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DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL COMPETITION IN EAST AFRICA

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Democracy and Political Competition in East Africa

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Contents

List of Contributors.....	viii
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Introduction

<i>Rwekaza S. Mukandala</i>	xi
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PART A

CONSTITUTIONS AND ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Chapter 1

Electoral Systems: Problems and Prospects in Tanzania

<i>Samuel S. Musibi</i>	3
-------------------------------	---

Chapter 2

The Pemba by-Elections

<i>Laurean Ndumbaro</i>	25
-------------------------------	----

Chapter 3

Electoral Systems: Problems and Prospects in Uganda

<i>Foster Byarugaba</i>	38
-------------------------------	----

Chapter 4

Review of Elections and Electoral Laws under the Movement Government in Uganda 1986-2003

<i>Kasaja Phillip Apundi</i>	68
------------------------------------	----

Chapter 5

Electoral Systems: Problems and Prospects in Kenya

<i>Njuguna Ng'ethe</i>	91
------------------------------	----

PART B

DEMOCRATIZATION AND REGIME TRANSITION

Chapter 6

The Politics of Regime Transitions: The Case of Kenya

Katumanga Musambayi123

Chapter 7

Democratisation and Leadership Succession in Uganda

Elijah Mushemega152

Chapter 8

The Presidential Term Limit ('Third Term') Debate: Implications for Regime Transition in Uganda

Elijah Mushemega170

Chapter 9

Leadership Succession and Democratization in Tanzania

Mohammed A. Bakari181

PART C

POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTORAL COMPETITION

Chapter 10

Political Parties and Electoral Competition in Tanzania

Max Mmuya199

Chapter 11

The Parameters of Party Competition in Tanzania

Daudi R. Mukangara216

Chapter 12

Political Parties and Electoral Competition in Uganda

Dent Ocaya-Lakidi234

Chapter 13

The Discourse of Political Competition for Power under the National Resistance Movement in Uganda - 1986-2006

Dent Ocaya-Lakidi262

PART D

CIVIL SOCIETY

Chapter 14

The Role of Civil Society and the Mass Media in Elections in Uganda

Charles N. Bwana287

Chapter 15

Civil Society and Political Competition in Uganda

Charles N. Bwana309

Chapter 16

Civil Society, Mass Media and Elections in Tanzania

Amos Mbina and Laurean Ndumbao325

Chapter 17

Civil Society and Political Competition in Tanzania: The Search for Level Ground?

Andrew Kiondo339

Chapter 18

The State, Civil Society, the Media and Elections in Kenya

Peter Wanyande353

Chapter 19

Contesting the Political Space, Civil Society and Transition to
Democracy in Kenya

Karuti Kanyinga371

PART E**MANAGEMENT OF ELECTIONS****Chapter 20**

Management of Elections in Tanzania

Amon E. Chaligha397

Chapter 21

The Management of Elections in Uganda

Foster Byarugaba416

PART F**GENDER****Chapter 22**

Women and Electoral Processes in East Africa

Ruth Meena449

Chapter 23

Gender and Parliamentary Elections in Uganda

Sylvia Tamale472

Chapter 24

Gender and Elections in Tanzania: Empowerment or Inclusion?

Bernadeta Killian496

PART G**PRIVATE CAPITAL, DONORS AND ELECTIONS****Chapter 25**

Private Capital, Donors and Elections in Kenya

M. Katumanga and J.D. Olewe Nyunya513

Chapter 26

Private Capital, Donors and Elections in Uganda - 1996-2001

Murindwa Rutanga530

Chapter 27

Private Capital, Donors and Elections in Tanzania

Andrew Kiondo578

Chapter 26

PRIVATE CAPITAL, DONORS AND ELECTIONS IN UGANDA 1996 – 2001

Murindwa Rutanga

Some may find it ironic that US's Chief Representative in Uganda feels he can pronounce on the electoral contest here, given what transpired last November in US. It is precisely because of our electoral experience that we think we may have a lesson or two to share.¹

It is a big shame that African governments which go to war without aid or IMF/World Bank Conditionality's turn to Western government when it comes to issues of national development and democratic process. We should get our priorities right in order to get these Western busy bodies off our backs.

Our Presidents are quick to find money for security issues. They must find adequate resources to guarantee our electoral processes from the intervention of foreign powers. When this is done, we will then be able to receive and send monitors on equal footing in good faith.²

Background

The creation of Uganda by the British colonialists into a singular political, administrative and economic entity in 1894 simultaneously integrated it into the British capitalists system. What followed was that instead of being transformed into a plantation economy, or an exclusive enclave of labour for other colonies, the British colonialists maintained it into a peasantry economy. To accomplish this, they compartmentalised it for their political, economic and administrative ends.

The colonial project of compartmentalising this colony was guided by various considerations. Principal among these were the existing modes of production within the different areas, the area's propinquity to the colonial

¹ The New Vision dated March 3, 2001.

² The New Vision dated March 22, 2001.

administration centres, the area's potential contributions to the capitalist requirements, especially in the provision of livestock, raw materials for export, the possibility of colonised people in the area to oppose the colonial project if they were not disorganised and reorganised to serve British capitalist interest, etc. Scholars who have treated the colonial project include Ramkrishna Mukherjee (1957), Mahmood Mamdani (1976, 1996 (a) (b)), and Murindwa-Rutanga (1991, 1999). These studies demolish the colonial scholarships that had been trying to project the colonisation of Africa as being of no significance to Europe. John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson (1953) demonstrate this very clearly.

It was through this larger colonial project that some areas were transformed into producers of raw materials for export, others with a lot of cattle were retained as sources of cattle for capitalist needs, while others were integrated into the capitalist system as labour reservoirs. Even then, these people were maintained predominantly as peasant producers at household level. This was worsened by the colonial authorities' deliberate and systematic removal of the colonized people from all forms of trade and commerce and replacing them with the Asian traders and businessmen. The main changes were reflected in the creation, expansion and intensification of new exploitative relations. All the subsequent colonial policies and legislation tended to perpetuate and entrench this new colonial order. As such, individual efforts by the colonized people to join commerce as witnessed in Buganda after the enactment of the 1928 Busuulo and Nvujjo Law could not receive the blessing and support of the colonial state. The colonial state was content and safe with the alien business.

In addition to enjoying state support, this class was able to frustrate indigenous people who tried to join trade because it had a lot of financial capital, experience in business, international reputation and connections. It had entrenched itself so strongly and strategically in the Ugandan economy that it successfully frustrated any emerging local competitors. The colonial policies together with this class' linkage with British capital also gave it an edge over any local people that attempted to enter trade. The Africans lacked capital and whoever tried to join trade had to purchase merchandise from the Asian businessmen. Likewise, those trying out small-scale trade through purchasing peasant produce for export would have to sell it to the Asian

businessmen. All this continued to frustrate and stunt indigenous capital accumulation efforts. This came out very clearly after the Second World War and it climaxed in Amin's declaration of the Economic War in 1972. Mamdani (1983), Ramakrishna Mukherjee (1984).

The colonial efforts to Africanise trade in line with the recommendations of the 1955 East African Royal Commission Report could not yield much as they could not change the long-established disparities that were politically defined and racially reproduced. These efforts were technical, in form of loans to encourage Africans to join trade, giving out community and public lands to the "progressive farmers" in a bid to create a yeomanry class, etc. (Murindwa Rutanga, 1999).

Thus, Uganda acquired independence with the Asian and European businessmen in full control of the import-export economy while the indigenous Africans were predominantly engaged in a peasantry mode of production and others provided migrant wage labour. As such, though there were pockets of capital accumulation by the indigenous Africans in the country, they did not and could not constitute a vibrant national bourgeoisie class to control the economic and political life of the country.

At the political plane, colonial authorities created and maintained Uganda as a sealed up dictatorship. The Africans were deliberately and administratively kept away from politics. Partha Chatterjee's exposure of the mechanisms through which the colonial state put in place technologies of disciplinary power and operationalised the colonial project is very helpful to the understanding of the colonial project. The colonising powers made concerted efforts to create the institutional procedures for systematically objectifying and normalising the colonised terrain – the land and the people. As Partha shows, it did not stop at codifying the law and rationalising the bureaucracy but it instituted a whole apparatus of specialised technical services in order to scientifically survey, classify, and enumerate the geographical, geological, botanical, zoological and meteorological characteristics of the people. (Partha Chatterjee 1993:19-20).

Efforts by the post-colonial state to create a national business class to rival and challenge the economic hegemony of the Asian businessman did not yield much. Attempts by the military regime under Idi Amin in post-coloniality to resolve this historical problem through the 1972 Economic

War by expelling the Asian businessmen from Uganda with 90 days in an efforts to handover the economy to the African instead had the unexpected negative result of bungling up the import-export economy. (Mahmood Mamdani, 1983). This militarised solution failed to address the social and economic issues, and it undermined the rest of the economy.

Neo-liberal economic efforts by the post-Amin regimes have failed to create a strong economy, let alone creating a national bourgeoisie class. Instead, the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies by the state since 1981 has had debilitating effects on the national economy, local investments and entrepreneurship, labour, etc. Zealous implementation of externally conceived and imposed reforms that are aimed at liberalising the economy and privatising the public enterprises has continued to loosen the hold of Ugandans from the economy. The state's unplanned returning of the expropriated Asia's property to the Asians in the post Idi Amin era has brought into formation a "rentier class." Most of the beneficiaries of this repossession exercise fly from Western capitals to Uganda, specifically to collect rent from those renting and sub-letting their repossessed property. This rent is fixed and paid in dollars. Given the fragility of the Ugandan economy, mainly agrarian in character, with no national bourgeoisie, this constitutes a nouveau form of capital invasion.

Capital from without is on the loose, purchasing sensitive and/or strategic public enterprises and assets are sold at throw away prices. Some fraudsters come posing as investors with the object of defrauding the country. The fraudulent sale of the Nile Hotel International Complex gives a good example. Akampumuza James (2000) brings out the controversies and irregularities in that deal in which the then Minister of Finance defied orders from the Vice President, bypassed her and signed an agreement with fraudsters who were masquerading as investors. The new owners immediately embarked on drawing millions of shillings from the Hotel Complex without investing anything in it. This went on for long before the contract was revoked.

This new process of handing over public enterprises to this class has had negative effects of crippling the efforts by the indigenous business people and the emerging bourgeoisie class. The post-cold war development and relationships have been tilting the balance in favour of foreign capital under the rubric of "Foreign Investors." The policies in place have facilitated to widen the exteriorising of the Ugandan economy. Their consequence is for foreigners to end up being handed over public enterprises at minimal costs.

Critical among these are banks, industries, social infrastructure and hotels. The problem is that banks owned by foreigners can never extend loans to the nationals to empower them so that they compete with foreign capital. Worse still, the 2001 presidential elections in Uganda showed how loyalty of many Asian business people to Uganda is questionable. This came out through their responses to unforeseen fears of insecurity.

This problem came out through a speech by Rajni Jaylor, Chairperson of the Indian Association in Uganda on March 16, 2001 just after the presidential elections had been concluded. After expressing satisfaction for those elections and congratulating Museveni on winning the elections, he disclosed that some Indians had fled the country after learning that *pangas* had allegedly disappeared from a shop in Kampala. He said that some families had fled to neighbouring Kenya in fear of a violent aftermath of the elections, while many Indian importers had suspended business fearing that their merchandise might be looted. He ended calling on the Indian community in Uganda to return to normal business. Museveni later repeated this when he was telling the country that NRM was strong enough to prevent any chaos. But did it need the Chairman of the Indian Association to call them back to do their own business? To what extent can such a wavering bourgeoisie class help to develop an agrarian economy like Uganda? Can such a deracinated class engage in national politics and help to push for its democratic rights?

All these demonstrate how the economic question is tied up with the national question. They reflect the problem of lack of indigenous capital in Uganda and the undependable character of Asian businessmen. Given the fragile nature of Uganda's economy, the import-export economy has remained weak, and mainly under the control of Asian business people and foreign capitalists. The most unfortunate thing for Uganda is that the Asian business people learnt bitter lessons from the 1972 Economic War. Given these circumstances and developments, how much nationalism can be expected from this social class to develop Uganda's economy? Isn't there a possibility that many of them are doing business with one hand while another hand is holding a foreign passport? If the British colonialists imported and promoted this social group as a political group, and given that this group has been kept off from Uganda's politics by the state with the subsequent approval by the Africans under the guise of "citizenry," the question that remains is the extent to which such a political minority can directly influence Uganda's politics.

Through the government's liberalizations and privatisations process, Ugandans lost out through sale of public enterprises like Marketing Boards, banking institutions, etc. Africans in business and trade are engaged in economic activities that are retails in character and internally focused. They are besieged by multitudes of internal and external obstacles. On the other hand there are millions of peasants in the peasantry economy, under the regime of compulsions – forced production, forced sales, forced contributions, etc. other classes are weak and fragmented (Mamdani, 1986).

The multiple objective weaknesses of the different classes within the agrarian setting deprive them of any capacity and vision to influence politics and its trends at the national and international levels. Explanations of this includes the fragmented character of the peasants. They are dispersed all over the country without any basis for uniting them, plus their localised focus. Other explanations include the dominant character of foreign capital with state support, the marriage between the neo-colonial state and imperialism best reflected by the state's privileging of whatever comes from the West in whatever realm whether philanthropic, funding, expertise, epistemic, technological, etc. The effect of the modernisation project – both at doctrinal and epistemic levels – have continued to undermine Uganda's internal capacities. The wholesale implementation of policies imposed by the World Bank, the IMF, etc without criticality has systematically and consistently effaced grounds for nurturing any strong private capital and nationalism.

It is a combination of all these that can help to explain to a large extent the absence of the direct influence of private capital in the electoral processes in Uganda. There has been marked heavy influence of Donors in Uganda's political and electoral process. It is this that brings out explanations for the absence of the national's influence on Uganda's political processes. This background therefore suffices to explain why this paper focuses on western involvement in Uganda's elections.

Resurgence of Imperialism under the Cloak of Donors in Post-Coloniality

We need to underline right from the beginning that the so-called donors and their club is in actuality a *potpourri* of western imperialism. The phenomenon

of donors emerged and gained currency in post-colonial Africa. What will be shown in this paper is how the Western countries ensure that whatever it dictates is promptly followed and fulfilled. This enforcement is done mainly through threats to turn off their taps of aid and loans, impose sanctions and other adverse repercussions. One of the main questions that this section will answer is why donors continue to get leverage over Uganda's politics and electoral processes.

With the collapsing of the Eastern Bloc which led to the abrupt waning of the cold war, the West has been assigning itself the duty of pushing for elections in the Third World countries and supervising them to the end. However, what needs to be clarified here is that though the phenomenon of international observers in Uganda's politics is an imperialist *modus operandi*, it did not start in post-coloniality. As the British colonialists were being forced to introduce elections in Uganda just towards the end of their rule, they invited Belgian observers from the Ruanda-Urundi colony to some and monitor Legislative Council elections in Kigezi. They were invited to Kigezi not merely because of Kigezi's propinquity to Rwanda but because this was a district that was experiencing the sharpest religion-confliction politics in the whole colony.

The inherent and ever-increasing weaknesses within the economy, its disarticulated nature, the historical locus and dominance of imperialism in Uganda's socio-economic and political life since 1894, and currently being reflected in Uganda's heavy indebtedness to the Western countries and financial institutions, and its heavy dependence indebtedness of the Western countries and financial institutions, and its heavy dependences on Western imperialists for funding its annual budgets all give the imperialists *lee way* to interfere and meddle in Uganda's politics and dictate terms and conditions. Other explanations lie in Uganda's internal weaknesses. These include the objective weaknesses of the agrarian population and the leadership. While the former are perennially preoccupied with issues of survival, with no time or even capacity to conceptualise political issues the leadership has demonstrated its unwillingness or incapacity to break ranks with imperialism and chart out an independent nationalist path. Other explanations include the excessive obsession for power, hand in hand with the drive to satiate and aggrandize the individualised material interests. Those who come to power

with good intentions soon learn its sweetness. They soon get engrossed into its mechanism, dynamics and methods of retaining it, and imperativity for its continuous protection for personal ends. This sweetness of power was well-captured by one president, Binaisa during his short-lived presidency in 1979 when he declared to show that he was not a front for Obote but that he was enjoying power, he told a mammoth gathering that: "Entebbe Ewooma" (meaning that the presidential seats was sweet, tasty, juicy or enjoyable).

It is this, which largely underlies the perennial unyielding bitter struggles for power in post-coloniality. Those holding power try to maintain firm grips onto it at the cost of life while the excluded ones try all means to oust them and replace them. There develops permanent tensions and high-pitched antagonisms where those in power try to prove that power can never self-destruct while the excluded ones apply the reversal principle of rights always being a result of struggles. It is this unity of opposed forces that has gradually created very important crevices for multilateral imperialism to penetrate deeply into Uganda's political and economic life. The commonest mechanisms for entry are the conditional ties based on ambiguous and vague promises of AID. These have transformed issues of democracy and elections in Africa into a monopoly business of the west.

What seems the central focus of all parties involved is the presidency. This is reflected by continuous concerns, demands and commands from the West, massive attendance of campaign rallies and the massive voter turn up during presidential elections vis-à-vis other elections – whether parliamentary elections, Local Councils elections or elections of representatives of interest groups like the women, youth, people with disabilities, etc.

What is most intriguing is the central involvement of the West in the whole electoral process. The West monopolises the scenarizing, discoursing, debating and speculating about democracy and elections in Uganda, etc. It has relegated itself this task in order to ensure that it is able to track and influence the politics in the country, influence its trends and outcome, and even work out ways through which some anticipated possibilities can be manipulated, averted or subverted. Their project includes shaping the thinking and actions of the local people. These and other issues come out clearly in the following discussion in this paper, which is based on elections in Uganda from 1996 to 2001. What also comes out clearly from these elections is how

elections in post-Cold War Africa have remained more of a concern for the West than of the Africans. This is reflected by their intelligence gathering, scenarizing, speculations, analysis and reporting on elections in Uganda. The Africans regardless of their political opinions and convictions, plus the press seem to have accepted the secondary position of repeating, reporting mimicking or rephrasing what the West says. Even those with independent thinking try to tailor their views to the interests of the donors to ensure that their names are not left out from the list of those to be funded during the elections. The 1996, 2000 and 2001 elections in Uganda demonstrate this succinctly. We begin by analysing external influence on the 1996 elections.

External Influence on the 1996 Elections

Given that British imperial interests led to the British creation of Uganda in 1894 and their subsequent colonisation and exploitation of it up to its independence in October 1962, it is not surprising that the first views from the West to attract the Ugandan press about elections in Uganda in 1996 were from Britain. These came out in a Report of a London-based Economist Intelligence Unit. This report was predicting Museveni's victory and the reasons why. It scenarized why Museveni would win and how a section of Uganda's society would reject legitimacy of that victory. On top of its list was the army, which the report termed Museveni's "tramp card." Its argument was that the army would not accept and other democratically elected government. However, the report did not go beyond to explain why. Neither did it give the source of those views, their authenticity and credibility.

Its second hypothesis was the political balance in parliament, which it claimed would defuse some political tension. It claimed that Museveni would win in Karamoja because of allowing the Karamjong to keep their guns. It predicted that he would win in Busoga because of its being the home of the Vice-President. It never explained how it had received this information, its authenticity, etc. Without any qualifications or logical justification, it cited Bugisu, Kapchorwa and in the Southwest as other areas where Museveni would win. Its justification for the southwest was that it was Museveni's traditional base. This, however, was flawed reasoning and therefore not a sufficient justification at all, given how Ssemogerere was soon to lose so miserably in his home constituency and in the whole Buganda region during those elections. It claimed that Museveni was trying to tempt Idi Amin to

come back in order to capitalise on his support in the Northwest. The validity and truthfulness of this claim has never been established.

To make this report appear credible, it brought in the centrality of the donors. It cited the new constitution and the escalating military expenditure as a possible source of disagreement between the donor community and the NRM government. It is of interest to note here for the benefit of the readers that in June 2003, donors backed Uganda's increased defence budget of UShs. 330 billion. (New Vision, May 21, 2003). The report further averred that European countries which were formerly reluctant to push for multiparty democracy had changed their stand and joined the USA to oppose the NRM's Five - Year moratorium on multiparty democracy. They began to press for an early constitutional amendment. Here, readers will be interested to note that the US President George Bush hosted President Museveni at the White House on June 10, 2003. Bush reciprocated this visit by visiting Uganda on July 11, 2003. Thus, instead of threatening Museveni with sanctions and turning off the AID tap if the NRM Government did not open up democratic space, Bush promised AID to Uganda. (The New Vision of June 12, 2003; July 10, 11 and 12, 2003). These, however, pose a serious question as to whether the West is interested in Uganda having meaningful democracy for the vast majority or it is only interested in governments to guarantee stability and continuity of imperialist exploitation. If the former is correct, what would baffle one is why the West has been ultra hostile to the Local Council system of governance in Uganda.

Besides this intelligence report, other British view on Uganda's forthcoming elections came from the British Minister for Overseas and Commonwealth Development, Lynda Chalker. She was quoted by the Inter-Party Cooperation (IPC) candidate, Kawanga Ssemogerere, that she had reaffirmed the British government's commitment to press for a level playing field for the NRM and the multi-partyists in the forthcoming 1996 elections. Ssemogerere claimed that he had told Chalker that the British government had a moral obligation to promote democracy in Uganda the way it was

doing elsewhere. He claimed to have warned Chalker that the British Government and the opposition parties in England would have to bear part of the blame if Uganda slid to anarchy as a result of their failure to intervene at this state when the multi-partyists were "oppressed by Museveni under the cover of the new constitution." He based on the ground that the British were the IPC's closest friend as both were being members of the commonwealth. He urged the British Government not to sit idly at that crucial moment since the British had invested heavily in Uganda both economically and in trying to promote democracy.

Here, we need to note that to argue that Britain was promoting democracy in other countries was a misreading of imperialism today and its *modus operandi*. It demonstrated the level of opposition's ideological consciousness and on issues relating to the national question. One would wonder as to what circumstances in which imperialism can be a guarantor of democracy, and the extent to which it could actually do it. Casting an eye on the ongoing racially motivated British involvement in Zimbabwe's politics would have helped him to understand British imperialist interests under the different disguises. Anyway, he claimed that he had reminded her that she ought to have intervened much earlier during the constitutional debate so as to preempt the passing of Article 269, which had effectively banned political party activities for at least another five years. Ssemogerere claimed that she had understood the concern of the multi-partyists over that Article which was problematic although she could not veto it. He said that Chalker had promised to regularly review her government's stand to ensure fair play in Uganda's elections, and would use appropriate channels to make her government's view known to the NRM government. His acquiescence demonstrated his failure to subject whatever he was being told to criticality. If one has to take a nationalistic stance and question this discussion, what had he gained from all this and what had Uganda lost?

The Monitor newspaper ended noting that this was the second time in nearly six months that Chalker was openly voicing her concern over the prospects of a level playing field in Uganda. It further reported that leading IPC activists had expressed cautious optimism that any further toughness of the British attitude towards the NRM government would deal a severe blow to the "special chemistry" between Chalker and Museveni. Here, it is of

interest to note that by the time her successor, Claire Short resigned from her ministerial post over the Iraq War recently, the NRM government was still their darling. This is demonstrated by her opting to chair a reconciliatory meeting between Presidents Museveni and Kagame instead of attending a very important political meeting in which a serious vote was to be taken against her government over the Iraq War. (The New Vision, May 13, 2003).

In its exteriorised search for support, the IPC had also received pledges for support from the British Opposition Labour and Liberal Democratic parties. Ssemogerere reported that he had met two leading members of the British Labour Party, Ernie Ross, Chairman of the Labour Parliamentary Committee at the House of Commons, and Tony Lloyd, Shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs (Africa). Incidentally, this also revealed the discrepancy of the reporting Newspaper itself, as it seemed to be having eyes on the imperialist horizon for salvation. Those two MPs were reported to have expressed solidarity with Uganda's multi-partyists, and also to have pledged to challenge John Major's government to make an unequivocal statement to the British people on Uganda's forthcoming elections.

True to their promise, the two British MPs questioned John Major's government over assistance to the Uganda government during the forthcoming elections. They wanted it to push the NRM Government to allow political parties conduct campaigns and guarantee free and fair elections. This reflected foreigners' over estimation of their powers and roles in Third World politics. They seemed not to understand the difference between colonialism and neo-colonialism. This came out through the response by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. He informed them that the British Government had put the matter to Museveni and his government and that the British government would soon embark on a scheme to convert some of Uganda's debt into aid in an effort to reduce the debt burden.

All these demonstrate that the opposition in Uganda lacks internal support. It is this which explains why the opposition had to go outside Uganda to seek support instead of going to the masses. It shows that the opposition valued external support much more than internal support. The question is whether it was because of lack of confidence in the local population or lack of interest in them. Could it have been a response to the IPC's prior knowledge that the people cannot support them in the circumstances or could it be because they wanted to raise external sympathies in order to tap foreign

funding? Ultimately, what emerges is that lack organic linkages with the populace demonstrates that such an opposition can never carry out an independent, anti-imperialist nationalist politics during the elections or even if it won elections and came to power.

External electoral concerns and pressures were not confined to Britain. By March 8, 1996, donors were mounting pressure on the NRM government to fix and announce poll dates. The *Crusader* of March 8, 1996 reported that representatives of western mission at Kampala – who were also Uganda's leading aid donor – had throughout the week been piling pressure on government and the Interim Electoral Commission (IEC) to set a date for the presidential and parliamentary elections. It needs to be pointed out here that they were able to do so mainly because their countries were promising to make contributions to the election funding. This precluded the role of the Ugandans. The paper reported that this pressure had been so intense that the representatives of Western Missions at Kampala expected the IEC Chairman to announce the electoral date that week. This was confirmed by the Danish Ambassador to Uganda when he was quoted saying that though government had not informed donors of the election date, IEC officials had been working on high pressure to see that they arrived on a date for the election. He quickly tried to minimise the damage by adding that the Ugandans should be informed of the election date even before the envoys knew it.

It should not be taken that whatever donor and their representative said would be accepted and implemented without questioning and challenging. This is demonstrated in this particular case by one IEC Commissioner who was quoted saying that donors could not panic the IEC, as it had to sort out other logistical problems even after the passing of the election law. He had gone on to argue that the donors' contribution to the election funding was negligible and that government could do without it. He had informed the *Crusader* that the donors' pressure on the IEC Chairman had at one time been overwhelming but that the rest of the Commissioners had told him to stand firm. This clearly demonstrated the intensity of external interference in the internal and national activities and policies. It also demonstrated that there could be no real independence as long as Uganda continued depending on donor funding for elections. At the same time, we accept what the Commissioner was saying to be true, given that the money that donors

contributed was mainly tied to civic education and other similar activities, then the sense challenge imperialism in defence of our national interests.

The fundamental questions, however, is why the IEC and the government did not go ahead and conduct elections without that meagre external funding. The IEC had budgeted US\$ 23 billion for presidential and parliamentary elections, of which government had promised to pay US\$ 11.5 billion. The EU had already availed US\$ 2.5 billion. Norway had given some small amounts towards the electoral process and was promising to increase the funding since the laws were in place and they were running out of time. Some other European members were said to have also pledged bilateral support. This marked a great loss of precious opportunity for reducing imperialist control. It shows how the government lacked independence and will-power to carry out its projects without external begging and borrowing. It is no wonder therefore that about 52% of national budget is foreign funded.

The *Crusader* newspaper then quoted another official who was close to the donors' meetings with IEC. This source had disclosed that the donors' insistence that civic education had to begin immediately thought that early May was appropriate for the presidential elections. The *Crusader* brought out how the donors through scenarizing were trying to fix the date for elections in Uganda. They had excluded voting in April. Muslims would be on holy pilgrimage that month. They wished to have two months between the presidential elections and the swearing in of the new government, which constitutionally would not be beyond July 8, 1996. Some donors were reportedly insisting that the election dates had to be announce before they could pledge their money.

Just during those preparations for the elections, the Ugandan print media published an article saying that Britain would only commit money towards the election process after the Uganda government had met certain conditions. The British High Commission to Uganda quickly turned round and refuted this as unconfirmed rumours. The Deputy British High Commissioner argued that the British government had not made any earlier pledge. He attributed the source of this information to be the "misunderstanding ... in minds of the journalists and some other people." He further said that his government had been engaged in an on-going dialogue with the NRM government, that the amount to be paid had not been determined yet and that it would depend

on whether there would be two polls or three – that is presidential, parliamentary and rerun in case one passed through in the first presidential elections. He argued that it was up to the IEC to work out the figures and inform his government. He averred that his government was ready to release the money once the IEC had provided it with the costing for printing the ballot papers. Without asking as to who was fooling who and why, the unanswered question is how his government was ready to release the money without any earlier pledge and also without knowing the quantum.

The EU had major interest and active involvement in the 1996 elections. The Italian Ambassador, Mr. Marcello Ricoveri, after assuming chairmanship of the EU mission in Uganda, declared that Uganda was ready for general elections. He lamented the delay to conduct civic education, a key component in voter awareness and in getting a free and fair election. In his own words, “to be democratic means you should be aware. To choose properly, the level of consciousness is important.” He praised the new constitution for having many provisions, which guaranteed the holding of free and fair elections. He, however, refrained from passing final judgement until the elections were over. He stated that with the exception of the loopholes in civic education, the EU and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – the two major donors – were satisfied with the advance election preparedness. All this shows that the whole election show was a matter between the western donors and the NRM government. The vast majority of the Ugandan population and the opposition had no active role to play in this matter.

Just on the same day, the Market Place newspaper reported that the several opposition politicians in the IPC had appealed to the IEC and the EU Mission in Uganda over the delay by parliament to debate the electoral law. (The Market Place dated March 1, 1996). This paper then noted dissatisfaction among the donor community, especially the EU and several other European countries at the slow pace of the National Resistance Council (NRC) in debating the parliamentary electoral law. It reported that donors were worried that even the government was not much concerned at the slow pace of debate. They took this to mean that the government did not mind failing to beat the constitutional deadline or ensuring that the country was prepared for a free and fair election. In other words, these donors wanted the government to push the NCR to rush through and pass that electoral laws without a thorough debate. Quoting the same source, the paper reported that the donors were

from then on going to constantly keep in touch with government to see whether despite the delays caused by the NRC, there would be plain and visible efforts on the part of the EC to hold the elections in time. It quoted the Italian Ambassador saying that the parliament's delay of the electoral law was causing anxiety among European countries as that law would affect all the electoral activities. He, however, ruled out the view that the EU was thinking of withholding funding for those elections if the NRM government did not take immediate steps to initiate the democratic process. What needs to be noted here is that the NRC passed the electoral law that week.

The same paper quoted the same source at the EU Mission office saying that since the law was in place, the EU would not withhold the funds but that what they wanted was a commitment on the part of the NRM government to the principle of holding a free and fair election in time. The same paper quoted the British High Commissioner urging parliament to quicken the process to allow ample time for holding free and fair election. His argument was that the slow pace towards the holding of the first nationwide election could dent the good faith of the donors and the credibility of the NRM government leadership. Within this argument lay some hidden consensus that the NRM would remain in power – even if free and fair elections were held in time. Following this logic, then these elections were for pleasing the donors while preserving and strengthening the credibility of the NRM government.

The donors' seemingly democratic concerns further came out when the European envoys to Uganda met President Museveni at the International Conference Centre within the same period to discuss the forthcoming elections. In that meeting, they asked the NRM government to be impartial and ensure independence of the IEC before and during the presidential and parliamentary elections. They argued that the EU believed that an agreeable electoral process was one where government was impartial, the electoral commission independent, and civic education emphasised. They demanded that the NRM had to suspend Chaka Mchaka until the electoral process was completed and this was done immediately.

It would be far from the truth to argue that the NRM and Parliament dance to all the donor's tunes. Instead, they had to try and put in place safeguards to ensure their longevity in power. As the saying goes, only Groachev' could play the *empoma* game of self-destruction. The NRM was not ready to play such a game. And it was content with this positionality, given that the vast majority of Ugandans were busy with their own affairs.

Lonely voices of leaders of the opposition and donors could not push the NRM to the political cliff. It had to take its time and consider every move before taking it. This created impatience, dissatisfaction and anger amongst all those opposed to the NRM longevity in power. Thus, by end of March, the Danish Government was concerned over the delays in the electoral process and over reports of harassment of aspiring presidential candidates. This concern had been echoed a week before in the annual consultative meeting between the Ugandan government and a delegation from the Danish Foreign Affairs Ministry. It had been pointed out that given the temporary limitation on political party activities, the onus was on the incumbent government to conduct free and fair elections. Denmark therefore offered to send observers to monitor the elections.

The Danish Embassy at Kampala issued a press release expressing shock by allegations that presidential candidates were being prevented from organising their campaigns. The Danish delegation warned that transforming Uganda into a one-party state would tarnish the positive image of Uganda and possibilities for further development since there would be no renewal of government through genuine political competition. It, however, maintained that Denmark would continue funding those projects that were committed to the promotion of democratic and human right, development of social sectors and advancement of economic growth.

Donors from Europe continued to push the NRM government covertly and overtly over these elections. By the end of April 1996, ten envoys from the EU held a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Rhakana Rugunda. The Minister together with the EU Chairman co-chaired the meeting. Co-chairing that meeting reflected a crisis of Uganda's sovereignty. A minister in the present universal form of governmentality is second topmost rank after the head of state. It would be unheard of getting an ambassador from Third World country co-chairing a meeting with a minister in one of the donor countries. This notwithstanding, the envoys asked the NRM government to ensure that it fulfilled their countries' requirement of holding free and fair elections. They underlined that it was because of that expectation that their countries had contributed materially as well as in ideas to support the electoral process in Uganda. After this meeting, they told the press that

they were still desisting from making any drastic statements about the electoral process for fear that this might bear undue influence on the exercise. That answer reflects the expectations of the press- wanting donors to compel the NRM to do certain things.

With these external pushes and conditionalities which did not involve any internal participation, the European countries began to raise money to cover their pledge for half of the election budget. Among these was Belgium, which by May 3, 1996 had donated US\$ 163,000. This contribution was meant to purchase electoral materials and equipment such as ballot kits, and for the printing of result forms and report books for the elections. Basing on this financial support, Belgium decided to reinforce the group of foreign observers with its First Secretary at the Nairobi Embassy. He was to monitor elections in Hoima.

The Netherlands had earlier on given US\$ 1.2 million to the IEC specifically to help in civic education for elections. This money would be released in instalments. It had by April 15, 1996 released the first tranche of that money worth Shs. 610 million. The Netherlands government put a conditionality that the NRM had to end the war in five districts in the North before the elections in order to avoid a crisis of legitimacy that could arise if the elections were held before that war was brought under control. It insisted that the legitimacy of the elected government would be questioned if five districts in the north were excluded from the elections out of sheer necessity. "This problem should not be underestimated and everything possible should be tried to restore peace in the north as a matter of urgency." It was apprehensive of a possibility of the rebellion in the north being misused to influence the elections in the rest of the country. It emphasised; in order to justify the contribution paid for by the Netherlands tax-payers, confidence in the optimal environment for these elections is needed." It further noted that though *chaka mchaka* had been stopped, the Netherlands government was concerned about "harassment of candidates by security organs and supporters of opponents and the refusal of some local authorities to allow them organise their campaigns." It demanded that government had to stop its security organs and the local authorities from interfering in the electoral process. They had to be neutral and abstain from undue interference. In his view, the IEC needed to be supported in its uphill

task to discourage misuse of power and harassment of opponents and try to keep everybody on the right track.

If we shift our focus from Europe to the USA, we find that it too had very keen interest and influence in these elections. In February 1996, the USA released an Official Report that it had compiled on the Constituent Assembly Elections of 1994. In this report, it looked at the Election Bill and how to operationalise it. This report brought out the concerns raised by the USA and how these were to be addressed. It was reported in mid-March 1996 that the USA Embassy at Kampala was preparing to issue a third stinging attack on the NRM within ten months questioning the fairness of the forthcoming elections. It was further reported that the USA had declared that there would not be fair competition in Uganda because of the lopsidedness of some of the provisions of the electoral law. The USA was therefore considering devoting its electoral support to funding only the civic education component of the electoral budget in a bid to level the field. It was opposed to: the provision in the parliamentary elections statute that allowed voting by proxy and the election of district women parliamentary representatives through electoral colleges instead of universal adult suffrage. It was also opposed to the incumbent president's canvassing for support before campaigning was officially allowed. Its argument was that these put non-NRM candidates in a disadvantaged position. It was disclosed that the American Mission in Kampala had issued a statement on May 12 warning the Constituent Assembly against endorsing the movement system for another five years as it was an attempt by the NRM to preserve monopoly power indefinitely while continuing to prohibit the right of association and assembly.

The US through its Embassy in Kampala continued to push the NRM government to open up democratic space for parties. It issued a sharp criticism of the NRM in October for suspending political party activities in Uganda for five more years through Article 269 finance the elections unless the NRM government addressed this article and the question of levelling the ground. The NRM responded by dismissing these views as not binding to Uganda. Museveni emphasised that Uganda could hold elections without donor funds. This was corroborated by an IEC Commissioner, who said that Uganda did not need American money as the IEC had already procured everything for the elections.

The fundamental question arising from these important revelations is why Uganda did not go ahead and carry out these elections without begging for funds from donors. This defiant nationalist positionality was expressed by the then Deputy National Political Commissar and NRM's legal adviser. His dismissive response was that Uganda did not issue statements when Americans were going to hold election although there were so many issues in America that one would comment on. He reiterated that Uganda was sovereign state just as America was and that Uganda clearly did not take instructions from anyone. The three views above reflect nationalistic sentiments that could bear seeds of resistance to imperialism. However, without including the vast majority of the population, that talk remained a public show as donors continued to toss the NRM government in all directions under the bait of aid. At the same time, it shows a weakness of the Third World countries to break ranks with imperialism and depend on their own resources. They seem to be ready to receive whatever comes from the imperialists, even when they do not need it.

Despite a seemingly common position with the Americans on the electoral laws, some multi-partyists became fed up with over-waiting for unyielding promises by foreign donors. They began to dismiss them as deceptive double dealers. One MP succinctly put it.

I have become suspicious of the international community They appear to be putting pressure on Museveni but nothing is coming out. They listen to multi-partyists and then say different things to Museveni When there is no progress, they say Uganda is a sovereign country and they can't interfere in its internal affairs.³

What needs to be noted here is that all the western donors and the UNDP were pushing for this election, influencing its process and course. To achieve that required them to promise the government funds and other materials for the election. It is this which gave them a new entry point in Uganda's politics and gave ground to make whatever demands that they wished. It is this which explains why many donor countries had by April 20, 1996 mandated the UNDP to supervise funds given to Uganda to organise the elections. The Principle and act of entrusting electoral funds to the UNDP was indicative of how they did not have any trust in Ugandans. By then the UNDP itself had already committed over US\$1.2 billion for these elections. Confronted

³ The Crusader of March 15, 1996, quoting Lira MP Daniel Omara Atubo of Uganda's People's Congress.

by journalists' subjective questions about how the un-level ground in Uganda would affect the funding process, the new UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Director, clarified that the act of the donor's approaching the UNDP to manage funds that they were to donate meant that the diplomatic community supported the elections. A few days later, she hailed the level of participation and enthusiasm of the Ugandans embracing democracy as "invigorating." She praised the freedom of the press in Uganda, which was giving coverage to all sides. She clarified that the issue of a level political playing field was a matter of contention worldwide. She sank the point home by citing the USA where the incumbent presidents had an advantage over other presidential candidates in elections.

By May 7, 1996, international election observers had arrived in the country. Elections were then held and Museveni trounced his two opponents, Ssemogerere and Mayanja. By May 11, 1996, western diplomats accredited to Uganda hailed the elections and saluted Ugandans for gaining a higher degree of political maturity. They expressed satisfaction with the calm and peaceful manner in which the general elections were conducted. The US followed six days later. It, in a press release endorsed Uganda's elections as having been conducted peacefully and that they represented a clear departure from the politics of the past, which was characterised by violence and confrontation. It described this election as a positive step forward in Uganda's democratic transition. It went on to say that the USA believed that a more open political process would contribute to the progress that Uganda had made in recent years. It hoped that all Ugandans would participate actively in the upcoming parliamentary elections, and in the ongoing democratisation process.

While these cited cases show how western donors pushed for this form of democratisation process and monitored it to the end and were satisfied with the whole exercise and results, a Belgian organisation, the Christian Democratic International, disputed these elections as rigged, fraudulent and therefore illegitimated and undemocratic. This was reported by the press on May 20 1996. Unfortunately, it had not been on the ground. Neither had it sent some observers in Uganda. It supported Ssemogerere's rejection of the election results. It went on to exhort the international democratic community to manifest its disavowal of the Uganda government and to express its

solidarity with Ugandans and with the democratic organs representing it. In response, the NRM Secretariat dismissed this as an old statement that had been issued during Ssemogerere's pre-election visit to Brussels. It argued that this statement had been rejected by the gathering which met in Brussels the previous month.

This exteriorised electoral dispute was finally settled in Brussels on May 29, 1996 when the chairman of the EU Parliamentary Committee on Development and Cooperation advised Ssemogerere to accept the result of the presidential elections instead of crying foul. The NRM government was represented before this committee by Uganda's envoy to the EEC. The chairman went on to remind the committee members and for the benefit of the IPC representative that the forum was not a tribunal for settling electoral disputes. He advised that "Parties to the election should learn to honourably accept the verdict of the population, whether it is in their favour or not." Seen broadly, this was another defeat to Ssemogerere, who had gone to Europe with high hopes of mobilising the West against the NRM government. The hidden message within this was that election matters could only be resolved internally, no matter how much one tried to exteriorise them. In other words, elections were an internal matter over which external actors lacked power and mandate to reverse.

On his return, Ssemogerere told supporters and the press that thousands of Inter-Political Forces Cooperation supporters in Europe had refused to return to Uganda during the next five-year rule of Museveni. The question is whether they really had intentions of returning even if electoral results had proved otherwise. Were they coming because Ssemogerere was going to be president or what mattered was a government that was democratically elected? Thus, these elections demonstrated the donor's new forms of direct involvement and meddling in Uganda's political and electoral processes. This became more visible in the subsequent elections to which we turn.

The 2000 Uganda Referendum

As already seen in preceding section, the 1996 elections ended up creating new permanent interstices for imperialist intervention in Uganda's subsequent elections under the disguise of "multipartyism" or liberal democracy. When Uganda ceded sovereignty in the electioneering arena by failing to meet all

the costs for the elections, the West quickly seized this opportunity to continue meddling in Uganda's political life. Their immediate focus was not the functioning and performance of the NRM after the 1996 elections but on the 2000 National Referendum. In other words, its concern was not on the performance but restricted to the method of how leaders came to power.

By end of 1998, donors from the EU were quoted warning NRM government on the 2000 referendum polls. The Australian Ambassador was one of the first who did not mince his words while speaking on behalf of the donors at a two-day consultative group meeting. He told the NRM that donors would be closely watching the political process that would lead to the referendum of 2000 and the subsequent presidential elections in 2001. He said that they would be looking at the terms and application of the Political Organisation Bill for the regulation of the political parties which was envisaged to be passed soon; the Referendum Bill and the time provided to debate it; the Movement's structures and especially the revival of the *chaka mchaka*. These envoys reiterated what they considered to be universal basics "in all democratic systems." They put emphasis on "periodic and genuine" elections by universal and equal suffrage, through secret ballot or equivalent free voting procedures. They emphasised that they would monitor the NRM government to ensure that all those interested in voting or standing for elections would do so without pressure or intimidation. They would also ensure that the electorate would get objective voting information to enable them make a free and informed choice, and also that the NRM had to guarantee freedom of association in support of preferred candidates. They wanted the referendum in 2000 to conform to the principles. They warned that the continued democratisation process would cement relations with donors while a flawed. Process would do the opposite. True to their word, these western donors continued monitoring the electoral developments up to the end of the elections.

By January 2000, the EU was demanding from the NRM to "Level Referendum Ground." The Danish Ambassador to Uganda was among the key actors. He warned the NRM to provide adequate time and opportunity for discussion and campaigning. He identified "serious delays regarding the preparations for the referendum," while it was less than six months to the referendum. He identified two problems: the failure to formulate questions

that the voters were to consider and the failure of the Electoral Commission to release funds to different stakeholders. He disclosed that the Danish government would extend US \$ 420,000 for civic education in the run-up to the referendum. Despite his pushing for the levelling of ground for all the political competitors, he was quick to defend his country that it was not making any attempts to influence the outcome of the referendum. The then Minister of State for Education instead of reacting to these issues he promised to pass on the envoys' message to the NRM government.

At the end of his service in Uganda, the British High Commissioner to Uganda pledged that Britain would continue to support the restoration of democracy in Uganda. He reminded the multipartyists that they had many friends externally. He stated that though he was leaving, the British High Commission would continue working with them since Britain was interested in seeing that Uganda's terrible past was relegated to history. He rubbished those multipartyists who had consistently accused him of supporting the NRM, and he appealed to them to develop new politics instead of thinking of the past. In his own words, "It is rubbish for multipartyists to say I am supporting Movement. What we have been supporting is the process of civic education." He repeated his call to them for full participation in the referendum process instead of their threats of boycotting. He counselled them that boycotting the referendum was very negative, that they should not waste their vote by boycotting the elections as a vote was a very important thing.

The referendum was finally conducted and 93% voted in favour of the movement system of govern mentality. What needs to be mentioned here though in passing is that the donors were already aware of the likely trend of these results and they did not want to lose face. The same applied to members of the opposition who were threatening to boycott the referendum. In fact, it appears to have been this privilege advance knowledge about the level of popularity of the NRM that has been forcing donors to keep low their fire as elections are approaching. They conduct surveys in the whole country. They seem to be very clear of the NRM's popularity within the largest section of the agrarian setting. Such prior knowledge forces them to avoid gambling against the NRM, as that would make them lose credibility. They are also not sure of all possible moves which the NRM government would take after.

It is this game of information access and uncertainties that the donors and the NRM have been locked in since 1986. The following section examine external involvement in the 2001 presidential elections.

External Involvement in 2001 Presidential Elections

With the conclusion of the 2000 Referendum, the EC fixed March 7, 2001 as the date for the presidential elections. Representatives of the Western donors countries organised themselves under the Post-Referendum Support Group (PRSG) with the objective of effectively monitoring and controlling the Uganda government. The 2001 presidential election race brought into Uganda's post-colonial political arena what up to then would be the sharpest and nastiest political competition. This was between the incumbent General Museveni and Retired Colonel Besigye of the newly formed Reform Agenda. The energy, intensity, acrimony, and enmity characterising their campaigning tended to project the two contestants as if they had some hidden grudge. Their campaigning looked like a struggle between life and death. As will be seen, their campaigns led to tensions and violence, arrest, killings etc.

The most dramatic and exciting event that captured headlines and on which the Reform Agenda gained political and publicity internationally and in urban Uganda though with no much attention and enthusiasm in the agrarian setting was the arrest of Major Rwabwoni at Entebbe Airport. This was no outspoken coordinator of Besigye's election campaign and whose membership in Besigye's camp had a great damaging effect on the NRM. He was an MP representing youths from Western Uganda, and was a brother to the National Chief Military Intelligence Officer in the NRM. His arrest by the military was well dramatised by mounting a counter-arrest militaristic style headed by Besigye and his wife, her sisters and others in the top leadership of Reform Agenda. They formed rings in military formation around Rwabwoni to prevent his arrest.

This arrest led to condemnation of the NRM by donors and other various western organisations. Topical among these was the Wide Consultation on Uganda. This was a UK-based Ugandan NGO. It denounced this arrest as gross violation of fundamental political freedoms. Instead of seeking solutions from within Uganda, it too saw the solution in the international

community which it appealed to carry out a quick review of the sad haemorrhagic situation prevailing in Uganda and take the appropriate steps to prevent Uganda from slipping to the Rwandese-style genocide. It claimed that this as possible because Museveni had armed most of his supporters. This was a mere claim to hoodwink and lure the West into the trap of using excessive blind force onto the NRM. The unfortunate thing for such a group is that the west has more detailed and classified intelligence information about Third World countries than the national. It is interesting to note that the state defused the Rwabwoni saga by whisking him away to England into some form of exile. Unfortunately for the NRM, it is this arrest at the Airport that transformed the NRM into a punching bag for the West.

This come as sufficient evidence of state-inspired harassment and violence in this electoral race. The head of the EU delegation in Uganda went to see the Deputy Speaker of Parliament over this matter on 26th February 2001. He attributed it to the anxiety among civil and military authorities. He opined that there was a tendency by the authorities to overreact, which created an un-conducive atmosphere to open competition and left an un-level ground. He saw the anxiety in Uganda as being caused by the close race. This was unlike elections in the past, which were a foregone conclusion and therefore made it easy for some people to relax. Regarding the arrest of Rwabwoni, the main concern of the West was that those who had arrested him were from an organisation that did not have powers to arrest and neither did they have an arrest warrant. The envoy underlined the importance and urgency of long-term civic education, which he said would be a major component of future cooperation between EU and Uganda. He justified it by saying that it would enable voters to receive regular information about democratisation instead of them being educated about a particular election.

Even before the Rwabwoni episode, western donors had been expressing concern about the increasing violence and intimidation of voters mainly by government agents. This had come out more vividly and strongly in a statement by the Danish Ambassador to Uganda on behalf of the PRSG. Instead of attacking the NRM directly, the PRSG hid behind a local NGO to call for and demand for the display of the voters, register in public places, that the NRM government should uphold the law and ensure impartiality in the elections.

Members of the PRSG have seen today's statement by the NGO Election Monitoring Group – Uganda on the arrest of Major Rwaboni Okwir, and are following events closely. The PRSG is seeking further clarification of recent events from the Government of Uganda.

It is not for the PRSG to comment on whether there were grounds for the Ugandan authorities to want to interview Major Okwir. But all correct legal procedures should be followed at all times. The PRSG will take into account these events as part of our overall assessment of the presidential election campaign in Uganda. These elections are an important opportunity for Uganda to demonstrate its increasing political maturity.

Basing on complaints lodged to him by the national campaign chairpersons for the respective candidates on February 21, 2001 about the Electoral Commission's delay to display the register, the US Ambassador to Uganda was irked by the high level of campaign violence in the run-up to the March 7 presidential elections and by the delay of displaying the voters' register. He expressed concern that the presidential electoral process was behind schedule and that it contravened the law on elections.

External pressure were not restricted to the NRM alone. As an example, the foreign press pressurised Presidential Candidate Kiiza Besigye to explain the support that he was getting from the Ex-Mayor Segaggala. Ssebagala's support for Besigye's presidential bid had become an issue to the foreign press specifically because Ssebagala has been convicted over fraud charges locally known as *ebicibuli*. He was sentenced to imprisonment for one year by the US court. What cannot be ignored is the possibility that the foreign press had picked interest in the Ssebagala issue mainly because he had been defrauding and outwitting America. In other words, racism underlay the raising of the Ssebagala issue in this electoral race.

External influence was not restricted to donors. It appeared as if anybody from the West had a right to indicate anything any time to Third World countries. The Amnesty International gives a good example. Its Secretary General wrote an open letter to all presidential candidates on March 2, 2001 urging them to address human rights issues proposed human rights policies of the candidates. He raised concern that none of the candidates had made human rights a central issue in their campaigns. He issued an order to all of them;

"I am asking each of you today to make public your positions with regard to the recommendations made in this open letter and to make a number of clear commitments that will make a positive contribution to the protection of human rights in Uganda."

He condemned the election violence and asked the candidates to commit themselves to the respect for the right of freedom of expression and information enshrined in Article 29 of the Constitution. No one should, therefore be arrested or detained, intimidated or punished in any way of the non-violent expression of their beliefs. Treason charges should not be used to criminalize the peaceful expression of political opinion.

He urged all of them to promise that if elected to presidency, they would investigate and prosecute all members of the armed forces suspected of committing human rights abuses right from the beginning of the campaigns. "Abuses allegedly committed by members of the armed forces should be investigated by an independent body, and alleged offenders face criminal prosecution," Since Uganda had ratified the UN Convention Against Torture in 1986.

This was a *prima facie* positionality which held that soldiers were the ones who had been committing crimes, while civilians were innocent victims in that highly charged electioneering violence. He urged them to take effective legislative, administrative and judicial measures to prevent acts of torture. "Anyone deprived of their liberty should be held only in officially recognised places of detention and be without delay brought before an independent judicial authority. No one should be held incommunicado." He turned the logic of state coercion on its head; "Confessions obtained through torture must not be invoked in any legal proceedings, except as evidence against a person accused of torture." He asked them to protect and promote human rights in the remaining days in order not to undermine the security and stability of the country. He also asked them to pledge that their governments would repeal Articles 73 and 269 of the constitution so as to lift restrictions on political activities, to work for the abolition of the death penalty and ensure that no executions would be carried out.

While presenting the 2000 US Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Uganda to the Uganda Human Rights Commission, the US Ambassador on March 2, 2001 condemned election violence and intimidation by various political camps. He disclosed how these were of concern to the international community. His argument was that attempts to skew the outcome of an election indicated lack of confidence in the ability of the voter or exercise considered judgement. He warned that the price of winning the election at any cost was too high and would cause democratic institutions to suffer. He was quick to pre-empt counter attacks by Ugandans based on the rigging and violence in the recently concluded US presidential elections thus;

Some may find it ironic that US's Chief representative in Uganda feels he can pronounce on the electoral contest here, given what transpired last November in the US. It is precisely because of our electoral experience that we think we may have a lesson or two to share.⁴

The US was not yet done. A report by a US Based Human Rights Watch which was released on March 5, 2001, the Economist Magazine, and the Counsel for Human Rights Watch's Africa Division decried the prevailing campaign violence, intimidation, harassments and arrests by soldiers, government agents, military intelligence personnel, the police and Presidential Protection Unit against the opposition since the beginning of the electoral campaigns of January 11, 2001. It documented arbitrary arrests, attacks and intimidation of the political opposition, its supporters and campaign agents, by the state. It explained this to be due to the incumbent's financial and structural advantage. It cast doubt on whether the election would be free and fair as Uganda was not a level playing field;

There are serious Human Rights concerns in the lead-up to Uganda's March 12, 2001 presidential elections that shed doubt to whether the election will be free and fair. Not only is President Museveni relying on a biased legal framework, but he is also using the state machinery to obstruct a transparent and fair electoral process.⁵

Given what others had already brought out, this report tended to be one-sided. It went on to argue that under the "no party" or 'movement' system, the five candidates against President Museveni did not have a party base to help organise or campaign for public support.

While The Economist Magazine predicted a win for Museveni in the first round, albeit by a much narrower margin than in 1996, it alleged that his international image had been badly damaged by report of soldier and security men behaving brutally. It, however, noted that electoral violence was not confined to the NRM but to most parties during the campaign. Its explanation for this prediction was that Museveni still retained the bedrock of rural support, plus that of many women voters and many Ugandans because of his ability to "restore economic growth and encourage international investment." This was a Euro-centric view, which tended to project Ugandan voters as consumerists who were interested in foreign capitalist interests. In

⁴ The New Vision dated March 3, 2001.

⁵ The Monitor dated March 6, 2001; and The New Vision dated March 9, 2001.

fact, many Ugandans have been opposing NRM's move to hand over the economy to foreigners. Many employees had been dismissed from their jobs under the guise of "retrenchment," "down-sizing" or "off-loading." Those who survive these merciless mass dismissals find that they have lost their status of permanent employment and entitlements in their places of work as they are transformed into temporary workers by the new owners. This creates insecurity of tenure.

The main reasons why people supported the NRM had to be found in its glaring achievements in enforcing peace in the larger part of the country. This magazine went on to opine that Besigye's attacks of corruption and nepotism in government coupled with growing resentment of Uganda's continuing involvement in the DRC had found much popular support. Unfortunately, this did not seem to be the reality amongst the voters. That is why it ended confessing that the opposition to Museveni was fragile, and that it was based on little more than the desire to oust him from power. It was that last aspect that captured the reality in Uganda.

The Counsel for Human Rights Watch's Africa Division alleged that were extensive efforts by the NRM Government to manipulate the elections. It, however, acknowledged that intimidation and assault had to a lesser extent also been directed at Museveni's real or perceived supporters. Having given the other side of the violence, it then turned round and concluded that "It is more clear than ever that Museveni's Movement system is in fact a means to perpetuate his power, through a system that does not allow free and fair democratic elections." It condemned the growing violence, including the shooting of unarmed opposition supporters by the state security forces on March 3, 2001. It underlined how this was "serious development that warrant a stronger and more decisive intervention by the Electoral Commission." It is accused the government of not taking steps to investigate or stop the violence and harassment suffered by the oppositions' supporters. It pointed out how harassment of journalist and editors, self-censorship and inequality in media access had intensified as the polling date came closer. It alleged that the electoral process had been marred by irregularities in the registration of voters; tendering process for the ballot papers and failure on the part of the Electoral Commission to act on the irregularities.

After alleging that there were serious human rights concerns in the lead-up to Uganda's March 12, 2001 presidential elections that shed doubt on whether the election would be free and fair, it turned round and admitted that Museveni's Government had taken important steps to improve the human rights situation in Uganda. It went on to accuse the NRM government of often using this general improvement in respect of human rights to underlay and distract attention from Uganda's flagging record on the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. It cited the running of the March election as an example where the denial of these rights was starkly highlighted. It claimed that run up to the election had been marred by violence, intimidation and arrest of supporters, particularly of Museveni's challengers. "Supporters of rival candidates have threatened and attacked each other. However, opposition candidates and their supporters have borne the brunt of these attacks, including intimidation, arrests and other abuses by state security forces." It based the allegations on these acts to ask Electoral and Museveni's government to put an end to all these. It argued that if the commission did not do this, it would end up being implicated in these election irregularities.

While not rejecting or refuting some of these claims, it would however be very limiting and erroneous to think that the other actors within that highly charged electoral race were passive bystanders. Whereas the western view was to project the state as the aggressor, reality on the ground showed that all parties involved were active in fanning this turmoil. While the west sometimes made cursory references to this broad-based form of violence and irregularities, their main target was the NRM. They tried to demonise it in order to make it come out of the elections with a tainted image. This is borne out by the same newspaper edition, which carried another article showing that violence and intimidation were being carried out by the different parties competing in these elections. That article reports that six members of the Reform Agenda, who had thrown stones at the NRM bus and broken its driving mirror had been arrested and detained at Wandegaya Police Station.

The *Guardian* of March 9, 2001 in full page published an analysis of the Director of Justice Africa, in which he was castigating the NRM on the forthcoming polls in Uganda. Its concern was not on who would win, but "what this deeply flawed election" would mean for Uganda. To this article,

the election campaign produced several warning signals in the West. This article criticised election violence by all sides, in particular some of Kiiza Besigye's supporters "who have recently come perilously close to inciting xenophobic violence." It went on to urge the international community to break its diplomatic silence on the issue. It noted that; "There are enough angry and bitter people to react to any call to insurrection." It went on to caution the West on the need and urgency to treat Museveni with firmness.

Up to now the international community has been conspicuously silent. Mr. Museveni has been the favoured African leader of both Whitehall and Washington and has been given carte blanche in domestic affairs. A few human rights irregularities have been considered a small price to pay. But today's favourites can easily become tomorrow's erratic despots. Consider the fall from grace of President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. Similarly, lessons from across the world show that early warning signs of conflict are ignored at our peril. Discreet but firm diplomatic intervention at an early stage can prevent the kind of crisis that has engulfed Sierra Leone.

It could not understand why Museveni had behaved as he did in an election that was in his favour.

.... His record is good enough to deliver a majority of votes. Ugandans have enjoyed more stability and prosperity under the last 15 years of Museveni's 'no party' system than under the previous regimes of Milton Obote and Idi Amin.

It alleged that while Museveni would win handsomely, his victory would be aided by some 2.5 million 'ghost voters.' On the electoral role, which was more than 20% of the total registered voters. The factuality of this allegation was never ascertained. Its second allegation was that the army had been called out to supervise the poll. Evidence on the ground proved the contrary to these two fabrications. I saw the problem being that Museveni was a military commander of autocratic learning who routinely vowed to "crush" his opponents. It alleged that Museveni's cronies had over the years grown fabulously rich on the pickings of "privatization" and more recently on the mineral wealth of neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo. This also lacked credible supportive evidence. Contrary to their allegation, most of the movement supporters predominantly live in the peasantry setting.

It, like the Economist Magazine, concluded that even if Museveni obtained a resounding victory in the following week's poll, he would emerge from the elections weakened and damaged.

The West maintained mounting pressure on the NRM government over election violence and intimidation of voters by its agents. The PRSG issued a statement about this rising political turmoil. Museveni responded very fast to forestall garnishment of the NRM's image internationally. One of the steps that he took was to invite the PRSG and pledge that his government would not allow anyone to take the law into their own hands. He explained that his government had put in place security measures to ensure peaceful elections. By then, the PRSG had summoned all the presidential candidates to explain their candidature for the presidential bid, and discuss other political matters including violence. Besigye was the other candidate who met the group on March 8, 2001. Though their meeting was very highly publicized, the substance of their discussion was kept a secret.

The Sunday Monitor of March 11, 2001 reported that many western governments had been caught off guard and shocked by violence in the presidential campaigns. The US ambassador to Uganda declared that incidents of violence and intimidation by various actors were of growing concern to the international community, as they were for Ugandans themselves. He said that many western capitals had originally not thought of sending election monitors as they thought that the campaigns would be straightforward and peaceful. He said that the competitive nature of the campaign, as well as the increasing violence had forced many of them to dispatch delegates. This argument was not tenable given that this was not the first team of election monitors to Uganda. After all, there is documented evidence to prove how the West has given itself a mandate to dispatch election observers all over the Third World. Neither was it tenable given that observers had been set to the West where election irregularities were not uncommon, the most recent case having been in the USA. He said that while the International Foundation for Elections Systems (IFES), a US-based international body, had originally planned to send election observers only for the June parliamentary elections, it had changed and would send them for the presidential elections. What needs to be noted here is that by then, it had already sent four of them into the country as part of the more than 160-person strong contingent of foreign election monitors.

The Monitor Newspaper noted that while America was alarmed by the increasing violence of the campaigns, it did not have immediate plans to re-

evaluate their position on Uganda. It reported that the US administration had been forced to reassess the situation after Ssemogerere's most recent visit to Washington DC and the presence of a strong pro-Besigye lobby group in the US. Ssemogerere was reported to have met many Republican and Departments during his US visit and briefed them about the violence in Uganda. The Monitor Newspaper concluded that the Americans had not made many public statements about Uganda, partly because they had not yet named a successor to Susan Rice, the former Under-Secretary of State in Charge of African Affairs at the State Department.

Amnesty International published another scything letter in the Sunday Vision, a day before the elections, raising concerns over violation of human rights in Uganda, with cases of torture and ill-treatment in prisons, and the maintenance of the death penalty. It cited cases of clashes between police and demonstrators and the killing of a supporter of one of the presidential candidates in these campaigns. It emphasized how Uganda's future political, economic and social development depended on the respect in law and practice of the basic human rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association.

External Reactions to the March 12, 2001 Presidential Elections

International observers traversed the whole country on March 12, 2001 to monitor Ugandans voting. After Ugandans had completed voting, they returned to their activities and the West took over the political stage. We shall just examine responses by the international press, one organization, the EU countries, the USA, the West's renewed interest in the parliamentary elections in Museveni's hometown, and Besigye's electoral court petition against Museveni's victory. At the same time, the western press continued with its diverse debates within the international arena.

Prominent among the western newspapers was the London *Daily Telegraph*. It published an article claiming that "Museveni was using the army to rig elections and win. It claimed that he was 'using troops to bully, intimidate, threaten, attack and arrest his opponents. It based on the pre-election claims that had been made by Binaifer Nowrojee, of the Human Rights Watch to make its case and authoritative conclusions. Its lead article claimed that these elections had been held in an atmosphere which many in the West would find surreal owing to Museveni's ban on all political parties. It argued that Museveni, "the former darling of the West, faced the first serious challenge to his autocratic rule in an election yesterday after a campaign that has

blighted his reputation as a model African leader."

Though some of these allegations may be factual and true, we cannot close our eyes to the exposure made by The New Vision on the functionality of the Telegraph Newspaper in discrediting, demonizing and ridiculing African leaders in a bid to undermine them. This paper's most recent victim had been President Mugabe, whom it had been projecting as "a murderer." Its focus was now being shifted to Museveni. It admitted that Museveni was expected to win but his tactics had "disappointed his foreign backers who saw him as representing a clean break from Uganda's turbulent post-colonial history under Idi Amin and Milton Obote. "Had this paper already consulted the foreign donors about their views and positionality on Museveni? The article regrettably lamented; "This is all a far cry from the late nineties when Mr. Museveni was the darling of the West." The question is whether Museveni had ceased being its darling or whether this was not merely journalistic tactics to demonise and isolate Museveni. Had he ceased being useful to imperialism despite any possible electoral irregularities? What needs to be noted in passing is that Bush, the US President came to Uganda on a state visit on Friday July 11, 2003. Secondly, Western donors are increasing their funding of projects by the NRM, in addition to funding a larger portion of the national budget.

Another British paper, the Independent published an article alleging blatant vote-rigging in the hotly contested presidential poll between the liberation hero incumbent and his former physician and comrade. It based on one case in Ketete, Kanungu district where one voter had reported that she had failed to vote because her vote had been cast before she arrived to make hasty conclusions that there had been massive rigging. The representative ness of such an isolated case out of thousands of polling stations in the country as a sufficient sample for making such a very far-reaching generalization as questionable. It based on this to claim that voters had been intimidated, that some of them had been forced to cast their ballots in front of the presiding officer and others had had their votes filled for them.

The International observers reported a contrary situation. As an example, African observers and one Austrian observer were quoted on March 14, 2001 praising the elections as open, free, disciplined, fair and successful. One British paper went further to criticize the critics of the NRM as being too hard on Museveni. While hailing the electoral process as a success, it had to edify Museveni about the dangers of blocking multiparty democracy. It warned that Museveni;

...most dangerous failure is destined to be his continuing refusal to allow opposition groups to organize as independent political parties. His monolithic, supposedly all-inclusive, movement is unlikely to survive him; yet its disintegration may bring new disasters. By way of legacy, Mr. Museveni should devote his next, last term, to building a responsible pluralist democracy."

The Monitor Newspaper then concluded:

With monitors describing the poll as *flawed but reflecting the will of the people*, the international community is likely to be satisfied with the result though concerned about the levels of violence and angry rhetoric used.

The *Financial Times* said yesterday that international donors were concerned with an election whose run-up was marred by violence and intimidation and which posed questions about a country that has become the darling of the aid world.⁷

These arguments raise serious questions. How can a flawed activity reflect the will of the people? What has the people's elections got to do with the donors? Why should the national press continue to give prominence to imperialism while sidelining the nationals? Why should the view of the international community matter more than that of the nationals to the nationals? Whose interests are being protected in such an exteriorized electoral process?

Despite all these accusations and argumentations, the PRSG through its Chairman had by March 16, 2001 endorsed the results of the presidential elections. It acknowledged the successful conducting of campaigns throughout Uganda by the six presidential candidates and their coverage by the media. It also acknowledged the NEMGROUP-U's endorsement of the election results despite the intimidation that marred the later stages of the presidential campaign, and the failure by the EC to satisfactorily update the voters' register and issue voters; cards. The NEMGROUP-U had made that conclusion notwithstanding its allegations of the campaign period not having been free and fair, and the election process and management having had many weaknesses such as violence and intimidation by government agents. Despite these shortcomings, it concurred with the NEMGROUP-U that voting had gone on smoothly in most areas, albeit some serious problems in some districts. It commended those Ugandans who sought to exercise their

⁶ The Monitor dated March 6, 2001.

⁷ Ibid.

democratic right to vote in a peaceful and orderly manner.

Having endorsed the electoral process and the elections results and in so doing acknowledging legitimacy of Museveni's election to power, the chairperson of PRSG then turned round and made an ambiguous statement for the benefit of their position in Uganda. This was to hoodwink those Ugandans who had expected contrary electoral results but failed, and who therefore wanted the donors to condemn the elections and the electoral results. That is why the PRSG made a baffling statement which in a way reflected how the West treats Africans as children with no critical minds. This is located within the discoursing of the colonial social sciences. Otherwise, how could it, after endorsing the elections and legitimizing the results turn round and claim that it was waiting for the Electoral Commission's response to these concerns and its own report and that any statement that it would make on the elections would have to be carefully made as it would be having a lasting impact, given that presidential election was a very important and sensitive activity? On what grounds could it stand to make a contrary claim and at what cost?

Faced with the election results in which the incumbent president had got a landslide majority, the US came up with a cautious and non-committal response to the election results. It congratulated the Ugandan people for their demonstrated "Commitment to democracy", which was demonstrated by the large voter turnout and the general calm that prevailed during the elections. It, however, refrained from congratulating Museveni on his victory at the polls. It instead issued a statement on March 16, 2001 directing the Uganda government to investigate charges of irregularities in campaigns and voting. It also urged this government to behave inclusively in the wake of President Museveni's re-election by reaching out on the opposition and also to work together for Uganda's future. It instructed government officials to allow legal challenges to follow their proper course. Seen through US' electoral history, the US could have been hoping for a reproduction of its recent electoral appeals over presidential elections that were marred by rigging, fraud and violence into Uganda's political arena.

The New Vision Newspaper then historicized US' funding of Uganda during Clinton's times and how Uganda became a favoured recipient of aid from the Brettonwood's institutions as donors endorsed Museveni's economic

policies. It noted that this warm relationship with the USA had been noticeably cooled by Uganda's protracted military intervention in the Congo. It noted that though Museveni was no longer touted as a model leader with the potential to spur democratic development in other countries in the region, still, the USA was keen on Uganda to preserve its political stability and continue its economic growth. The paper concluded affirming that the US was unlikely to take any action aimed at undermining Museveni's authority although the considerations being weighed in private by the Bush administration officials were likely to be similar to those voiced by the *New York Times* commentary that 'Uganda's hard-earned reputation for stability took a beating this week in an election marred by violence, intimidation and extensive cheating.' It also added that Museveni would have to make a fresh start toward restoring his own diminished stature as an enlightened African statesman "by opening up his country's constricted political process, rooting out high-level corruption and extracting Uganda from the war in Congo." It continued;

Mr. Museveni needs to scrap the constitution's obsolete ban on party politics. The system has evolved into little more than a one-party state. After all that Mr. Museveni has accomplished, it would be a shame if he were to join the undistinguished roster of African liberators – Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe is the most recent example – who has clung to power too long through dubious means.⁸

As if to strengthen its pre-election claims and denouncements, Amnesty International on March 16, 2001 based on allegations of intimidation and harassment of supporters of different candidates during the election campaigns to conclude that human rights were not fully respected in Uganda. "Respect for human rights is central to Uganda's political, economic and social development. All those interested in a better future for Uganda should speak up now for human rights and accountability." It underlined how every Ugandan had the right to life, freedom from torture and the right to peacefully express his or her political opinion. It argued that "Dedication to the protection of human rights is now needed to make Uganda a country where human rights are protected not only by law, but also in practice." It reiterated its call on Museveni and the opposition political leaders in Uganda to reaffirm their commitment to human rights by publicly condemning acts of

⁸ The Times quoted in New Vision.

violence committed by their supporters before the elections and cases of human rights violations against opposition supporters. These included illegal arrests and detention without charge, ill-treatment while in detention and unlawful killings. It reiterated concern by international and local human rights groups about the role played by the army in the "taskforce on internal security" and how violence had continued in post election period with bomb blasts in Kampala killing and injuring people. It repeated its pre-election appeal for "prompt, impartial and independent investigations into all allegations of human rights violation committed in the context of the election campaign." It insisted that the results of such investigation had to be made public and those accused of perpetuating them had to be brought to justice in trials that conformed to international standards for fair trials. It, however, never explained what international standards were, whose standards were being universalized, and for what reasons.

Another report from Stockholm was reproduced in the *New Vision* on March 23, 2001 acknowledging that the EU had Okayed the election results. It held that the polls had taken place "normally" with reports of bad practice. Sweden, the one which by then was chairing the EU representatives committee in Uganda said that the EU hailed the efforts made by NEMGROUP-U, which monitored the vote. It argued that, "According to these monitors, local observers and scrutinizers from the international community, it appears that the vote of March 12 took place normally in most regions in the country." The EU also commended the "manifest desire of all Ugandans to exercise their right to vote in a peaceful and regular fashion." It acknowledged statements by visiting foreign journalists that they had seen evidence of intimidation and vote-rigging by supporters of the president, but that this appeared to be more the work of zealous officials than an organized campaign. It concluded that the EU had based on the violence and some irregularities during the poll to urge the Ugandan authorities "to ensure that the legislative elections of June 2001 fully comply with democratic standards." All these developments in Uganda provide a window through which the west is seen involving itself in Uganda's electoral and political processes.

Donors; Over-Involvement in the Besigyes' Political Contestations Against Museveni's Presidential Election Victory

After this presidential race, the West in its privileged panopticon shifted its gaze mainly to two new internal developments stemming from the Besigyes. These were the court petition by Besigye against Museveni's election victory and the parliamentary campaign race in Mbarara Municipality. While this court petition generated anxiety, excitement and speculations within and outside the country, some people in the opposition hoped that the judgment would follow the US election petition whereby Besigye could come to power like Bush. On the other, others from within the country were gripped with fear and uncertainties of what was likely to happen if court reversed the election results. A related development was the Mbarara Municipality parliamentary election campaigns, which became the most charged and contested in the whole country that season. The explanation for this form of conflictual electoral politics lay in the Museveni-Besigye-Byanyima connection. Mbarara was the hometown of both Museveni and Winnie Byanyima. The latter was the sitting MP of that Municipality. Interestingly, she was the wife of Besigye, Museveni's main challenger, first in the electoral race and then in court. As such, she had to tussle it out with Ngoma Ngime to retain her seat thereby whatever methods, this drive was intertwined with her human desire to defeat and humiliate the NRM candidate, which implicitly meant defeating Museveni. This, in a way, could be taken as a form of retribution for her husband's loss of the presidential elections, consequencing in their families' loss of going to State House.

What cannot be explained by this paper is why the NRM resolved to field a candidate hailing from a distant region against her. Although he was a Resident District Commissioner there, getting a clear outright win among people who consider themselves very highly was an impossibility. What baffles one is whether the NRM had failed to get a son or daughter of the soil to field against her. The NRM decision was to prove that it was wrong and costly. Anything that her group did would be to Ngime's disadvantage. Not only did she claim to be a movementist – being a combatant from the bush, but she had other nerves to tap. She hailed from the Catholic Church while

Ngime hailed from Islam. She was able to mobilize this factor and deploy it ably in her favour. The press and the donors worked in her favour. Even her father's incumbency as DP's national President worked in her favour. It is this *mélange* that brought about the sharpest form of campaigns.

It is not, therefore, surprising that when the EC announced June 26th 2001 as the date for parliamentary elections, and nomination of candidates was carried out and completed, western Ambassadors, international observers and journalists began to frequent Mbarara Municipality Constituency to monitor the progress of the campaigns. By June 19, 2001, Winnie Byanyima disclosed that two international observers from Sweden had arrived in Mbarara to monitor the elections. She also disclosed that American and German Ambassadors had just visited her in Mbarara. She explained these to be precautions against rigging by the NRM, after her experience in the concluded presidential elections. It was reported the following day that the US envoy to Uganda, had held a meeting with the two contestants for the Mbarara Municipality constituency at Mbarara Lake View Hotel. It was disclosed that the purpose of that meeting was for the envoy to establish the trend of the political campaign in the area.

The two candidates had differing explanations for this visit. While Ngoma Ngime explained that the purpose of the Ambassador's visit was to find out who was going to win in Museveni's hometown, and that he had wanted to establish whether they were having violent campaigns after the shooting of a boy. On its part, Winnie Byanyima's group told the press that the envoys wanted to know the extent of Museveni's involvement in the campaigns in Mbarara Municipality. They tried to capitalize on this visit for political ends by claiming the Byanyima had been a friend to the American Embassy and the British Commission considering that she had been appearing in the media. They also claimed that the envoys had wanted to get facts about the campaigns and ascertain the truth whether some senior government officials were interfering with the elections. This meeting was immediately followed by another one between the two parliamentary candidates and a delegation from the British High Commission.

As few days before the parliamentary elections, the EU issued a directive in Brussels to the Uganda government urging it to ensure that these elections would comply with democratic norms. It expected government to react to

"irregularities" that had been reported during the March 12 election polls and correct the defects that were pointed out by local and international observers. The then Minister of the Presidency, Dr. Ruhakama Rugunda said that the NRM appreciated these comments by their European friends and that they clearly coincided with the NRM's own well articulated and long standing commitment to free and fair elections at all levels in the country. The EU had the audacity to push the NRM to implement the EU's demands mainly because the EU was funding Uganda. As the Monitor Newspaper revealed, Uganda was a beneficiary of the EU's financial support, which emanated from a direct budget line for strategic sectors related to poverty eradication, including health, education, secondary roads and water supply to rural areas. To demonstrate this, the EU had extended Euros 51 million to Uganda in 1998 and for structural adjustment support.

The same edition carried another article saying that the US and Britain were following Besigye's court petition closely. The US is reported to have sent a representative from the US Embassy in Kampala to attend Besigye's press conference soon after the presidential election results were announced. The US State Department was also reported to have asked for a regular update on the proceedings of the case from their Embassy in Kampala. The British foreign Affairs office was also reported to be following the case with keen interest. This was further confirmed by Besigye, when he cited those two Foreign Embassies, plus the Netherlands and several law societies in America as having asked for copies of his petition. He was further quoted saying that it was because of such interest that the Reform Agenda had decided to post his "petition on the Internet to ease access." Of course, this cannot be accepted uncritically. Putting the case on internet aimed at publicizing the case and himself. It was a very effective way of reaching more people from all over the world and appeal for support of various forms at minimal cost while demonizing the NRM as an illegitimate government that had come to power fraudulently through violence, intimidation and rigging. In other words, that website was mainly for propaganda and resource mobilizing purposes.

Unfortunately for him and his supporters, the case which had generated much excitement and hopes finally was resolved against him – three judges against two judges. On Winnie Byanyima's party, the election race became

the hottest contestation and she emerged the winner. Her opponent appealed in court against massive rigging but the appeal was dismissed by a High Court Judge on technicalities that he did not have the required academic qualifications for standing for the parliamentary elections. He appealed to the Court of Appeal and he won the case in part and was awarded costs. What was surprising was that the press turned this judgment on its head and announced that it was Winnie Byanyima who had won that appeal.

Having reviewed the role of western involvement in the electoral and democratic processes in Uganda since 1996, what lessons can we draw? To what extent can the West be guarantors of democracy and democratic rights of the subalterns in the agrarian economies where the local leadership has formed a complex unity with imperialism under the rubric of donors, partners in development, developers, foreign investors, etc?

Lessons From Electioneering in Africa

The first answer is provided by Tajudeen in his column in the *New Vision*. Basing on the 2001 presidential elections in Uganda, he questioned whether Africa needed those election monitors. He argued that these elections had shown the needlessness of the army of external monitors and observers. He explained that hundreds of these armies from international NGOs, inter-governmental agencies and multilateral organizations trooped into town, a few days before the polls and remained holed up in hotels. They then drove on tarmac around towns and cities as "election tourists". As such, they were able to detect malpractices in the elections because of their lifestyle and lateness. Their collective verdict was predictable and similar to their verdicts in several elections in Africa since electoral democracy broke out in the past decade of democratization. His view was that it appeared that they just cut and pasted, changing names of countries as they moved from one country to the other in their multinational electoral safaris.

Tajudeen based his article on these to question the rational and value from the heavy expenditures on their per diems, accommodation, tickets and other expenses. He argued that the best argument in their favour was that they helped in focusing the attention of the international community on the country and the processes thereby acting as deterrence against the

perversion of the electoral process. His view was that other than these, hope lay only in the local citizens, credible opposition and vigilant local media who could detect malpractices. He underlined that only the wananchi could legitimize any political process. He urged the Africans to wake up from "combination of donor-driven agenda and resilient colonial mentality" Which was making Africans believe that these external forces can make a significant difference." He went on;

...This election monitoring bonanza is the larger than life role that Western ambassadors and High Commissioners have acquired in different African countries. Some of them behave like latter-day colonial governors. I guess having missed out on the real thing being an ambassador in our banana republics gives them illusions of grandeur. Just imagine, despite the Florida imbroglio, American ambassadors can still lecture Africans on electoral procedures! And they do this without any sense of irony or paradox!

Tajudeen recounted and narrated a lesson that he had learnt from one western diplomat while he was monitoring elections in Zimbabwe. The diplomat had candidly explained to them that the West could not exert pressure on the Zimbabwe Government because it had refused to ask the western countries for any material help. This was a clear lesson that western arrogance and know-all attitude was predicated on African countries' receiving financial aid from them. His conclusion was that "If you do not take their money they will have little or no say in your activities." He went on to explain that despite the epidemic of external aid which had ruined Africa, Africa's problems lay mainly in its leaders not getting their priorities right – their failure to put forward national development and democratic processes instead of investing most resources in wars and security issues. He concluded;

It is a big shame that African governments which go to war without aid or IMF/World Bank conditionalities turn to Western governments when it comes to issues of national development and democratic process. We should get our priorities right in order to get these Western busy bodies off our backs.

Our Presidents are quick to find money for security issues. They must find adequate resources to guarantee our electoral processes from the intervention of foreign powers. When this is done we will then be able to receive and send monitors on equal footing and in good faith.⁹

⁹ The *New Vision*; dated March 22, 2001.

Major Hindrances

This chapter has brought out the role of foreigners in Uganda's electoral processes since 1996. It has shown internal weaknesses and how they have become crevices for western penetration and domination of Uganda's politics.

The major internal weaknesses include dominance of foreign capital in a weak and fragile agrarian economy owing to absence of national capital and a strong national bourgeoisie class. The paper brought out some of the historical causes of this problem – mainly buttressed in the instrumental role of the state. These stemmed from the state's compartmentalization of the economy through which it replaced Africans with an imported commercial class to control the economy. This had had negative effects of effacing possibilities of developing a strong economy on which internal social forces would arise. This weakness has perpetuated the problem of weak and fragmented political parties, civic organizations and movements.

Beyond these objective weaknesses are political ones. Principal among these is the persistent unwillingness of the politicians in power to hand over power through democratic processes. Whatever democratic measures that are put in place aim to hoodwink the masses and bring the incumbent politicians back to power. This in turn tends to give rise to conflicts in a cyclic manner. A combination of these has been responsible for the military's intervention into Uganda's politics. Though not discussed in this paper, still, it is imperative to recognize the military factor in Uganda's politics. The military has been a crucial actor in Uganda's politics in determining the nature and form of politics since 1894.

These internal weaknesses have continued to be entry points for Western powers and organizations under the guise of aid. Unfortunately for Uganda, their keen interference has continued to derail and undermine Uganda's national sovereignty, unity and national character in post-coloniality. As this paper has shown, Ugandans have continuously lost capacity to define their destiny – this role has been ceded to the West. A situation has developed where all hopes are glued onto the donors.

Given this background, donors have been gaining more powers over the Third World. As the paper showed, for elections to become legitimate, the donors have to sanction them. Claims and counter-claims of fraudulency, violence, intimidation, rigging, etc. have been undermining the whole political

and electoral processes in Uganda. The EC lacks independent organs to handle cases. There is need for an independent Electoral Commission, with independent investigation powers, judicial court systems, judges, etc. This would have its independent powers derived from the constitutions, with a separate strong vote in the national budget, etc.

Uganda is faced with a problem of lack of organic intellectualisation, absence of the politics of the governed, popular version, etc. Added to this is the problem of lack of legitimate funding for candidates. Some parties and individuals have been receiving money from different sources including outside governments.

The question of funding elections and individual candidates remains crucial. The same applies to material resources for the politicians. Sticking to power reflects the motives of retaining political power for personal ends. It is this which explains the struggle to hand on to power – where economic and/or political – to protect personal interests and insulate the culprits from prosecution and persecution by the in-coming leaders that leads those in power to keep a tight grip onto power. This weakness of dying opponents room and equal opportunities to participate and compete freely in political competition for political power, resources and jobs gradually develops into a life and death struggle for power between those in power and those who are excluded from it. It reaches proportions where those in power may deny others to express their views. Exclusionist politics lead the majority of the population to feel isolated. It opens possibilities of giving rise of politics of collective action.

Given the dismal performance of Third World economies in post-coloniality – mainly arising from mismanagement, misrule, abuse of office, and exploitation by both internal forces and external forces, those wielding power rush to the West to beg for more aid. This aid has had negative consequences on internal capacities, national politics and sovereignty, Western exploiters (imperialists) now turned benevolent donors hide under the newly acquire labels to extract all forms of concessions from these countries to the level that the begging governments lose respect and credibility. Thus, as this paper showed, the West occupied a commanding locus in neo-colonies. Ambassadors dictate to presidents and ministers. The latter are compelled to comply with humility and dishonour. They bring in armies of monitors and observers to monitor the electoral processes as if the third world countries were provinces in their empires.

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