratic deliberation and the framing of key political issues concerning the transition in Uganda. Based on a triangulation of methods involving qualitative analyses and quantitative assessments of public discourse on the political transition as reported in the mainstream press, the dynamics involved in constructing

meaning out of the key transitional issues as well as the outcomes were analyzed and explained.

In this chapter, the results are interpreted, their implications are discussed, and conclusions are drawn against the backdrop of the study's two primary lines of inquiry: the constructionist process of issue framing and the norms of deliberative democracy.

Within the constructionist paradigm, Gamson (1988b, p. 225) treats public discourse about collective interests and actions basically as an aggregate of discourses concurrently influenced by the elite, the media, and the political culture. For this reason, he conceptualizes the media's unique contribution to the broader deliberation on any public issue and the frame packages used to support the discourse as "the outcome of a value-added process" generated by the sponsor activities of the elite, the practices of the media, and the cultural resonances within the political culture.

First, with regard to sponsor activities, political actors seek to affect public opinion in such a way as to galvanize desired action or to stimulate preferred perceptions of events, issues, and actions. They do this by framing issues in a manner that reproduces their preferred interpretations of reality and also propagates their own causes and interests. Second, with regard to media practices, mediated deliberation is by and large constructed, for example, when media gatekeepers in their editorial practices routinely choose or privilege certain voices and frame packages over others, thereby implicitly framing the meaning of news stories (see, for example, Page, 1996). Third, with regard to cultural resonances, some frames command more power than others precisely because the ideas on which they are based reverberate strongly with underlying cultural frames within the

political culture at large. These underlying frames tend to acquire a hegemonic status and are often taken for granted. Citizens who identify with them will find a corresponding frame package more appealing and will respond to it more readily, as will journalists who have internalized this very frame. In other words, to the extent that cultural frames resonate, they will help to buttress and magnify the impact of the input from elite political actors and the media. The discussion that follows explores the implications of the study and interprets the results guided by the core concepts of the constructionist framing paradigm.

Media practices in issue framing

The degree of media attention devoted to the two issue domains examined has implications for public discourse on the political transition as a whole. It defines the deliberative context in which competing claims are contested and issues framed. Cook (1998, p. 130) has argued that how an issue is originally framed in the news tends to endure and to impose constraints on future choices. But whereas the initial frame might be hard to alter, it is not impervious to change. Newly constructed frames may acquire their power from recurrent use, thus opening up possibilities that would have been previously unfathomable. “Insofar as officials can influence the news media’s framing so as to favor their preferences, they can boost their likely success in this particular contest and enhance their reputation for future battles.”

One of the themes underlining this study has been that political activists typically enter the public deliberative sphere with particular political goals in mind. Seasoned political actors do clearly understand that every media encounter offers a framing opportunity. But the actualization of any such opportunity will ultimately depend

upon the relative visibility of the sponsored frames. The degree to which a frame gets noticed, if at all, is primarily a function of its prominence in media discourse, something that framers do not have routine control over. Following Gamson's (1992) criterion, a frame was considered to be visible in this research if it were present in no less than 10 percent of all stories in the message pool. From the results of this study (see Table 4), four of the nine issue frames reached that threshold of visibility, namely: 'the people's choice' (37.2%); 'pluralism' (15.2%); 'constitutionalism' (12.8%); and 'orderly transfer of power' (12.6%).

The visibility of a frame package is an indicator not only of its effectiveness as a carrier of meaning about an issue, but is also a measure of its cultural resonance. If we place the apparent dominance of these frame packages in the press in the context of Uganda's political culture whose background we traced in chapters 1 and 2, we get a clearer picture of media discourse as a meaning system of its own. It is a system that effectively indexes the larger public discourse about the political transition in Uganda. Although it is only a snapshot of that discourse, what it reveals is no less telling than what one might have discovered, say, by listening directly to ordinary participants in day-to-day deliberative forums. Being part of the reality in which meaning about political issues is constructed, citizens often feed off media discourse by embracing the language, symbols, and, above all, the interpretive frames they encounter therein.

In launching their claims onto the public deliberative agenda, elite political actors must pinpoint problems and at the same time figure out whom to attribute responsibility and blame for those problems or issues. This is the essence of diagnostic framing. When issues have been identified and targets of blame marked out, claims-

makers then have the task of determining and conveying what they believe needs to be done to address the problems they have identified. This is the essence of prognostic framing. And with the problems and their solutions laid out, claims-makers must communicate messages that will bring those affected or touched in some way by the issues to take action. This is the essence of motivational framing. Because the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational functions of framing serve specific strategic purposes in public deliberation, the frames they yield are to be seen in much the same light. This is to say, theoretically, that the value of different issue frames resides in the distinctive functions they serve for the claims-making process. In practice, however, even though we might analytically treat these as discrete discursive functions, the demarcations among frames as diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational can be porous. The point is: the same issue frame can be summoned to serve all these functions at once, while, at the same time, some framing functions might be engaged more readily and frequently in certain public discourses than in others.

The nine frames detected in this study appear to be either diagnostic ('concentration of power,' 'anarchy,' ',' and 'stability') or prognostic ('the people's choice,' 'orderly transfer of power,' 'pluralism,' 'individual merit,' and 'constitutionalism'). The results indicate, interestingly, that all four dominant frames, which together were apparent in 77.8 percent of all the stories (see Table 4) belong to the prognostic category (excluding 'individual merit').

To the extent that press coverage reflects not just the dominant themes on the public deliberative agenda but also the meaning attached to the issues on the agenda, the media do a lot more than merely reflect and react to inter-elite power struggles. They

are the sites of a discursive struggle over whose interpretations of reality or whose frame packages will prevail.

The salience in news discourse of issues on the public agenda and the prominence of the attendant frame packages are functions of elite actors' efforts to generate support for their claims. They garner this support "less by offering new facts or by changing their evaluations of those facts, and more by altering the frames or interpretive dimensions by which the facts are to be evaluated" (Miller & Riechert, 2001). It is through the mediated process of meaning construction that the preferred frames acquire prominence in public discourse, an outcome that has been proven by the results of this study.

Sponsor activities in issue framing

Frame sponsors are said to possess 'framing potency' when the frame packages they sponsor proliferate in media discourse to a higher level than the frames sponsored by their competitors. Accounting for frame sponsorship allowed us to figure out which frame sponsors were most active in news discourse and to identify frames with the political actors responsible for their proliferation. How the dominant issue frames are distributed among deliberators is a good measure of framing potency.

Construed as the power to frame, framing potency is not shared equally among frame sponsors. The voices of some participants in public deliberation carry more weight in news discourse, thus giving their frames a superior level of visibility. Besides, often times there are tensions between official frames sponsored by those in power and counter-frames sponsored by those challenging the status quo. More often than not, as Gamson (1996) contends, political actors attempting to provide alternative media

discourses through counter-frames find that the odds are stacked against them due to limited resources, skills, and rapport with the media. In trying to challenge dominant frames, they sometimes find that the mainstream media, steeped in the traditions of their norms and practices or tethered to the ideologies of powerful elites and organizations, simply do not take them seriously. If they do, they might dismiss the efforts of the challengers as unrealistic, react to them with sheer hostility, or undercut their efforts as just too risky to promote.

In this study, though, we found that political actors from the margins of power and other disaffected elites managed to compel the media to let them vent their claims. And whenever deliberative inroads have been effective, success at challenging official frames has often motivated counter-elites in general and even attracted the sympathies of moderate elite actors affiliated to the dominant centers of power.

For instance, the anti-establishment frame sponsors, though outnumbered (see Figure 3) nevertheless attempted to counter-frame in order to supplant the ‘orderly transfer of power’ frame that was originally propounded by pro-establishment claim-makers. They constructed alternative frames, notably, ‘concentration of power’ and ‘constitutionalism’ to underline the core themes of their claims that, one, coercion and intolerance were the stock in trade of the NRM as expressed in Museveni’s thinly veiled threats of death (as reflected in his “six feet underground” metaphor) for those who dared criticize the military; two, that the NRM was a virtual state party and one-man show; and three, that the principle of individual merit was a mockery (as reflected in the perceived irony of the NRM’s endorsement of Museveni as the sole presidential candidate in a Movement system). Anti-establishment frame sponsors constructed the issue frame of

‘pluralism’ which they invoked to mobilize otherwise disaffected and moderate supporters of the NRM and to attract independent citizens and those who were otherwise inclined to go against the political establishment.

Frame alignment, a critical process in issue framing, comes into play when political actors are compelled to conjure up frame packages around which to rally their supporters and keep them focused on their agenda. In public deliberation on political succession in Uganda, pro-establishment frame sponsors propagated the frame of an ‘orderly transfer of power’ to convince the public that the Besigye challenge could only arise because the system was democratic. But they also employed the very basis of this frame to raise specters of clandestine conspiracies and the consequences of disrupting the status quo. It is in this light that the frames of ‘stability’ and ‘anarchy’ are to be considered. In the same breath that ‘orderly transfer of power’ was being invoked to persuade the public that Besigye had no justifiable reason to claim that the system had excluded him or anybody from participation, ‘stability’ and ‘anarchy’ were being invoked to send the message that chaos would prevail if Museveni and the NRM lost power.

In claims-making, frames that are narrowly conceived to structure the narrative for a specific claim can be re-engineered through amplification when the basis of that claim either changes or is threatened by a new political development or critical discourse moment, for that matter. In this situation, an old frame could be repackaged to generate a new or better understanding of the urgency or gravity of changes in the political environment.

From the results summarized in Table 5, we note the particular case of ‘the people’s choice’ frame. Originally, going by the case history of the debate about multi-

party politics, this frame emerged in the context of a long-standing claim among counter-elites that citizens must be given a choice of political and policy alternatives. As such, it was the narrative framework for the claim that political parties needed to be reinstated and competition restored in politics. But when the discourse urging the ditching of presidential term limits surfaced, rather than supply another frame, the champions of this claim amplified ‘the people’s choice’ frame. This would give their current and potential supporters a familiar frame package for justifying their claim.

Besides, as the findings summarized in Table 14 reveal, this frame was not just co-opted but practically captured by the pro-establishment claims-makers. In reformulating it, they at the same time extended it to accommodate the idea that just as citizens had the right to choose how to and who to associate with politically, so were they entitled to deciding who would govern them and for how long – hence the argument in favor of nullifying term limits to allow the citizens to exercise their freedom of choice.

The tensions that characterized the relationships among the anti-establishment frame sponsors hint at the tenuousness of frame-bridging. For instance, mutual suspicions tended to hinder concerted action among the regime’s political challengers. In particular, although Besigye articulated the very grievances that the traditional opposition long held against the NRM government, he was initially viewed with suspicion by the opposition. By choosing to predicate his candidature on the Movement tenet of individual merit, however disputed his candidacy was within the NRM itself, some in the opposition felt that his claims about reform were superficial to the extent that he did not appear to be disengaging completely from the regime. This was compounded by the perception that in proclaiming the very principle of individual merit

that the NRM used to justify suppressing political parties, Besigye would still undermine the goal of institutionalizing associational politics based on competition within a multi-party arrangement.

The said tensions aside, the findings summarized in Figure 2 indicate that frame sponsorship is as much about frame-bridging as it is about counter-framing. In no case is this more apparent than in the president and vice president's inclinations to see issues through the lenses of political actors with otherwise opposing worldviews. A noticeable trend in the analysis of the frame sponsors' political affiliation is that regardless of the fact that the debate was dominated by claims-makers affiliated to the president and vice president's party (the NRM), as individuals the two leaders were frequently inclined to endorse positions propounded by their detractors. As is evident from Table 7, they were nearly as likely to take positions favorable to their own party as to the opposition. For instance, in 17.5 percent and 30.2 percent of stories, the president tended to lean toward the same positions as opposition and pro-opposition frame sponsors, respectively. A similar conclusion can be drawn with regard to political actors affiliated with the opposition. In just under half of the news stories in which the primary claims-makers were identified with the opposition, their positions on the issues were consistent with those of their rival, the NRM. The implication here is that frame-bridging can serve to not only reconcile the claims of those with pre-existing grounds for concerted collective action, but also the claims of those with inherently antagonistic interpretations of reality.

Pro-establishment claims-makers faced a particularly daunting challenge to their framing strategies. Given that many Ugandans had come to perceive political

parties as divisive and disruptive, a perception that the NRM itself did a lot to inculcate, would it be possible to build new faith and confidence in these institutions? With the NRM pushing for a return to multi-party politics and with the Movement shedding its status as a political system and morphing into a political organization, would it be possible to overcome the legacy of public mistrust toward political parties as democratic institutions? Would the largely positive evaluations of the Movement system rub off the political party system in general? Answers to these questions would depend on the efforts and success of the media and the political elite in (re)framing public discourse about the transition.

The results of this study reveal that generally the same frames were proliferated across competing claims by rival claims-makers (see Table 14). To illustrate this point, we found in one instance that a frame such as ‘anarchy’ was used by pro-establishment frame sponsors to suggest that political parties would lead once again to chaos; while anti-establishment claims-makers appealed to the same frame in suggesting that preventing citizens from associating politically as they wished was also a recipe for disaster. In yet another instance, while pro-establishment claims-makers tried to convince the public that Besigye’s challenge could only arise because the system was democratic, they also raised specters of clandestine conspiracies and disruption of the status quo if he was allowed to have his way. In claiming that every citizen was free to compete for power, the frame of ‘individual merit’ was invoked to persuade the public that Besigye had no justifiable reason to claim that the system had excluded him or anybody from participation, yet in the same vein he was portrayed as a potential source of anarchy.

Similarly, the counter-elites drew on pretty much the same repertoire of frames to support their claims such as those concerning: the coercion and intolerance of the regime as expressed in Museveni's not-so-veiled threats of death (the "six feet underground" metaphor) for those who dared criticize the military; the NRM as a virtual state party and one-man show; and the mockery of the principle of individual merit as seen in the endorsement of Museveni as the sole NRM candidate.

Leading up to the 2001 presidential election, pro-establishment claim-makers were keenly aware of the challenge that Besigye posed to their grip on power.⁴⁹ As a former high-ranking military officer and guerrilla fighter with as much claim to helping rebuild and stabilize the country as Museveni himself, the pro-establishment players drew on the framing resources of frame amplification, extension, and transformation to motivate their supporters.

First, to stave off Besigye's challenge, the pro-establishment elite amplified the issue frame of 'orderly transfer of power' by implying that Besigye was not only jumping the gun (reflected in the argument that Museveni was after all going to serve his last five years), but that his candidature also threatened to unleash disruptive forces that the country could not risk. Second, they extended this frame with the assertion that by launching his challenge, Besigye was proof of the government's democratic credentials since he was exercising his freedom on the basis of a right ('individual merit') that only the NRM could guarantee in the first place. Finally, they transformed the frame by suggesting, for the first time publicly, that Museveni was personally indispensable to the peaceful transfer of power in 2006. Previously, they were inhibited in making this

⁴⁹ Museveni won the election with 69.3 percent of the votes; Besigye got 27.8 percent; and the remainder was shared by four other candidates. Besigye disputed the results and took his case to the Supreme Court. It ruled in favor of Museveni in a 3-2 decision.

claim as it would play in the hands of critics who invariably maintained that the NRM could not survive without Museveni.

When faced with an unpredictable situation that threatened to dislodge their grasp on power, the pro-establishment political elite reacted by trying to recast the context of public deliberation in terms favorable to their interests. They attempted to redefine the terms of the debate by imposing their own parameters on public discourse. Yet, despite the efforts to graft an official package of frames on the debate about Uganda's democratic transition, political actors from the peripheries of power and those who felt outright oppressed or were disaffected succeeded in mobilizing public opinion by initiating media discourse on subjects that were hitherto considered off-limits or impervious to counter-framing.

And whenever such deliberative breakthroughs make it possible to challenge the official claims and frame packages, they often embolden the counter-elites and dissenting voices in general, and could even attract the sympathies of moderate elite actors affiliated to the dominant centers of power. In fact, such is the dynamic nature of the framing process that it necessitates the reframing of issues in order to adapt to changes in political reality and perceptions. Old arguments or justifications may not pass the test of new political and popular demands. Realignments of interests compel political actors to adopt new deliberative strategies.

For instance, it could not have been lost on the NRM that by challenging for the presidency, Besigye had tapped into an undercurrent of discontent that had built

up over the years especially among the urban electorate.⁵⁰ His candidacy was emblematic of the realignment of interests within the wider context of Uganda's political culture. It should be recalled that Besigye was a principle architect of the Movement system and the policy that constricted political parties under the NRM. Notwithstanding that legacy, he drew most of his support from advocates of multi-party politics who apparently embraced him as the embodiment of the kind of protest they could barely launch on their own. Hence, he provided the anti-establishment claims-makers or counter-elites the narrative framework they needed to confront the regime and to voice their claims regardless of the deliberative disadvantages in their way. As Gamson (1988b, p.228) argues:

At the very least, a vigorous challenge to the official package will force its taken-for-granted assumptions into the open, necessitating their justification and defense...a contested discourse exposes frame vulnerabilities in the official package. Unfolding events that otherwise might have been ignored may instead be used to discredit and embarrass official packages. In the process, rival, mobilizing packages that have anticipated such events may be elevated to prominence in media in spite of their normal handicaps.

Cultural resonances in issue framing

The findings of this study speak to an intense frame contest between pro- and anti-establishment claims-makers especially with regard to the dominant frames. When the distribution of issue frames was compared with the frame sponsors' orientation toward the political establishment (see Table 14), the analysis found that the same frames were simultaneously present in the discourses of pro-and anti-establishment actors. Furthermore, when claims-makers' issue frames were ranked according to the issue domain in which they appeared, the analysis revealed that the most dominant frames

⁵⁰ Besigye has challenged Museveni twice (2001 and 2006) for the presidency and on both occasions defeated him in Kampala, the country's capital, most populous city, and main center of political and economic life.

overall were also in large part the most dominant frames across all four leading categories of frame sponsors (see Table 12). Now, the fact that the relationship between frame sponsors' issue frame and political orientation was found to be statistically not significant indicates that no claims-maker, singly or collectively, had an exclusive stake in a specific issue frame.

We can deduce that public deliberation about the political transition was conducted around the same narrative parameters as evidenced by the cross pollination of issue frames between frame sponsors of opposing political persuasions and motivations. This indeed is the whole idea of aligning one's frame packages in such a way as to strike the appropriate cultural resonances. First, it necessitates that frame sponsors position themselves within the bounds of universally shared cultural frames, such as Ugandans' sensitivity to the long history of violence and the desire for civic order and stability. Second, it necessitates that frame sponsors embrace the frames that resonate with the base of their support so they can be spurred to act. Third, it necessitates that frame sponsors orientate their own frames to those of the citizens whose support they are seeking. With regard to Uganda's political transition, frames were unlikely to succeed unless they resonated with the citizens' values.

If the history of Uganda is anything to go by, citizens over the years grew wary of regimes that came into power with a lot of promise only to end up perpetuating the excesses of their predecessors. As the public opinion data cited in chapter 1 showed, the post-1986 reforms initiated by the NRM empowered citizens in ways that were unthinkable under previous regimes. Ugandans would subsequently place a high premium on institutional arrangements that afforded them reasonable opportunities and

latitude to participate in the political process. This explains why ‘the people’s choice’ frame featured strongly among the claims of both pro- and anti-establishment frame sponsors. It is a frame package that had strong resonance among Ugandans across the board because of their yearning for a chance to have a say in how they are governed. It is a value that became ingrained in the country’s political culture at least within the bounded context of the democratic transition.

The deliberative quality of mediated discourse

To be able to assert their claims and preferred issue frames, claims-makers must first and foremost be active or vocal in public deliberation. This is a necessary condition for visibility in news discourse. This study has painted a clear picture of the claims-makers whose voices were in contention and, logically, these are the political actors whose frames were effectively at work.

The deliberative notion of equality puts a premium on opportunities for every participant in public discourse to have access to all deliberative avenues applicable to the debate, discussion, and decision making about specific public affairs. The range of claims-makers represented in the news discourse examined in this research appears to be balanced given that the voices of the opposition, civic (LCs), and the executive (cabinet ministers) tended to compete virtually on equal terms for the media’s attention. However, in line with a central assumption of this study, the voices of elite political actors far outweigh those of ordinary folks. It is not so much that the elite are over-represented as the fact that the realm of mediated politics is no less tilted toward powerful elites than other institutions in the political culture at large. Besides, in Uganda as in much of Africa, the power of incumbency grants unique deliberative privileges in that the president as an

individual political player enjoys disproportionately more leverage than citizen participants in the deliberative sphere.

Other than equal access to public forums for deliberating matters of collective interest, the principle of equality also vouches for the equal rights of deliberators to voice their opinions and to advocate their interests without encumbrances on their freedoms of expression, conscience, and association. In transitional democracies of which Uganda is a classic case, enduring the fetters around free speech comes with the territory of public discourse.

The barriers to entry into the sphere of mediated political discourse can be exacting even for elite claims-makers anytime the stakes rise, as happened about a month after Besigye declared his presidential aspirations. Three columnists⁵¹ of *The New Vision* had their columns banned because they were perceived to be sympathetic to the incumbent's rival. Although *The New Vision* traditionally toed the government's line that restraining multi-party politics was necessary for the country's stability and cohesion, it seemed to have warmed up to the prospect of Besigye taking on Museveni and promising a reform agenda that included a return to pluralism. The paper's allusions to Besigye's emergence as a threat and worthy alternative to the incumbent were read as signs of bias. The message getting out was that the government would not tolerate dissenters and public discourse that questioned its politics. Such infractions on democratic deliberation were designed to control the context in which the issues would be framed.

Deliberative democracy puts a premium on non-tyranny in the public sphere, implying that persuasion must take precedence over coercion. Oloka-Onyango (1999, p. 16) has contended that over and above the numerous laws that the government

⁵¹ Joachim Buwembo, Robert Kabushenga, and Francis Gureme.

could use to crack down on public deliberation in the media and other oppositional forums, “what is more problematic is the invisible line beyond which free expression is not tolerated.” The banishment of the columnists who picked up the cue when Besigye broached the subject of succession corroborated his belief that “the exact positioning of that invisible line comes into play once the government feels threatened by the grievances being articulated.”

As the findings suggest, the fact that pro-establishment claims-makers (54.7 percent) dominated the discourse would imply that they had an upper hand in setting the discursive parameters of the debate. By and large, anti-establishment political actors were mostly positioned as counter-framers, struggling to come up with frames or to extend and transform existing frames in order to challenge the frame packages created by the political actors who dominated public deliberation. This is the kind of framing contest that essentially typifies public deliberation as a discursive struggle over the definition of public issues and problems.

Basically, though, this is an asymmetrical struggle in which the dominant players enjoy definite advantages in the deliberative realm. Owing to these discursive asymmetries, political actors who attempt to provide alternative media discourses by constructing counter-claims sometimes find that the odds are stacked against them due to limited resources, skills, and rapport with the media. When they try to challenge the dominant claims, they may find that the mainstream media, steeped in the traditions of their norms and practices or tethered to the issue frames adopted from powerful elites and organizations, may simply not take them seriously. Interestingly, the data reveal that even non-elite frame sponsors, notably the LCs, were potent framers as they appeared in as

many stories as cabinet ministers and opposition activists. On closer scrutiny, however, we found that the reason these non-elite framers were prominent was that either they were politically affiliated to the party in power, the NRM, or they endorsed the positions favored by the NRM.

The political players or claims-makers whose voices are amplified are motivated by the desire to construct issue frames that will shape the perception of reality in the political environment. From the range of political actors represented in news discourse, we can conclude that public deliberation on this issue was multi-vocal, which refers to the plurality of voices and is in keeping with the deliberative ideal of equality.

Suggestions for future research

Gamson (1992, p. 27) has argued that public discourse evolves in the course of time, supplying (new) interpretations and meanings for issues and events as they unfold, and in the process “[c]ertain ways of framing issues gain and lose prominence over time, and some assumptions are shared by all frames.” The evidence from this study provides a basis for determining the robustness of the frames found in media discourse or their stability across time. Given that claims-making is a competitive process, there is reason to assume that frames do not prevail equally over time – within and between media and issue domains and across claims-makers. Future research should explore the robustness of frame packages over time.

Assuming that the ultimate goal of issue framing is to have some impact on the political attitudes and perceptions of the public, future research in this line of work should explore audience-based outcomes of the claims-making process. Studies that aim to correlate elite frame packages and audience frames should be particularly informative.

The deliberative dimension of this strand of research ought to be extended by empirically operationalizing those normative characteristics of deliberative democracy that can be productively measured in public discourse. Future research could develop new measures or adapt existing ones for assessing the quality of political deliberation using a quantitative yardstick.

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APPENDIX A

CONTENT ANALYSIS CODEBOOK

INTRODUCTION

This study explores various characteristics of *news* coverage related to (i) *multi-party politics* and (ii) *presidential term limits* in *The New Vision* and *The Monitor* newspapers from October 2000 through October 2005. The data is to be entered on a separate codesheet. By *news* we refer to ‘hard’ stories about events and issues reported as observed or understood by an agent of the newspaper.

PROCEDURE

Select newspapers, one at a time, from the timeframe assigned to you. Use the tracking form provided to keep track of every issue you have analyzed regardless of whether or not you coded its content. This will enable us to monitor progress and to ensure that no newspaper issue is coded more than once.

Read the headlines and scan the text of all articles on the news pages and identify those stories whose content deals explicitly and substantively with (i) multi-party politics and (ii) presidential term limits. Proceed to record the required information by using the relevant codes provided. Please circle only one code for each item except where you are specifically instructed to circle all that apply. If you make a correction, draw a bold X sign over the canceled code.

Fill out a separate codesheet for every news article as follows:

CODER ID: Write the three-digit identification number assigned to you: _____

NEWSPAPER: Indicate the newspaper in which the article is located:

- 1 The Monitor
- 2 The New Vision

DATE: Enter the date of the issue you are coding. Use a numbering style that follows the format of mm/dd/yyyy (month/day of the month/year) and precede single digits with a zero e.g. October 7, 1967 is coded as 10/07/1967. ___ / ___ / _____

HEADLINE: Write the exact headline (exclude the sub-headline) in the space below.

Write the headline exactly as it is including punctuation and upper cases. Don’t abbreviate or spell out abbreviations. _____

PAGE: Indicate the page number on which the article starts: _____

TOPIC: Read the article and determine as best you can what its primary focus is. As a first resort, use the headline to determine the primary topic of the story. If the headline offers no clue, turn to the story intro i.e. the opening one or two paragraphs. Even if both topics appear in the story, code only the primary topic as follows:

- 1 Multi-party politics
- 2 Presidential term limits

Multi-party politics: These are articles about opening up the political system to multi-party politics and/or about maintaining the no-party/Movement system.

Presidential term limits: These are articles about lifting and/or maintaining the limits on the presidential term of office.

PRIMARY SOURCE: For each news story, identify the FIRST individual or group of individuals to whom particular facts and/or opinions are attributed:

- 1 President
- 2 Vice President
- 3 Minister (including prime minister and state ministers)
- 4 Member of Parliament
- 5 Local Council leader (elected officials at all LC levels)
- 6 Military personnel
- 7 Civil servant (appointed/unelected officials in the central and local governments including those in Law Enforcement)
- 8 Government/Movement functionary or activist
- 9 Opposition functionary or activist
- 10 Civil society activist
- 11 Religious leader
- 12 Cultural/traditional leader
- 13 Public/ordinary citizen (not occupationally involved in politics)
- 14 Diplomat or representative of a foreign government
- 15 Representative of a foreign or international organization
- 16 Indeterminate
- 17 Other (write in) _____

SECONDARY SOURCE: For each news story, identify the SECOND individual or group of individuals to whom particular facts and/or opinions are attributed:

- 1 President
- 2 Vice President
- 3 Minister (including prime minister and state ministers)
- 4 Member of Parliament
- 5 Local Council leader (elected officials at all LC levels)
- 6 Military personnel
- 7 Civil servant (appointed/unelected officials in the central and local governments including those in Law Enforcement)
- 8 Government/Movement functionary or activist
- 9 Opposition functionary or activist
- 10 Civil society activist
- 11 Religious leader
- 12 Cultural/traditional leader
- 13 Public/ordinary citizen (not occupationally involved in politics)
- 14 Diplomat or representative of a foreign government
- 15 Representative of a foreign or international organization
- 16 Indeterminate
- 17 Other (write in) _____

PRIMARY AFFILIATION: Indicate the political affiliation or inclination of the primary source as described in the article:

- 1 Movement
- 2 Opposition
- 3 Pro-government
- 4 Anti-government
- 5 Neutral/Independent
- 6 Indeterminate

SECONDARY AFFILIATION: Indicate the political affiliation or inclination of the secondary source as described in the article:

- 1 Movement
- 2 Opposition
- 3 Pro-government
- 4 Anti-government
- 5 Neutral/Independent
- 6 Indeterminate

Movement: Refers to individuals playing explicit and official political roles and functions as office-holders, functionaries or elected representatives of the (National Resistance) Movement as a political organization and as a government.

Opposition: Refers to individuals playing explicit and official political roles and functions as office-holders or elected representatives of organized political parties or groups.

Pro-government: Refers to supporters and sympathizers of the Movement government generally i.e. ordinary citizens or individuals not occupationally engaged in politics but who declare themselves, or appear to be, or advance opinions, favorable to the (National Resistance) Movement government or its leaders and policies.

Anti-government: Refers to opponents and critics of the (National Resistance) Movement government generally i.e. ordinary citizens or individuals not occupationally engaged in politics but who declare themselves, or appear to be, or advance opinions, critical of the Movement government or its leaders and policies.

PRIMARY PARTY POSITION: Determine as best you can whether the primary source in general:

- 1 Objects to multi-party politics
- 2 Is neutral
- 3 Supports multi-party politics

SECONDARY PARTY POSITION: Determine as best you can whether the secondary source in general:

- 1 Objects to multi-party politics
- 2 Is neutral
- 3 Supports multi-party politics

PRIMARY TERM POSITION: Determine as best you can whether the primary source in general:

- 1 Objects to term limits
- 2 Is neutral
- 3 Supports term limits

SECONDARY TERM POSITION: Determine as best you can whether the secondary source in general:

- 1 Objects to term limits
- 2 Is neutral
- 3 Supports term limits

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Objects to term limits: Is against having term limits for the president.

Objects to multi-party politics: Is against the multi-party political system.

Support for term limits: Is in favour of having term limits for the president.

Support for multi-party politics: Is in favour of the multi-party political system.

PRIMARY PRO-PARTY POSITION: If the primary source supports political parties, determine as best you can which of the following ideas best describes the main reason(s) advanced to defend the support for political parties (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism
- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

SECONDARY PRO-PARTY POSITION: If the secondary source supports political parties, determine as best you can which of the following ideas best describes the main reason(s) advanced to defend the support for political parties (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism
- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation

10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

PRIMARY ANTI-PARTY POSITION: If the primary source objects to political parties, determine as best you can which of the following ideas best describes the main reason(s) advanced to defend the objection to political parties (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism
- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

SECONDARY ANTI-PARTY POSITION: If the secondary source objects to political parties, determine as best you can which of the following ideas best describes the main reason(s) advanced to defend the objection to political parties (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism
- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

PRIMARY PRO-TERM POSITION: If the primary source supports term limits, determine as best you can which of the following ideas best describes the main reason(s) advanced to defend the support for term limits (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism
- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

SECONDARY PRO-TERM POSITION: If the secondary source supports term limits, determine as best you can which of the following ideas best describes the main reason(s) advanced to defend the support for term limits (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism
- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

PRIMARY ANTI-TERM POSITION: If the primary source objects to term limits, determine as best you can which of the following ideas best describes the main reason(s) advanced to defend the objection to term limits (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism
- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

SECONDARY ANTI-TERM POSITION: If the secondary source objects to term limits, determine as best you can which of the following ideas best describes the main reason(s) advanced to defend the objection to term limits (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism
- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF ISSUE FRAMES

The people's choice: The idea that the people reserve the right to determine the systems of government and leadership they wish to have; and that it is within their constitutional and legitimate power to choose who their leader should be and what political system should prevail.

Orderly transfer of power: The idea of a smooth change of governments and peaceful process of presidential succession.

Pluralism: The idea of a competitive political system that allows individuals to compete for power in a multi-party system. Or the counter-claim that the Movement is non-partisan and more embracing of all political beliefs.

Concentration of power: The idea that the absence of political parties is synonymous with a monopolistic system of government; and that lifting term limits would lead to the monopolization of power and dictatorship.

Individual merit: The idea that people should seek political office or compete for power and leadership positions on the strength of their personal credentials rather than because of the interests they represent; and that anybody who believes that she is a competent candidate has a right to seek and stand for elective public office.

Stability: The idea that the absence of parties guarantees a stable political environment and that removing term limits ensures continuity in good governance. Or the counter-claim that stability can only be guaranteed by a pluralistic system and predictable term limits.

Anarchy: The idea that political parties are divisive and causes of civil unrest, political chaos, and social disruption. Or the counter-claim that the continued absence of political parties is bound to lead to similar outcomes.

Constitutionalism: The idea that the constitution is supreme and that the existing constitutional provisions on party politics and term limits should prevail. Or the counter-claim that the people or their representatives have the right to change the constitution to meet their preferences.

Consolidation: The idea that dissenters should be allowed to leave the Movement and form their own political parties or join existing ones so as to ensure harmony and cohesion; and that the absence of parties and abandoning of term limits would enable the government and incumbent to protect their development agenda and secure their achievements.

APPENDIX B

Form # _____

CONTENT ANALYSIS CODESHEET

CODER ID: _____

NEWSPAPER:

- 1 The Monitor
- 2 The New Vision

DATE (mm/dd/yyyy): ____ / ____ / _____

HEADLINE: _____

PAGE: _____

TOPIC:

- 1 Multi-party politics
- 2 Presidential term limits

PRIMARY SOURCE:

- 1 President
- 2 Vice President
- 3 Minister (including prime minister and state ministers)
- 4 Member of Parliament
- 5 Local Council leader (elected officials at all LC levels)
- 6 Military personnel
- 7 Civil servant (appointed/unelected officials in the central and local governments including those in Law Enforcement)
- 8 Government/Movement functionary or activist
- 9 Opposition functionary or activist
- 10 Civil society activist
- 11 Religious leader
- 12 Cultural/traditional leader
- 13 Public/ordinary citizen (not occupationally involved in politics)
- 14 Diplomat or representative of a foreign government
- 15 Representative of a foreign or international organization
- 16 Indeterminate
- 17 Other (write in) _____

SECONDARY SOURCE:

- 1 President
- 2 Vice President
- 3 Minister (including prime minister and state ministers)
- 4 Member of Parliament
- 5 Local Council leader (elected officials at all LC levels)
- 6 Military personnel
- 7 Civil servant (appointed/unelected officials in the central and local governments including those in Law Enforcement)

- 8 Government/Movement functionary or activist
- 9 Opposition functionary or activist
- 10 Civil society activist
- 11 Religious leader
- 12 Cultural/traditional leader
- 13 Public/ordinary citizen (not occupationally involved in politics)
- 14 Diplomat or representative of a foreign government
- 15 Representative of a foreign or international organization
- 16 Indeterminate
- 17 Other (write in) _____

PRIMARY AFFILIATION:

- 1 Movement
- 2 Opposition
- 3 Pro-government
- 4 Anti-government
- 5 Neutral/Independent
- 6 Indeterminate

SECONDARY AFFILIATION:

- 1 Movement
- 2 Opposition
- 3 Pro-government
- 4 Anti-government
- 5 Neutral/Independent
- 6 Indeterminate

PRIMARY PARTY POSITION: Determine as best you can whether the primary source in general:

- 1 Objects to multi-party politics
- 2 Is neutral
- 3 Supports multi-party politics

SECONDARY PARTY POSITION:

- 1 Objects to multi-party politics
- 2 Is neutral
- 3 Supports multi-party politics

PRIMARY TERM POSITION:

- 1 Objects to term limits
- 2 Is neutral
- 3 Supports term limits

SECONDARY TERM POSITION:

- 1 Objects to term limits
- 2 Is neutral
- 3 Supports term limits

PRIMARY PRO-PARTY POSITION (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism

- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

SECONDARY PRO-PARTY POSITION (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism
- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

PRIMARY ANTI-PARTY POSITION (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism
- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

SECONDARY ANTI-PARTY POSITION (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism
- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

PRIMARY PRO-TERM POSITION (circle all that apply):

- 1 The people's choice
- 2 Orderly transfer of power
- 3 Pluralism
- 4 Concentration of power
- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
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- 6 Stability
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- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

PRIMARY ANTI-TERM POSITION (circle all that apply)

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- 2 Orderly transfer of power
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- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

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- 4 Concentration of power

- 5 Individual merit
- 6 Stability
- 7 Anarchy
- 8 Constitutionalism
- 9 Consolidation
- 10 No reason

Other: write in by describing as succinctly as possible the main idea(s) behind the position advanced in this article: _____

APPENDIX C

UGANDANS' COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONS 2000 & 2002

SOURCE: Logan, C.J, Muwanga, N., Sentamu, R., & Bratton, M. (2003). "Insiders and outsiders: Varying perceptions of democracy and governance in Uganda." Afrobarometer Working Paper No. 27.
<http://www.afrobarometer.org/papers/AfpaperNo27.pdf>

I - SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY		
	2000	2002
Democracy best ¹	80%	74%
Non-democracy OK ²	8%	12%
Doesn't matter ³	8%	7%

II - SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY BY REGION & POLITICAL AFFILIATION (2002)							
	Region				Political Affiliation		Average
	West	East	Central	North	Movement	Opposition	
Democracy best	85%	74%	76%	59%	80%	72%	74%
Non-democracy OK	8%	16%	9%	15%	9%	17%	12%
Doesn't matter	3%	6%	10%	12%	6%	7%	7%
Don't know	3%	5%	5%	14%	5%	3%	6%
N	680	608	568	544	840	313	2,400

III – EXTENT OF DEMOCRACY ⁴		
	2000	2002
Full democracy	25%	11%
Democracy with minor problems	32%	43%
Democracy with major problems	32%	31%
Not a democracy	7%	7%

IV – EXTENT OF DEMOCRACY BY REGION & POLITICAL AFFILIATION (2002)							
	Region				Political Affiliation		Average
	West	East	Central	North	Movement	Opposition	
Full democracy	12%	15%	10%	4%	16%	3%	11%
Democracy with minor problems	56%	40%	44%	29%	56%	25%	43%
Democracy with major problems	23%	33%	33%	38%	20%	46%	31%
Not a democracy	4%	5%	7%	12%	2%	22%	7%
Don't know/Don't understand	5%	8%	6%	18%	7%	4%	8%

V – SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY		
	2000	2002
Satisfied	74%	60%
Dissatisfied	18%	33%

VI – SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY BY REGION & POLITICAL AFFILIATION (2002)							
	Region				Political Affiliation		
	West	East	Central	North	Movement	Opposition	
Satisfied	70%	60%	58%	39%	76%	32%	
Dissatisfied	26%	30%	35%	42%	19%	64%	

VII – ATTITUDES TOWARD REGIME ALTERNATIVES		
	2000	2002
Reject military rule	89%	85%
Reject traditional rule	79%	48%
Reject strongman rule	83%	90%
Reject one-party rule	53%	53%

VIII – ATTITUDES TOWARD A ONE-PARTY STATE BY REGION & POLITICAL AFFILIATION ⁵ (2002)							
	Region				Political Affiliation		Average
	West	East	Central	North	Movement	Opposition	
Disapprove	40%	58%	51%	73%	33%	80%	53%
Neither	4%	2%	9%	4%	4%	2%	5%
Approve	55%	38%	39%	21%	62%	17%	40%
Don't know	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%

IX – ATTITUDES TOWARD DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS: PERCEIVED ASSOCIATION BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTIES & CONFLICT BY REGION & POLITICAL AFFILIATION ⁶ (2002)							
	Region				Political Affiliation		Average
	West	East	Central	North	Movement	Opposition	
Often/always	76%	64%	61%	57%	73%	62%	65%
Never/rarely	20%	34%	34%	32%	26%	34%	30%
Don't know	4%	2%	5%	11%	2%	4%	5%

X – CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES TOWARD POLITICAL PARTIES ⁷ (2002)						
	Uganda	Cape Verde	Ghana	Namibia	Nigeria	South Africa
Party choice (percent selecting statement B)	42%	64%	56%	69%	63%	56%

XI – PROVISION OF POLITICAL GOODS ⁸ (2002)*	
A = Freedom to say what you think	85%
B = Freedom to vote as you choose	79%
C = Freedom from unjust arrest	67%
D = Freedom of political association	62%
E = Ability to influence government	56%
F = Equality of treatment for all	51%
* Percent saying “Better” or “Much better”	

XII – PROVISION OF POLITICAL GOODS BY REGION & POLITICAL AFFILIATION (2002)*							
	Region				Political Affiliation		Average
	West	East	Central	North	Movement	Opposition	
A	92%	87%	92%	64%	93%	66%	85%
B	84%	81%	86%	64%	90%	55%	79%
C	78%	70%	66%	48%	80%	41%	67%
D	65%	63%	72%	41%	76%	40%	62%
E	68%	67%	55%	24%	70%	30%	56%
F	62%	65%	45%	24%	62%	21%	51%
* Percent saying “Better”							

XIII – PERFORMANCE OF ELECTED OFFICIALS (2002)*	
LC1 Chairman	92%
President Museveni	81%
LC3 Chairman	79%
LC5 Chairman	73%
MP	64%
* Percent approval	

XIV – RATINGS OF ELECTED OFFICIALS BY REGION AND POLITICAL AFFILIATION (2002)							
	Region				Political Affiliation*		Average
	West	East	Central	North	Movement	Opposition	
President							
Performance	94%	84%	83%	56%	96%	43%	81%
Trust	82%	62%	60%	30%	83%	21%	61%
MP/Parliament							
Performance	73%	62%	57%	60%	65%	59%	64%
Trust	56%	52%	38%	45%	53%	40%	48%
Movement							
Trust	76%	60%	52%	26%	82%	15%	56%
Opposition groups							
Trust	10%	16%	16%	24%	7%	47%	16%
* Neutrals excluded							

XV – TRUST IN INDIVIDUALS & INSTITUTIONS (2002)	
LC1 Council	77%
President Museveni	61%
Independent broadcasting	58%
Government broadcasting	57%
LC3 council	57%
Movement	56%
LC5 Council	52%
Army	51%
Courts	50%
Parliament	48%
Traditional leaders	47%
Independent newspapers	45%
Government newspapers	45%
Police	43%
Electoral Commission	21%
Opposition parties	16%

XVI – VALIDITY OF CONSTITUTION AS INDICATOR OF LEGITIMACY BY REGION & POLITICAL AFFILIATION ⁹ (2002)							
	Region				Political Affiliation		Average
	West	East	Central	North	Movement	Opposition	
Agree	90%	57%	59%	44%	76%	48%	64%
Neither	3%	3%	8%	9%	5%	10%	6%
Disagree	5%	29%	15%	20%	9%	30%	17%
Don't know	2%	11%	18%	27%	11%	12%	13%

NOTES ABOUT THE MEASURES:

¹ “Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.”

² “In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.”

³ “For someone like me it doesn’t matter what kind of government we have.”

⁴ “In your opinion, how much of a democracy is Uganda today?”

⁵ “There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternative: only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office.”

⁶ “In this country, how often does competition between political parties lead to conflict?”

⁷ “Which of the following statement is closest to your view: A) Political parties create division and confusion, it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in [Uganda]; B) Many political parties are needed to make sure that [Ugandans] have real choice in who governs them.”

⁸ “Comparing our present system of government with the former system of government under the old Constitution (that is, before 1995), are the following things worse or better now than they used to be, or about the same?”

⁹ “For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: Our Constitution expresses the values and aspirations of the Ugandan people.”

APPENDIX D

EXAMPLES OF NEWS TEXTS AND THEIR FRAME PACKAGES

STORY #1 [The People's Choice]
Let people decide on 3rd term - VP
The New Vision, December 23, 2003
By Albert Ayiga Ondoga

VICE-President Prof. Gilbert Bukenya on Saturday said the people of Uganda should be given chance to decide whether the presidency should be limited to two five-year terms or be unlimited. At an end-of-year staff party hosted at his home in Lwantama, Kakiri in Wakiso district, Bukenya said the same yardstick should apply to members of Parliament, chairmen of districts and sub-county councils. "If MPs and chairpersons of districts have led their constituencies and districts as long as they have stood, why should we limit the President if the people still want him to lead them? They are all leaders though at different levels," he said. The guests applauded him. Kampala mayor John Sebana Kizito, information minister state Nsaba Buturo, state minister in the Office of the Vice-President Adolf Mwesigye, Movement pressure groups and a Movement mobilisers' group from Gaba attended. Bukenya said the power to decide on the issue should not be restricted to only a few people. It should be the entire population, he said. Ssebaana Kizito said he saw no problem with the issue of raising term limits. Bukenya also urged all Ugandans to engage in activities that will enable them to raise income so as to fight poverty instead of wasting time in fruitless political debates. He said next year should be a practical year of saving, investment and development, saying this is the leadership focus of transforming the country from the current subsistence system of activities to a market-oriented production. He commended his officers and all staff for the support and commitment they have rendered in executing the mandate of his office during the last seven months he has been in office.

STORY #2 [Orderly Transfer of Power]
MPs vow to block third term bid
The New Vision, September 20, 2003
By Henry Mukasa

MEMBERS of Parliament in the anti-third term lobby, dubbed the 'malwa group' have said their target is to block the lifting of the two term limit for the presidency and take centre in the management of the transition from the Movement system to pluralism. The group's head of advocacy and spokesperson, Salaamu Musumba, (Bugabula South) said since the Government blocked the traditional political parties from holding rallies, the group would use its parliamentary privilege to mobilise Ugandans to oppose the 'third term.' "Our stand is that we don't like to see anything that upsets the term limits. That's our stand even to the Constitutional Review Commission," Musumba said on Thursday at the parliamentary buildings. Musumba, however, ruled out the possibility of the group transforming into a political party and compete for power in 2006. She said their intention is limited to "saving the country from political manipulation and emergence of a

dictator.” “The Movement revolution, we were told, was supposed to safeguard us so that we don’t get dictators,” Musumba said. She said the Movement and the political parties have resorted to a game of Ping-Pong, which must be stopped, and a consensus reached at a national dialogue. The group elected its executive on Tuesday, which is composed of staunch multipartyists and some Movementists.

STORY #3 [Pluralism]

Multipartyists plead for breathing space

The New Vision, May 7, 2002

By John Kakande & Hamis Kaheru

THE long-awaited debate on the Political Parties and Organisations Bill kicked off in Parliament yesterday with multiparty MPs pleading with their Movement colleagues to relax restrictions on party activities. Movement MPs, with the exception of Bernadette Bigirwa (Bushenyi), in unison argued in favour of retaining or even tightening up the noose around parties. They said the choice made by the majority of the people through the 2000 referendum must be adhered to. Bigirwa spoke in favour of allowing the parties to operate up to the district level. An unusually large number of people, including scores of Uganda Young Democrats (UYD), turned up yesterday at Parliament to listen to the debate. The press gallery was filled to capacity. Bigirwa, who introduced herself as a cadre of the Movement, wondered why the Movement feared to compete with political parties at lower levels. “What are we afraid of? For all these years, we have been mobilising. I personally was mobilising (as RDC) for nine years without hindrance. If we have become lazy to mobilise, we should say so,” she said. She said the referendum, which many MPs were referring to as ground for restricting political parties, was instead the reason why they should be freed. “The Movement got over 90% in the referendum, which shows that the opposition form the minority, so what are we fearing?” she asked. She said Uganda’s problems have been as a result of leaders’ failure to look at social justice and equity. Bigirwa warned, “Today’s minority can be tomorrow’s majority.” She said passing the bill in its present form would be denying parties a chance to have internal democracy. Abdu Katuntu (Bugweri) warned that if the restrictions were recycled in the Bill, multipartyists would seek redress in the Constitutional Court. “This is not politics, this is now law,” said Katuntu warning that “if you to transplant Article 269 into the Bill, we shall meet in Court.” The Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Hajat Janat Mukwaya, earlier said the Parliament was free to use the Bill to re-institute the restrictions imposed on the parties by Article 269 of the Constitution. Mukwaya also warned that parties must not assume that they are free to operate “as usual.” She said they must also conform to the democratic principles enshrined in the Constitution. Gagawala Wambuzi (Bulamogi) said that parties have let the country down. He said parties should not be allowed to “disturb the peasants.” Alex Onzima (Maracha) said MPs particularly the women and youths, should not take orders from elsewhere, but debate the Bill freely. Onzima said the women and youth MPs should not allow themselves to be twisted. Sarah Nansubuga (Ntenjeru North) who, while responding to a heckler retorted “if I am a sycophant, let me be a sycophant”, said she had instructions from her constituents not to bring back the parties. Richard Ssebuliba Mutumba (Kawempe South) appealed to his colleagues to consider the Bill in a sober manner. He said all Uganda’s presidents have

been dislodged from State House by the barrel of the gun not the ballot. “Let us think about posterity,” Mutumba argued, saying the syndrome of Ugandans fleeing into exile should be brought to an end. Otto Odonga (Aruu) warned that in next 25 years most MPs would be dead but he would still be around answering questions about the decision they were taking.

STORY #4 [Concentration of Power]

Reform agenda attacks NEC on constitutional proposals

The New Vision, April 1, 2003

By Vision Reporter

The Reform Agenda yesterday rejected the Movement’s National Executive Committee (NEC) decision to amend the Constitution to allow a third term for the President. They have also protested the NEC proposal to hold a referendum on opening up political space. The group Secretary General, Geoffrey Ekanya, told a weekly press briefing at Bukoto that “the proposal that the tenure of office of the President be lifted is totally unacceptable and should be rejected in totality because it is meant at perpetuating President Museveni’s dictatorship.” Quoting article 74(2) of the Constitution, Ekanya, who is also the Tororo MP, said change should be attained using district councils and MPs. Flanked by Reform Agenda officials, Ssebowa Kagulire, Louis Otika, Beatrice Anwar and Wycliffe Bakandonda, Ekanya said the view that the Movement remains as an organisation was “unattainable and unworkable.” He said, “Parliament should use its wisdom to dissuade the leadership of the Movement from this idea because the Movement is fused with the State and is funded by the State.” Delegates at the recent NEC meeting were said to have supported the lifting of the restrictions of the President to two terms.

STORY #5 [Individual Merit]

Abolish presidential terms - Mukono RDC

The New Vision, April 24, 2002

By Nicholas Kajoba

MUKONO Resident District Commissioner (RDC) Charles Mubiru has said presidential terms should be abolished so that a president can rule a country as long as the electorate supports him. Mubiru was presenting his views to the Constitutional Review Commission at Mukono community centre hall yesterday. Prof. Frederick Ssempebwa chaired the committee and commissioners, Sam Owor, Olwedo Okot and Benedict Mutyaba attended the hearing. Mubiru said the president should lose his seat when the voters felt that he had failed to perform to their expectations. “People can vote for a president who has been in power for 20 years,” Mubiru said. He cited countries like Libya which had had one president for over 20 years yet it was stable. Mubiru recommended that people elected to Parliament should not be judged according to their academic qualifications but their ability to articulate issues pertaining to governance. “Parliament should be open,” he said.

STORY #6 [Stability]

Wait for 2004, Museveni advises multipartyists

The New Vision, June 12, 2002

By John Kakande & Okello Jabweli

PRESIDENT Yoweri Museveni has said advocates of multipartyism should wait for 2004 if they want to renew the debate on the matter. "In 2004, the Constitution provides for avenues of renewing the debate. For now, let us all concentrate on consolidating and expanding the hard-won security, law and order and use this to move even faster towards development," said Museveni in his state of the nation speech delivered to Parliament yesterday. Museveni said the Political Parties and Organisations Bill which he described as 'historic' has now become law. "This law was necessary to reassure our people who voted massively for the retention of the Movement system during the period of my presidency and your term (Parliament). It was also a signal to all - nationally and internationally that the Constitution is indeed supreme," Museveni said. "Let those who wish to be with us in the long road to permanent peace and sustained development now waste no further time on sterile debate," he added. Vice President Dr. Speciosa Wandira Kazibwe represented Museveni who is in Rome, Italy attending a World food security summit. This was the first time Museveni delegated Kazibwe to deliver the state of the nation address. Speaker Edward Ssekandi earlier read a proclamation to mark the opening of the second session of the 7th Parliament.

STORY #7 [Anarchy]

Parties lead to tyranny - Bihande

The New Vision, December 23, 2003

By John Nzinjah & John Thawite

KASESE district chairman Yokasi Bihande has expressed fear that the return to multipartyism was likely to plunge the country into political anarchy again. Bihande said his people were questioning the opening up of political space. He was recently speaking at the memorial service of the late Victor Muhindo. Muhindo, husband to senior presidential advisor on mass mobilisation, Christine Muhindo, is said to have been killed on suspicions that he was going to contest on a DP ticket against a UPC candidate. Bihande condemned people who kill their political opponents, saying it was against democracy, which recognises different views. President Yoweri Museveni was among the people who attended the memorial.

STORY #8 [Constitutionalism]

3rd term won't yield tyranny – Kiwanuka

The New Vision, November 11, 2003

By Emmanuel Mulondo

STATE minister for Luweero Triangle Prof. Ssemakula Kiwanuka has defended cabinet proposals to the constitutional review commission of lifting the two-term presidential limit, Government's compulsory acquisition of land and dissolution of Parliament. "Some

times the constitution has made it difficult to fulfil what we are supposed to implement,” Kiwanuka said. Addressing a public rally in Fort Portal recently, Kiwanuka said the proposals were for the good of the country. He denied claims that lifting of the term limit would lead to President Yoweri Museveni’s despotism. “They say it will breed dictatorship. Did Idi Amin take more than two terms to become a dictator?” he asked. “If power belongs to the people, then what do these critics fear?” he said. Kiwanuka said the government’s forceful acquisition of land was aimed at wooing investors into the country. “Many people in Buganda want the whites to come and negotiate for the land. I tell you no white man is coming. They will go where land is readily available,” he said. He said the provision to dissolve parliament would not be limited to Uganda as the critics were implying. Kiwanuka said countries like Cameroon, Kenya Zambia, DR Congo and others had such provisions.

STORY #9 [Consolidation]
Movt hands report to CRC
The New Vision, May 8, 2003
By Alfred Wasike

THE movement has finally recommended to the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) that political space be opened up. It says there are concerns that there is “a minority of Ugandans who feel forcibly conscripted into a system they do not believe in.” “Ladies and gentlemen, these positions came from very hot debates. It was violent. There was so much opposition to the liberalisation of political space that it took the chairman (President Museveni) three days to cool the delegates down. I want to underscore the importance of the National Conference because it is very representative of Uganda. We shall continue to champion movement values,” Dr Crispus Kiyonga, the National Political Commissar and Minister without Portfolio, told the CRC yesterday. He presented a resolution from the March 2003 National Conference of the movement calling for the lifting of the restrictions on the tenure of the president to two terms. Stressing that the movement will not become a political party, Kiyonga said Museveni had appointed a special taskforce of 13-20 members chaired by Hon Khiddu Makubuya, education and sports minister. The task force is to study the legal, constitutional and institutional implications of the resolution on liberalising the political space. It will deliver its findings to the chairman in about a month. It is an in-house committee. Accompanied by the Movement Secretariat directors, Cranmer Kalinda, Margaret Oumo and Raphael Baku, Kiyonga said Museveni had also appointed a special cabinet committee chaired by justice and constitutional affairs minister Janat Mukwaya. The committee is to collect views from individual cabinet members and harmonise them. Lashing out at the movement’s local opposition for its ‘complete lack of patriotism’, Kiyonga said Museveni had also set up another team chaired by him (Kiyonga) to bring dialogue with such groups as Reform Agenda and others. “We note that the movement political system is the best system for a non-industrial society like Uganda. We are convinced of the need for the movement to purify itself in order to be more efficient. We are aware that opening up political space for political parties and organisations will enhance our relations with our development partners,” he said. Kiyonga said the overwhelming majority of memoranda from the district movement committees,

submissions by district chairpersons and other delegates called for the lifting of the restriction on the tenure of the office of the President. “The National Conference with thousands of representatives from the grass-root resolved that the restriction on the terms of the of President under Article 105 of the Constitution be lifted by deleting Clause (2). The delegates resolved that necessary amendments be pursued through the constitutional review process,” he said. Explaining the new attitude of the movement leadership, Kiyonga said, “We noted that a significant number of Ugandans, about 20%, have voted against us. We noted that although the movement is the best system for Uganda, there are inefficiencies like MPs and other elected leaders undermining it from inside. They are now free to go. This is purification. But we hope that at the end of the day, Ugandans will retain the option of returning to the movement and continue building their country.” Kiyonga said the movement “is committed to respecting the will of Ugandans in their choice.” He said, “I have heard certain skeptics who loosely argue that the referendum on the political system is a violation of inherent or basic rights. That is nonsense. We are not voting on whether they should eat or not.”

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EDUCATION

PhD in Mass Communications, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA
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M. Phil. in Mass Communication, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK
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PUBLICATIONS

Lugalambi, G. W. (2006). Media, peace-building, and the culture of violence. In A. E. Mbaine (Ed.), *Media in situations of conflict: Roles, challenges and responsibility* (pp. 103-119). Kampala: Fountain Publishers Ltd.
Lugalambi, G. W. (2003). Media freedom in Africa. In *South African yearbook of international affairs* (pp. 257-265). Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs.
Lugalambi, G. W. (2001). The role of mass communications in preventing conflict. In E. Sidiropoulos (Ed.), *A continent apart: Kosovo, Africa and humanitarian intervention* (pp.89-102). Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs.
Baguma, R., Lugalambi, G., & Zawadi, D. (2000). The state of broadcasting in Uganda. In L. M. Wanyeki (Ed.), *Up in the air: The state of broadcasting in Eastern Africa* (pp. 107-140). Kampala: Panos Eastern Africa.
Lugalambi, G. W. (1999). Professionalising journalism in Uganda. *Uganda Journalism Review* 1, 1-6.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Political communication; public opinion; media and democracy; media in Africa; communication policy.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Lecturer and Teaching Associate, Penn State University (2002 – 2005)
Courses taught: Mass media and the public; Cultural foundations of communications; Mass media and society
Lecturer and Assistant Lecturer, Makerere University (1992 - 1993 & 1996 - 2001)
Courses taught: Introduction to communication theory; Media research methods; Media management; Media and society; Contemporary issues in mass communication; Media research methods; Writing for publication; Media history and issues.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

I worked as a communication specialist at the World Bank in Washington, D.C. and for several organizations in Uganda including UNICEF, USAID, WHO, The AIDS Support Organisation, Nile Basin Initiative, Ministry of Health, Uganda Communications Commission, and other clients through a partnership of communication consultants. Using a variety of approaches, I have conceived, researched, designed, planned, implemented, monitored, and evaluated a range of communication strategies, policies, and campaigns. I also practiced as a journalist and editor between 1996 and 1999.

AWARDS AND HONORS

J. William Fulbright Doctoral Scholarship
Pennsylvania State University, 2001 - 2003
Association of Commonwealth Universities (UK) Masters Scholarship
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Top 3 Paper Distinction in the Media and Democracy Seminar of the 2003 U.S. National Communication Association Doctoral Honors Seminar, School of Communication Studies at Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio, August 2-6, 2003.