

Of Extensive and Elusive Corruption in Uganda: Neo-Patronage, Power, and Narrow Interests

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Abstract: This article explores the prevalence of high-level political and bureaucratic corruption in postindependence Uganda, with particular focus on the narrow interests it serves and its impact on development and service delivery. It argues that high-level political corruption endures largely because it is situated within the framework of “neo”-patron-clientelism and skewed power relations. The article shows how institutions have not been able to effectively engage the inner-circle ruling elite due to a skewed power structure that serves narrow political interests. Grand bureaucratic and petty forms of corruption are equally extensive and challenging, though only the former have been affected by “zero tolerance” policies. The article concludes, however, that through its interplay of inclusion and exclusion, political corruption has generated contestations which undermine it and challenge the National Resistance Movement (NRM) regime.

Résumé: Cet article explore la prévalence de corruption bureaucratique et politique à haut niveau en Ouganda depuis l'indépendance. Il se concentre en particulier sur les intérêts limités que la corruption sert ainsi que son impact sur le développement du pays et la qualité du service public. Cet article soutient que la corruption politique à haut niveau perdure principalement à cause du “nouveau” contexte de patronage/clientélisme en place et de relations de pouvoir biaisées. Il montre aussi comment les institutions n'ont pas été capables d'engager de manière efficace l'élite interne au pouvoir à cause d'une structure de pouvoir qui sert des intérêts politiques étroits. La corruption bureaucratique systémique côtoie une corruption quotidienne mineure, toutes deux sont vastement répandues et difficiles à combattre, bien que seule la première aie été affectée par des mesures de “tolérance zéro.” Cet article conclut cependant que la corruption politique, par l'intermédiaire du phénomène d'inclusion et d'exclusion, a généré des contestations qui la remettent en question et qui lancent un défi au régime du Mouvement de Résistance Nationale (MRN).

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This article focuses on high-level political and bureaucratic corruption in Uganda and the narrow interests that it serves. It argues that political corruption on the part of the inner-circle ruling elite and filtering down to the middle levels of the state bureaucracy has thrived within a framework of “neo”-patron-clientelism and a skewed power structure that enables institutional and social manipulation. While some low-level bureaucrats, outer-circle actors, political opponents, and scapegoats have been ousted through a policy of “zero tolerance,” other politically known and well-connected actors have been able to maneuver and go scot-free. The prevalence of corruption has been blamed for poor service delivery, persistent poverty, capital flight, and a constraint to development in African countries like Uganda (see Mbaku 2007; Kaufmann, Kraay, & Zoitto-Lobaton 1999; Ndikumana & Boyce 2008). Corruption has also been blamed for faltering market reforms and operations, uncertainties, and high operational costs (see Szeftel 2000; Smith 2008; Wrong 2009). Uganda’s anticorruption strategies have had success only in combating some forms of petty corruption (Asiimwe 2009), and a culture of corruption has tended to mutate into a tolerance for nonmonetary forms such as absenteeism, inefficiency, and the misuse of resources in the workplace. This article argues that any attempt to fight corruption must be accompanied by deeper democratization within institutions and strong checks and balances, as well as improved livelihoods for all citizens, fair remuneration, and job satisfaction to reduce their vulnerability to corruption.

Conventional discourses tend to attribute the problem of corruption to a number of problems: to overall “bad governance” in the global South; the failures to consolidate democracy and hence the problem of holding leaders accountable; and a weak “civil society” (see Gyimah-Boadi 1996; Hadenius & Ugglå 1996; Birdsall 2007). Some narratives emphasize a cultural tolerance of corruption that is rooted in ethnicity and notions of reciprocity and communalism, and that manifests itself in patrimonialism and patron-clientelism (see Szeftel 2000; Rob 2007:174; Wonbin 2009). Sardan (1999) argues that corruption is virtually embedded in the cultural “logics” of negotiation, gift giving, group solidarity, predatory authority, and redistributive accumulation in Africa. Wonbin (2009) claims that since the concept of the nation-state in Africa is relatively new, national interests are low compared to other obligations like those of family and ethnicity. Such traditions, he argues, are conducive to corruption, in contrast to “imported” legal norms and institutions. A logical extension of this point of view is the assumption that functioning democratic institutions such as parliaments and policies of economic liberalization are formidable strategies against corruption (see Kauffman et al. 1999). Indeed, the anticorruption strategies of the 1990s directed efforts toward institution building, legal support, policing, and empowerment of civil society organizations as bulwarks against corruption

(see Hadenius & Ugglå 1996; World Bank 1997). Nevertheless, the experiences of the last two decades have shown that strengthened institutions per se are not necessarily a constraint against corruption.

Indeed, many of the premises underlying such conventional discourse are faulty. For example, the assumed link between corruption and African traditions of “obligation,” in which leaders give donations and gifts in order to maintain legitimacy and reciprocity, is a distortion. Such cultural norms, in fact, were underwritten by principles of rational distribution, equity, legitimacy, and mutual responsibility. Greed, selfishness, fraudulent accumulation, and unfair maneuvering represented unacceptable and contestable deviance in African traditional systems, and most societies had formal and informal mechanisms of dissent, checks, and redress.

In present-day Uganda, by contrast, corruption is characterized by a brand of “neo”-patron-clientelism that endorses private extraction and a skewed redistribution of wealth. Within a framework of perverted patron-clientelism, a distinct strand of neopatrimonialism has thrived as those in power pursue narrow political and sectional interests for survival, reward, and reproduction of their inner-circle and sociopolitical power bases: a subculture of “eating” and meteoric accumulation (see Wrong 2009). Under a system of neo-patron-clientelism, President Museveni achieved the status of a father figure and accumulated a mountain of resources that he dispensed to his clientele. Through a personalized state-house system, the president “donated” money, vehicles, and cattle to strategic actors such as religious leaders, cultural figures, and entertainment celebrities who had the potential to mobilize political support.¹ Museveni’s State House became a major drain of resources amidst poverty and poor service delivery (Mugerwa 2010, 2011 a), while aspiring politicians bribed the electorate with petty “gifts” such as alcohol and matchboxes.

Political Corruption in Uganda under the National Resistance Movement (NRM)

Political corruption in Uganda that favors narrow individual and political interests has had an effect on the larger population through the hijacking of policies, procedures, and institutional operations. In much of the political corruption cases under the NRM, the main actors have largely been inner-circle political and military cronies and first-family members who are closely interrelated through ethno-kinship links, alliances, loyalty, collegiality, and clientele relations (see World Bank 1998; Tangri 1999; Tangri & Mwenda 2001, 2003, 2006). Most of those involved were also in possession of “classified secrets”; hence they were instrumental for regime survival and offered their loyalty in return for protection and advancement. As a result, institutions in Uganda have persistently failed to engage high-level political corruption. Through a skewed power structure, the executive often ignores or derides institutions like Parliament whenever these institutions are at variance with the executive’s narrow political interests (see Ruzindana 1997:134; Tangri & Mwenda 2006; Harris 2003:19).

Although Uganda's official policy is "zero tolerance" in regard to corruption, many observers have noticed a lack of "political will" (see Amundsen 2006:17–19; Luggya 2006). Ad lib comments of President Museveni also contradict the official position. In regard to his ambition to build an entrepreneurial middle class, for instance, he was quoted as saying "These thieves also build the country, but in a disorganized way. They swindle money and build houses. Yes, they are also contributing to the development of the country" (Sekiika 2010). Thus members of the inner-circle elite, mostly from NRM's southwestern Uganda sociopolitical power base, have accumulated vast resources within an enabling framework of willful blindness. Museveni's regime has persistently been accused of nepotism favoring westerners—notably his Banyankole ethnic group (see Okuku 2002; Mubatsi 2010a). During an NRM parliamentary caucus in 2007, the NRM vice chairman for Eastern Region, Mike Mukula, reportedly told Museveni that sectarian tendencies were hurting the nation and making it hard for people in eastern Uganda to embrace the NRM, and during the NRM National Executive Council meeting in January 2010 Angela Kebba from Adjuman complained about sectarianism in appointments (see Nalugo & Naturinda 2010). In 2009 the army commander had to defend a petition to the Constitutional Court alleging sectarian-based promotions (Ssemujju 2009a). According to the opposition politician Betty Kama (2008),

Does one need to be soothsayer to see that [Museveni] is leading Uganda to a terrible genocide, with only one community eligible for State House scholarships, lucrative jobs, land allocation, control of security organisations and the country's finances in 20 years?...Isn't it obvious that time will come, no matter how long it might take, when all his misdeeds will be undone, at great cost to his favoured community?

The Executive versus the Judiciary and Inspector General of Government (IGG)

One of the main channels of the president's exercise of power has been the judiciary, partly through his hand-picked appointments (see Nalugo 2009) and also, in a more general sense, his contempt for the judiciary's authority in areas that touch on the interests of the regime (see IBAHRA 2007). He was once quoted as saying that "the major work for the judges is to settle chicken and goat theft cases but not determining the country's destiny" (Ssuuna 2004). Justice John Bosco Katutsi of the Anti-Corruption Court, commenting on the powerlessness of the courts in regard to members of the ruling inner circle, commented that "this court is tired of trying tilapias when crocodiles are left swimming" (Muhumuza & Nyongesa 2010).

The Inspector General of Government (IGG) has showcased the regime's "zero tolerance" of corruption largely through the prosecution of petty bureaucratic corruption cases such as those involving nonpayment of salaries and benefits, mismanagement and misappropriation of public funds and utilities, property disputes, forgery, and low-level bribery and extortion

(see IGG 2002; IGG 2009). To some extent the publicity about such “zero tolerance” initiatives, along with the attendant electioneering rhetoric, has paid off in terms of support from the *wamainchi* (common citizenry), who bear the brunt of petty corruption. The IGG is also used as an instrument for drumming up real or imaginary charges against political opponents of the regime and against scapegoats. In terms of the executive and inner circle, however, the powers of the IGG are frustrated, repudiated, and dismissed; any initiatives attempted by the IGG in the area of government procurement processes lead to accusations that the judicial actions frustrate investors, discourage development projects, and undermine the prosperity of the country.

Other cases in which the IGG’s actions have challenged the dominant interests have led to termination of the individual’s appointment. In 2009 President Museveni and NRM parliamentarians denied the reappointment of Justice Faith Mwendha (see Among 2009). According to an editorial in *The Independent* (April 15, 2009),

Justice Mwendha has locked horns with virtually everybody in cabinet and other government bodies. There is no doubt therefore that her woes could be emanating from those she has antagonised. She has locked horns with Vice President Gilbert Bukenya, Prime Minister Apollo Nsibambi, former Minister for Energy Daudi Migereko, Attorney General Khiddu Makubuya, former Local Government Minister Maj. Gen. Kahinda Otafiire, and Deputy Speaker Rebecca Kadaga, to mention a few. (*The Independent* 2009b)

Subsequently a legal technicality was invoked and Mwendha was given the opportunity to be re-vetted by a parliamentary committee, but she refused, choosing to remove herself instead from the generally hostile situation.

The IGG’s Double Standards: The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and the Cases of Nsimbe and Temangalo

One area in the which the selective application of “zero tolerance” for corruption is particularly evident involves the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), a government instituted worker’s compulsory savings scheme. In two similar political corruption cases, justice was applied selectively based on the profiles of the actors involved. In 2005 the IGG was asked by the president to investigate the alleged mismanagement of NSSF investments in the development of the Nsimbe Estate housing project. The implicated officials were Zoe Bakoko Bakoru (who eventually fled into exile), Onegi Obel, Leonard Mpuuma, and James Isabirye Mugoya, who were charged jointly with conspiring to defraud NSSF of US\$ 8.2 billion (see Parliament Select Committee 2005). Bakoko herself alluded to the IGG’s double standards by pointing out how “zero tolerance” was applied with alacrity against an outer-circle novice politician from the northern region (Bakoru 2009).

The “zero tolerance” in the Bakoko Bakoru case compared markedly with the regime’s handling of a similar NSSF land sale case involving more

well-connected players. In 2011 Amama Mbabazi (an inner-circle politician, secretary general of the NRM, and minister of security who is now the prime minister), Finance Minister Ezra Suruma, and the businessman Amos Nzeyi went scot-free in a case involving the NSSF's purchase of land in Temangalo at what reportedly was an inflated price from a company owned by Amama Mbabazi. In this case all of the individuals hailed from Kigezi in western Uganda and shared investment interests in their Kigezi home-based bank, the National Bank of Commerce, where Suruma was one of the directors.

A parliamentary committee pointed out the conflict of interest and flouting of Public Procurement and Disposal Act (PPDA) rules, notably the requirement to advertise for bids (PCCSASE 2008). The executive director of the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA), Aryamanya Mugisha, also told MPs that 116.18 acres out of the 463.87 that NSSF bought were in a legally protected wetland (Naturinda & Nalugo 2008), and it was further discovered that about fifty-two acres were fictitious ("ghost") land (see Olupot & Karugaba 2008). The NSSF managing director, David Chandi Jamwa, testified to Parliament that Amos Nzeyi

would tell me how the President has already cleared this transaction. "Don't worry," he would tell me, "you are protected." He would tell me how he was on the phone with the First Lady and they were talking about this deal....Then came in my supervisor, Ezra Suruma...Suruma begged me to help them save their bank—the National Bank of Commerce. He even asked me to pay the money before we concluded the deal. He told me to pay Shs10b to Tropical Bank. I told him that was not the best way to do it. Let us get the whole transaction in order and that is how we can allow funds to be disbursed. Suruma asked me to buy shares in the National Bank of Commerce. We considered it as an option and refused. This was the minister in charge of NSSF asking me, his subordinate, to use workers' money to pay for his friends' land before we had concluded the transaction. If that is not corruption, what is it? (Chandi Jamwa 2009)

However, President Museveni reportedly directed the Inspector General of Police to investigate the possibility that Aryamanya Mugisha of NEMA and Chandi Jamwa had been "coached by anti-Mbabazi elements" to deliberately skew their testimonies (see Matsiko 2008). As the parliamentary committee was in the final stages of its investigation, a group of six NRM MPs, reportedly under the influence of Mbabazi, disassociated themselves from the main committee and wrote a minority report exonerating the ministers.² Some also accused Mbabazi of having tampered with the parliamentary reports (see Gyezaho 2008). In this context, subsequent appointments in the cabinet (e.g., Hope Mwesigye, Jesca Alupo, James Kakooza, Asuman Kiyingi, and Pereza Ahabwe) were particularly telling since they clearly rewarded Mbabazi's supporters (see Kelen 2009). Subsequently, it was only the NSSF managing director, Chandi Jamwa, who was convicted in the Temangalo case while the implicated inner-circle politicians were cleared.

Commissions of Inquiry

In 2001, Brig. James Kazini, commander of Uganda People's Defence Force's (UPDF's) "Operation Safe Haven" in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, together with Col. Kahinda Otafiire, Col. Noble Mayombo, and Museveni's younger brother, Major Gen. Caleb Akandwanaho (Salim Saleh), were implicated by the United Nations in the plunder of Congo resources and abuse of human rights (United Nations 2001). Museveni appointed Justice David Porter to head a commission of inquiry, which reiterated the U.N.'s findings. However, the president ignored these findings and instead promoted the implicated commanders: Otafiire to major general, Mayombo to brigadier, and Kazini to major general and army commander. Salim Saleh was promoted to general and in 2006 appointed Minister of State for Micro-Finance. The president argued that there was no evidence against Saleh to warrant prosecution (Wasike 2006). During Kazini's tenure as army commander, the UPDF became riddled with the problem of "ghost" (fictitious) soldiers (see Matsiko & Bogere 2008; Kasasira 2008). It was not until allegations of plotting a coup emerged that Kazini was pursued for corruption through the General Court Martial (see Katureebe 2009; Ssemujju 2009b). Kazini was found guilty of insubordination, abuse of office, and disobeying lawful orders, which was tantamount to treason, and given a three-year prison sentence. As he was contemplating an appeal he was murdered, allegedly by his lover.

The Executive versus Parliament

Over time, Parliament has tried to engage the implicated inner-circle over corruption, but the executive has often ignored, manipulated or attempted to tame legislative powers, concocting strategies to mobilize the majority NRM party and special-interest-group legislators to fight the "political threat" against their regime. Consequently, implicated inner-circle actors have not been prosecuted, and are regularly rewarded with higher appointments.

During the divestiture of public enterprises in the 1990s, a select committee of Parliament accused the president's brother, Salim Saleh (Keleb Akandwanaho), and Sam Kutesa, then state minister for finance and a man who was close to the first family, for mismanaging Uganda Airlines.³ The committee also accused Salim Saleh of involvement in the fraudulent acquisition of public enterprises, notably Uganda Commercial Bank (UCB). Saleh allegedly acquired UCB through Greenland Investments, in which he had majority shares. However, it was the managing director of Greenland Bank, Sulaiman Kigundu, who was imprisoned in 2002, despite his insistence that it was members of the first family who were involved in the sale of UCB.

In 1997 Salim Saleh was also accused of having accepted a \$800,000 bribe in return for the government's purchase of several MI-24 "junk" helicopter gunships. Museveni told Justice Julia Ssebuteinde, the head of a

commission of inquiry, that Saleh had confessed to taking the bribe and that he had ordered him to use the money for operational expenses in the northern Uganda conflict. The parliamentary committee ruled that Salim Saleh and colleagues should be held criminally responsible for defrauding the Ministry of Defence and that prosecution should go forward. Museveni was also criticized for advising Saleh to take the bribe and use it for military expenses (Allio 2002). However, in the end the prosecution botched the case, charges against Saleh were dismissed, and Emmanuel Kato, who had allegedly bribed Saleh, was freed. All in all, the state was defrauded of over US\$12 million (Allio 2002; Tangri & Mwenda 2003).

In March 1998, Sam Kutesa was censured by Parliament for abuse of office, together with Brig. Jim Muhwezi, then state minister of education (see Aisu 1998; Tangri 1999; Tangri & Mwenda, 2001; Tangri & Mwenda, 2006).⁴ In May 2003 a Transparency International consultative meeting called for the dismissal of Kutesa and Muhwezi (see Transparency International 2004). Nevertheless, Museveni reappointed and then promoted Muhwezi to the position of minister of health, while Kutesa was promoted to become the minister of foreign affairs. "The censuring was not serious," Museveni insisted. "It was being done by some of these people who eventually went to FDC [the Forum for Democratic Change, the main opposition party]. They were using it as a political weapon so I was not convinced by them..." (Kalinaki 2010).

As a minister of health, Jim Muhwezi was later implicated in the misappropriation of the Global Fund (to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria) and GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation) funds for AIDS, malaria, and immunization programs. Accordingly in March 2007 the Global Fund turned down Uganda's application for a grant of US\$16 million due to "Uganda's unsatisfactory performance." In April 2007 the government ordered the IGG to investigate the fund's mismanagement. According to the ensuing report, the State House and the first lady's office were key spenders of the money. The president's aide, Alice Kaboyo, testified that some of the money was used in the 2004–5 referendum campaigns (Kasyate 2007).

During proceedings of the commission of inquiry, Justice James Ogoola asked Jim Muhwezi to take responsibility for the scandal and resign. Muhwezi replied scornfully that he wondered where the judge was when he (Muhwezi) was fighting for the peace that the judge was enjoying (see Turyagyenda 2006). In June 2006 Ogoola's commission recommended that the implicated officials be investigated further for possible criminal prosecution, although no immediate action was taken under the pretext that funds to continue the investigation were lacking (see Mugerwa 2008). Eventually in May 2007 two former junior ministers of health, Mike Mukula and Alex Kamugisha, were arrested, but they were released on bail six days later. In 2008 the Anti-Corruption Court was established, and on October 21 Teddy Ssezi Cheeye became the first (and so far the only) high-profile official to be convicted in the Global Fund corruption case. Observers assume that he had made himself vulnerable because he had offended the inner circle with his scathing

newsletter, *Uganda Confidential*. Alongside Cheeye, three less well-known individuals were also imprisoned for mismanaging Global Fund money: Fred Kavuma, a former television producer, and the directors of the Value Health NGO, Analiza Mondon and Elizabeth Ngororano.

Meanwhile, during his tenure as minister of foreign affairs the reappointed Sam Kutesa, along with some of his close family members, continued to be associated with various allegations of corruption. These included the controversial US\$ 1.2 billion contract with a London law firm in which his daughter was employed to advise the government on foreign public relations (see Atuhaire 2005). Kutesa's son-in-law's company, Kenlloyd Logistics, was also implicated in the controversial acquisition of exclusive rights to manage the country's oil reserves in Jinja. Kutesa was further implicated in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) corruption scandal (see Ssemujju 2008).

Grand and Lower-Level Bureaucratic Corruption

Most of the corruption that the NRM has been willing to acknowledge in Uganda involves lower-level malfeasance in the ministries and lower administrative units. Such corruption does indeed hinder service delivery, development, and poverty reduction, although most observers reject the regime's self-serving justification for its actions. Referring to corrupt bureaucrats as "flies," Museveni said, "We need to protect milk from these flies.... People who harass investors are flies." According to a report in *The Observer*, this comment prompted members of the audience to respond with cries of "yellow flies," in reference to the NRM party color (Mubangizi & Lumu 2010).

Under decentralization, most services were devolved to lower units, which received substantial resources and became sites of policy development and project implementation.⁵ Consequently, these lower units also became mobilization platforms for power bases of the ruling party at the grass roots and arenas of patronage-facilitated corruption. Complaints against local government institutions have included mismanagement and misappropriation of resources, corruption in the procurement and awarding of contracts, embezzlement and theft of supplies, false documentation, fictitious ("ghost") workers, and payment for shoddy and incomplete infrastructure projects (see CBR 2005a, 2005b; IGG 2007; Asiimwe 2009).

One area that has suffered enormously is health care. In 2004 it was reported that the median availability of essential medicines at public health facilities was 55 percent (Ministry of Health 2004), and a 2006 survey found that only 27 percent of the essential medicines distributed to health units reached the target beneficiaries (Ministry of Health 2006). Essential drugs were found lacking at 43 percent of the health centers, in addition to lack of proper records for the medicine received and dispensed. In 2010 the National Medical Stores reported that supplies were delivered to some one hundred nonexistent ("ghost") health facilities scattered all over the country,

including seven “hospitals” in Kampala (Mubatsi 2010b; Kwesiga 2010) and that the government was spending USh 6 million (\$3,000) per month on nonexistent health centers in Kampala (Namutebi 2010). The Mulago National Referral Hospital reportedly had three hundred “ghost workers” (*Monitor Reporter* 2010a).

The education sector also has “ghost” schools with nonexistent students on their registers and nonexistent teachers on the payrolls (see Asiimwe 2009). Maracha-Terego District reportedly spent over USh 130 million (US\$54,000) for three years on a “ghost” district council (Amazia 2009). And the problem of “ghost” soldiers has undermined the capacity of the UPDF to combat Joseph Kony’s rebels during the excruciating two-decade war in the north. In 1996 it was noted that only 55 percent of the reported fighting force was actively on duty (see Kasasira 2008; *Monitor Reporter* 2008a, 2008b).

Fighting Corruption

Although corruption in Uganda is entrenched and pervasive, the Ugandan people are not simply passive victims of the NRM “eaters” (the euphemism for the corrupt) (see Holmquist 2002; Blundo & Olivier de Sardan 2006; Smith 2008; Sherk 2005). Much information about high-level transactions is concealed or legally protected by the Access of Information Act of 2005 under the rubric of “classified” information. Nevertheless, the advent of competitive politics under political liberalization, organized human rights campaigns, and some freeing of the press have enabled the opposition to expose and engage with the ruling elite’s corruption (see Ackerman 1999:127–32; Nogara 2009). Informally, the populace responds to corrupt leaders with sneering and mockery, derisive idioms (such as “eaters”), and satirical songs. While campaigning for the post of NRM secretary general and vowing to fight corruption, Kahinda Otafiire noted, “The other day, I went to Buganda and they were shouting ‘here is the thief’” (Kairu & Nalugo 2010). Resentment against the “benefiting Banyankole” is particularly virulent, as evidenced, for instance, during the September 2009 riots that broke out after the *Kabaka* (King) of Buganda was forbidden from touring Bugerere. It was reported that people were dragged out of cars at illegally mounted roadblocks and beaten for “looking like Banyankole” (Human Rights Network Uganda 2010).

Following the rampant corruption in the 1990s, a schism has also emerged within the NRM hierarchy itself between those who consider themselves the “true revolutionaries” versus the “deviant” and favored cliques (see Tripp 2010:59–71). Some political and military elite from western Uganda broke with mainstream NRM and formed the Parliamentary Advocacy Forum (PAFO), the Reform Agenda (RA), and later the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), which has grown into a formidable opposition force.⁶ The western urban electorate are particularly receptive to change, as evidenced by the electoral victory of the opposition MP candidate Winnie Byanyima, who defeated NRM’s Ngoma Ngime in Museveni’s hometown of Mbarara.

Museveni sought to trivialize the defections with the dismissive slogan of *balekebagende* (let them go), but dissent has grown. Kahinda Otafiire announced to a political gathering, “When I came in, I brought in a party of liberators; it has now become a party of thieves....We are going to bequeath you a party that is tainted...with our iniquities[,] ... so stand and tell us enough is enough (Kairu & Nalugo 2010). Since the '90s many NRM politicians from western Uganda have lost in general elections, though many have returned through tactics of rigging, bribery, manipulation, and intimidation.⁷ Perpetrators of grand bureaucratic corruption also tend to be sophisticated, to be well-placed within networks of collusion that override checks and balances, and to have access to the best lawyers who know how to exploit legal loopholes. Their impunity is aggravated by the low motivation of law enforcement agents (Annual Report of the IGG 2007; Njoroge & Wesonga 2011).

Conclusion

Anticorruption strategies have achieved some success in Uganda, albeit mostly against some forms of petty bureaucratic corruption (Asiimwe 2009; IGG Report to Parliament 2009:14). This is not to diminish the importance of combating even this lower-level malfeasance; livelihood-driven corruption among poorly remunerated civil servants can metamorphose into grander political forms that affect the populace at large. However, it has largely been unknown bureaucrats, outer-circle actors, political opponents, and scapegoats who have felt the brunt of “zero tolerance” policies.

Meanwhile, grander political corruption remains extensive and elusive, thriving within a skewed power structure and abetted by a wide range of legal, institutional, and informal manipulations, direct and indirect repression, and controls. A skewed power structure enables the executive to influence, manipulate, and control the legislature, the ombudsman, and the judiciary, thus shielding the implicated inner-circle elite from reprimand. Political corruption, both of the grand and petty variety, remains extensive and elusive in Uganda as perpetrators use sophisticated methods and networks in the context of weak institutions, low remuneration, and general poverty. Nevertheless, evidence of increasing contestations between beneficiaries and losers does suggest that the potential for undermining political corruption exists. Deeper democratization and increased political activism will likely lead to more exposure of and engagement with corruption, a strengthening of the institutional capacity to combat political corruption, and increased powers of the population at large.

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Notes

1. Bishop Niringiye observed that through gifts, the executive was trying to influence the church (quoted in Njoroge 2010). After a performance by Eddie Kenzo, Museveni presented him with a vehicle and co-opted him as a performer on the campaign trail (see *The Red Pepper* 2010b). The State House also paid \$75,000 for medical treatment for the singer "Bebe Cool" (*The Red Paper* 2010a).
2. They included Tashobya Stephen, Ahabwe Perez Godfrey, Bucyanayandi Tress, Kaahwa Amooti Erisa, Wabwire Munyira Rose, and Kakooza James.
3. This was through the Efforte and Mustwin Corporations (which Saleh owned with Hezi Bezalel of Israel) and Global Airlinks, whose managing director was Sam Kutesa. Kutesa is from Ankole; his late wife was a cousin of First Lady Janet Museveni, and his daughter later married Museveni's son (see *The Independent* 2009b).
4. Jim Muhwezi is a member of the inner-circle political and military elite from Rukungiri, also in western Uganda, whose wife is a cousin to the first lady (*The Independent* 2009a).
5. In 1997–98, transfers to local governments amounted to US\$ 225.23 billion, which increased to US\$ 1,099.67 billion in 2007–8 (Ministry of Finance 2007).
6. Notable dissenters were the former ombudsman Augustine Ruzindana, Col. Kiiza Besigye, Capt. Guma Mumisiriza, the Hon. Winnie Byanyima, Brig. Henry Tumukunde, Major Gen. Mugisha Muntu, Former Army Commander Major Kazoora, Jabel Bidandi Ssali, Major Amanya Mushega, and First Deputy Prime Minister Eriya Kategaya.
7. In the 2001 elections, John Bosco Twinomuhwezi, a supporter of Musinguzi Garuga James (against Amama Mbabazi), was allegedly shot and seriously injured in the eye (see Mufumba 2010). High-profile figures who lost during the 2010–11 NRM primaries were Tarsis Kabwegyere, Urban Tibamanya, Richard Nduhuura, James Nsaba Buturo, Perez Ahabwe, Ephraim Kamuntu, and Alex Kamugisha (see *Monitor Reporter* 2010b).