

District Creation and Decentralization in Uganda

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Abstract:

In recent years many countries across the world, especially in Africa, have created large numbers of new local administrative units. This trend has largely gone unnoticed in the scholarly community, with no attempts to understand the underlying processes at work. To examine this phenomenon I take the case study of Uganda, one of the more prominent ‘donor darlings’ of the 1990s. Alongside large-scale economic and political reforms Uganda has also experienced a near explosion in the number of districts (the highest level of local government), going from 39 to 79 in less than a decade. I examine a variety of potential reasons why these districts might have been created, and argue, through the use of both qualitative and quantitative analysis, that district creation has been primarily a source of patronage in the ongoing need for Museveni to win elections. I conclude with reflections on the relationship between economic and political reforms and patronage in the developing world.

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For God and My Country
National Motto of Uganda

For God and My Stomach
Name of Restaurant in Gulu, Northern Uganda

Introduction

The consequences of economic and political reforms on patronage and clientelism in Africa have been a source of much debate in recent years. On the one hand, more optimistic scholars have argued that these reforms have led to a decline in both the supply and demand for patronage, inasmuch as structural adjustment programs in the 1980s limited the supply of patronage at the center while the democratization that swept the continent in the early 1990s lessened demand for patronage as voters increasingly evaluated candidates on policy differences rather than clientelistic offers (Lindberg & Morrison, 2008). On the other hand, however, most scholars have remained pessimistic and argue that African leaders have been able to circumvent these reforms and find new sources of patronage, which they then have been able to utilize in buying off voters at election time (Van de Walle, 2001; Wantchekon, 2003). In particular, according to this school, African leaders have been able both to use these reforms to their own benefits, for instance through selling off privatized state-owned assets to political cronies, and maintain their clientelistic networks through the allocation of jobs in the cabinet, civil service and armed forces.

One of the responses to these perceived failures has been to further reduce the scope of African leaders' abilities to allocate resources through the promotion of decentralization reforms from the 1990s to the present. Indeed, in developing countries in particular decentralization has been as a palliative for a large number of governance problems, and as such many countries have instituted a wide variety of reforms that have devolved the provision of various public services to lower levels of government. As with the other aforementioned reforms, a mini-cottage industry has sprung up to analyze decentralization policies, with a large amount of controversy over their outcomes (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006; Treisman, 2007).

Within this literature, however, there has been little to no focus on one important aspect of decentralization, namely the creation of new sub-national administrative units. This has been an especially prominent trend in the developing world, where the governments of such countries as Benin, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Vietnam, among many others, have created a slew of new units since the 1990s. Yet there has been very few attempts at explaining this trend, especially in Africa, and those that exist have ascribed it to a variety of factors such as gerrymandering, the desire to improve service delivery, ethnicity and electoral calculations among others (Fitriani, Hofman, & Kaiser, 2005; Malesky, 2005; Mawdsley, 2002; Suberu, 1991). Furthermore, none of these studies have attempted to draw wider inferences from their case studies that may apply elsewhere.

As such I hereby take one country, Uganda, as a case study to see both what underlying motives lie behind the creation of new units in one African country and how widely applicable these motives may be in other contexts. Uganda is a particularly good case study for this examination for three reasons. First, Uganda's economic and political reforms have attracted a great deal of praise since President Yoweri Museveni first assumed power in 1986. Regularly cited as one of Africa's few 'donor darlings,' Uganda's structural adjustment reforms and wide-ranging political reforms have been held responsible for its high economic growth rates and stable governance over the past two decades. In particular, the process by which power has been deconcentrated and devolved to five levels of local government has been called 'one of the most far-reaching local government reform programs in the developing world' (Francis & James, 2003, p. 325); yet, despite the lavish attention given to these reforms in the scholarly literature, there exists as of yet no analysis of administrative unit creation under Museveni's rule.

Second, despite the famed successes of Uganda's reforms, it remains one of the most corrupt countries in the world, with a mean and median ranking of 2.4/10 in Transparency International's annual corruption perceptions index since 1995.² A puzzle thus exists as regards whether this high

² http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi. In the 2001 rankings Uganda was tied for the third-most corrupt country in the world, with a score of 1.9/10.

amount of corruption has helped or hindered President Museveni's continued electoral support across three presidential elections. A detailed examination of the Uganda's political economy under Museveni can thus help to address the broader question of why corrupt governments enjoy public support (Manzetti & Wilson, 2007).

A third and final reason to examine Uganda here is its extreme nature of unit creation, whereby the number of districts (the highest level of local government) has gone from 34 in 1991 to 79 and counting today.³ The country recently surpassed Thailand to hold the spot of fourth on the list of the world's largest number of highest-level sub-national administrative units per state,⁴ and, as demonstrated on Table 1, has far more highest-level sub-national units (and far fewer people per unit) than any other large African state.

[Insert Table 1 here]

I thereby employ Uganda as an 'extreme case' of sub-national administrative unit creation, whereby it may be paradigmatic for what is happening elsewhere in the developing world and where the logic of unit creation may therefore be clearer than in other cases. Indeed, due to the variety of different potential causal explanations, a case study analysis is superior to a cross-national study in understanding a phenomenon like administrative unit creation (Gerring, 2007). In this paper I thus explore a number of plausible reasons behind district creation and conclude that, while several of them have some element of truth, the best explanation is the use of new districts as patronage. More specifically, I ascribe the rise of district creation as a political tool in the 1990s as a result of Uganda's dual economic and political reforms and the resultant need to find new sources of patronage to perpetuate Museveni's rule. In this sense I argue that district creation in Uganda, while extreme, can be

³ Such is the state of affairs in Uganda that there is even confusion over the number of districts that exist – the websites <http://www.statoids.com/uug.html> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Districts_of_Uganda list 77 and 80 districts, respectively, while (Mwenda, 2007) lists 81. The reason for this confusion is undoubtedly due to the fact that the central government has often announced the creation of a new district months or even years before the new district's boundaries, capital and leaders have been allocated or elected. I list 79 districts here as that is the number of districts for which I have verified election data from the Ugandan Electoral Commission for district chairpersons; undoubtedly by the time this paper is in print the number of districts will have been raised once again.

⁴ The first three are Russia (83 federal subjects), the Philippines (82 provinces) and Turkey (81 provinces).

seen as paradigmatic for other states in the developing world which have similarly undergone reforms that have cut the supply of government patronage without instituting any fundamental changes in the nature of how these states are actually governed. As with the failures of structural adjustment, the failure of decentralization programs to curb patronage thus adds to existing evidence that top-down and externally-led reform processes cannot hope to improve governance structures in Africa on their own.

Below I first give a brief introduction to the political economy of Uganda since 1986, with special attention to its decentralization reforms, before exploring each of the potential reasons behind Uganda's burgeoning number of districts. After making a qualitative case for patronage as the most plausible reason for district creation, I then run a number of logistic regressions and examine election data, both of which strengthen my argument. I then conclude with some wider thoughts on patronage and decentralization in Africa.

Economic and Political Reform in Museveni's Uganda

Uganda's post-colonial history has been notoriously tumultuous, most prominently due to the misrule of Idi Amin in the 1970s and a brutal civil war in the early 1980s. After President Museveni came to power in Uganda in January 1986, however, he and his ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) enacted a wide range of reforms at all levels of government and society. Museveni turned to a Structural Adjustment Program in 1987, which helped to reform Uganda's damaged economy through the introduction of such reforms as the devaluation of the Ugandan shilling, the privatization of many large parastatals like the Uganda Commercial Bank and the Kampala Sheraton Hotel, a reduction in the size of the civil service and armed forces and the elimination of the state marketing board monopolies over coffee, cotton and produce (Reinikka & Collier, 2001). These largely neo-liberal reforms have led Uganda to be consistently ranked as one of the top three most 'economically free' states in Africa in the Heritage Foundation's annual global rankings, which assign positive scores to low levels of government expenditure, inflation, tariffs, taxation, restrictions on foreign investment, and state

regulation of finance and labor.⁵ Moreover, Museveni's reforms (alongside a serendipitous boom in world coffee prices in the mid-1990s) are also cited for producing an average rate of 6.2% GDP growth per annum between 1986 and 2000 and a reduction in the absolute poverty level from 56% in 1992 to 35% in 1999 (Kappel, Lay, & Steiner, 2005). This marriage of 'Washington Consensus' policies and real growth and poverty results has thus been seen by many as one of the high points for the Wolfensohn-led World Bank in the 1990s (Mallaby, 2004).

Simultaneous to these economic reforms were political ones such as the creation of a new constitution, which was adopted in 1995 after a Constitutional Commission made extensive tours and solicitations throughout the country over a period of four years. During this process Museveni allowed the restoration of four of Uganda's five traditional kingdoms, which had been abolished in 1967, as cultural institutions; he also instituted a system of quotas across all levels of government for women, persons with disabilities, and the youth. While Museveni controversially failed to re-introduce multi-party politics until 2005, he did set up competitive elections to a Constituent Assembly in 1994 and Parliamentary and Presidential elections in 1996, 2001 and 2006, all of which were largely assessed as free and fair by international observers.

Alongside these other reforms was the introduction of the Local Council (LC) system of local government,⁶ which incorporates five levels ranging from the village (LCI) to the district (LCV). Elections to the LCIs began in 1987, alongside indirect elections to the other tiers; by the mid 1990s the central government had both created a system of regular and direct elections at the local level and reassigned local government power from centrally-appointed technocrats to locally elected politicians. Further reforms that decentralized both financial decision-making and power over local public land to district governments meant that, by the late 1990s, district leadership positions had become quite powerful within their jurisdictions (Green, 2005). As with other reforms, the LC system has thus drawn large amounts of praise from the outside world, inasmuch as it offered lessons to other African

⁵ Uganda has ranked among the top three African states eight out of fourteen years since the index was begun in 1995, including every year since 2005. Cf. <http://www.heritage.org/Index/>.

⁶ The LCs were known as Resistance Councils until 1995.

states on how to detribalize rural administration (Mamdani, 1996) and how to combat HIV/AIDS successfully (Allen & Heald, 2004).

As these reforms accelerated Museveni's government slowly began to create new districts in 1990 and 1991. He was not the first Ugandan president to undertake this task; previously in 1974 Idi Amin introduced ten provincial governments and almost doubled the number of districts from 19 to 37 in a clear example of prebendalism (Jørgensen, 1981; Van de Walle, 2007). In response to Amin's policies the Museveni-appointed Commission of Inquiry into the Local Government recommended in 1987 a review of existing districts, which, it claimed, 'would undoubtedly result in a large number of the newly created districts losing their existing status' as they were financially unviable and unnecessary (Uganda, 1987, pp. 121-123). However, no such review took place, and, as Table 1 demonstrates, Museveni continued to add districts in 1994, 1997 and 2000 before announcing the creation of 22 new districts in 2005, the largest ever increase in Uganda's history.⁷ Thus Uganda now has 79 districts, more than twice as many as when Museveni took office and more than four times as many as when Amin took office in 1971.

[Insert Table 2 here]

In the next section I thus examine five potential reasons behind this trend, namely 1) the improvement of service delivery, 2) ethno-linguistic conflict management, 3) gerrymandering, 4) the inability of the central government to resist local demands for new districts, and 5) patronage and electoral politics.

1. The Improvement of Service Delivery

The standard reason for creating new sub-national units in developing countries is to improve service delivery and developmental outcomes, as seen in the rhetoric from Nigeria and Vietnam, among

⁷ The districts were created in two sets, with thirteen new ones inaugurated in 2005 and another ten in 2006.

others (Akinyele, 1996; Malesky, 2005). In Uganda Article 179 of the 1995 constitution allows for the creation of new districts based on ‘effective administration and the need to bring services closer to the people.’ Indeed, local councilors have often praised the creation of new districts as effective in promoting service delivery, even among those districts that have only recently created. For instance, Amuru district leaders in northern Uganda claimed that, only a year after Amuru district had been created, the advantages of a new district has been obvious in more boreholes, schools and roads and better coordination and easier monitoring among government officials.⁸ More generally NRM cadres like Ofwono Opondo have claimed that district creation and development have gone hand-in-hand in Uganda, in that ‘Uganda is more developed today than 25 years ago when it had only 39 districts or indeed four decades of only 18 districts’ (Oguttu & Opondo, 2007).

There is, however, little concrete evidence that the creation of new districts has benefited citizens. One source of evidence comes from the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG)’s annual assessments of district government performance, which monitor local governments according to the guidelines set forth in the 1997 Local Government Act. Specifically, if a district does not meet a certain minimum set of requirements in such areas as accounting, auditing, capacity building, monitoring and gender mainstreaming, it will fail to procure various types of grants. In its evaluations the MoLG has shown that older districts invariably outperform newer ones in meeting its minimum conditions of governance. For instance, in 2004, compared to a Ugandan average of 58.9%, only 50% (8/16) of districts created since 1997 passed these minimum standards, with an even lower score of 45.5% (5/11) for those created since 2000 (Uganda, 2004). Despite an overall improvement, in 2007 81.5% (38/44) of older district governments were able to meet minimum conditions while only 66.7% (22/33) of the districts created since 2000 were able to do the same (Uganda, 2007).

Indeed, when pressed upon this issue, district leaders often admit that the creation of new districts creates as many logistical and administrative problems as it solves. In following the principle that district headquarters are to be located in the geographical middle of a district, district offices are

⁸ Interviews with District Chairman Anthony Atube Omach and Chief Administrative Officer Alia Seraphine, Amuru, 16 July 2007.

often located far away from any sizeable town or village, thus making district officials commute long distances over unpaved roads to their offices and thereby spend less time in their actual offices. (In Amuru district in northern Uganda, this meant commuting from Gulu, a 90-minute drive away.⁹) More importantly, important files and documents often linger for years in rump districts before they are separated and sent along to the new district headquarters. For example, Kiboga district (northwest of Kampala), which was created in 1991, still had not received all of its relevant land office files from Mubende district in 2001, according to its district land officer at the time.¹⁰

2. Ethno-Linguistic Conflict Management

Arguments for decentralization and the creation of new sub-national units are often based on the management of ethno-linguistic conflict (Treisman, 2007), as seen for instance in the example of India (Mawdsley, 2002). In Uganda, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government, Vincent Ssekono, similarly claimed that the creation of new districts has enabled ethnic minorities who were formerly marginalized to obtain their own district. As an example Ssekono gave the Aringa ethnic group of northwest Uganda, who had formerly shared Arua district with their Lugbara neighbors. This resulting ‘problem of communication’ was alleviated by the creation of Yumbe district in 2000, which allowed the Aringa to speak their own language at council meetings and articulate their specific development priorities.¹¹ Ethnicity could potentially explain a good number of districts in Uganda, whose constitution officially recognizes 65 indigenous ethnic groups and which in one recent data set was declared the world’s most ethnically diverse state (Alesina, Devleeshauer, Easterly, Kurlat, & Wacziarg, 2003).

However, Ssekono’s explanation falls flat for two reasons. First, despite his claim that new districts not created along ethnic lines like Nakaseke or Nakapiriprit are exceptional, there is no

⁹ Interviews with District Chairman Anthony Atube Omach and Chief Administrative Officer Alia Seraphine, Amuru, 16 July 2007.

¹⁰ Interview with District Land Officer Francis Kabanda, Kiboga, 16 November 2001.

¹¹ Interview, Vincent Ssekono, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government, Kampala, 13 July 2007.

evidence that ethnicity has played a primary role in the creation of new districts over the past two decades. Of the 46 districts created over Museveni's reign, only 13 or 28.3% have led to a minority ethnic group becoming a majority in either the new or the rump district. Moreover, this figure does not change significantly if one breaks down the result chronologically: for the periods 1990-1997, 1998-2002 and 2003-2007 the numbers are 27.3% (3/11), 27.3% (3/11) and 29.2% (7/24), respectively.

Secondly, far from alleviating ethnic tension and spurring development, it is clear that the creation of new districts has led in many cases to increased levels of ethnic conflict. For instance, the demands of many Bakiga and Batagwenda inhabitants of Kabarole district for their own district in the late 1990s led to a reaction from the Batoro elite in the district, who were worried both about losing control over local resources as well as the future viability of the local Toro kingdom if the new districts refused to support the kingdom financially.¹² Tensions between the two sides grew so high that, according to a local newspaper, 'people [in the region] are even arming themselves for a possible war', which subsequently led to intense talks between various military and security leaders from Kampala and local leaders (Mwenda & Mugisa, 1999). Similarly, the Tororo district of eastern Uganda, which had been dominated by Itesot before the creation of the Itesot-majority Pallisa district in 1991, is currently dominated by members of the Japadhola ethnic group. As such, a number of minority Itesot residents in Tororo county have petitioned the government for their own district. While the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the central government agreed to create the district, it failed to assign the current district capital, whose residents are both Japadhola and Itesot, to the new district. The rift led to ethnic divisions in the February 2006 parliamentary race, whereby the candidate supported by the Itesot escaped a petrol bomb attack at his residence in April only to have the Ugandan army deployed in town in August and October 2006 after rumors that local Itesot extremists were planning on burning down the district headquarters.¹³

¹² While districts thus do not currently contribute any funds to the upkeep of the kingdoms, there are ongoing discussion about the potential creation of a regional tier system, thereby creating a large incentive for kingdom governments to prevent districts under their nominal aegis from seceding.

¹³ Interview with MP Sanjay Tanna, 19 July 2007.

3. Gerrymandering

In his analysis of province creation in Vietnam, (Malesky, 2005) posits that the central government created new provinces in order to placate conservatives whose power was otherwise being whittled away by privatization and other economic reforms. As suggested by (Malesky, 2005), this process was very similar to the old American practice of gerrymandering, whereby sub-national political units are altered in size or shape in order to alter the majority/minority status of certain political, racial or ethnic groups; in the Vietnamese case, the boundaries of the new provinces were drawn as to make them less dominated by state-owned enterprises than their predecessors. Whether in Vietnam, the United States or elsewhere, gerrymandering is often marked by the creation of oddly-shaped political units, inasmuch as the groups in question do not inhabit geographically compact areas.

Despite claims from (Piron & Norton, 2004) to the contrary, however, gerrymandering cannot explain district creation in Uganda, for three reasons. First and most obviously, if gerrymandering were occurring in Uganda, one would also expect to see oddly-shaped districts and a subsequent uproar as there has been in other countries where gerrymandering produces strange-looking political units. Yet none of the shapes of Uganda's new districts have been controversial or even a topic for public discussion. Second, there are fewer incentives for Museveni to gerrymander districts, whose leaders have no representation at the central government level, than in other countries like Vietnam where provincial leaders have seats in the regular Communist Party congresses (Malesky, 2005). Moreover, while Article 63 of Uganda's 1995 constitution allows for the redistricting of parliamentary constituencies after a census, this power is given to the Electoral Commission, which is independent from the government and which has so far not pursued redistricting according to the 2002 census results.

Thirdly and finally, there is no evidence that new districts in Uganda have been created along lines that would move local ethnic or political groups from majority to minority status or vice-versa. As noted above, new districts in Uganda have largely not been created along ethnic lines, and there is no

evidence that districts have been created along political party lines, i.e., where NRM or FDC (Forum for Democratic Change) supporters have been hived off into the new districts. If this were so, one would expect to see an increase over time in the standard deviation of electoral support for Museveni by district, inasmuch as political parties would be increasingly separated into their own districts as they are in the United States and there would thus be wider variation in support for Museveni at the district level. Yet, as indicated in Table 3, the standard deviation in support for Museveni is considerably lower in the 2001 and 2006 elections than it was in 1996, the opposite of what would be expected if gerrymandering were occurring along political lines.

[Insert Table 3 here]

4. The Inability of the Central Government to Resist Local Demands

One of the overriding themes in discussions of the African state is its inherent weakness, whereby governments are incapable of controlling their territory or citizens. More specifically, African politicians are seen to be at the whim of local and peripheral social forces, who thus determine government policy (Migdal, 1988). Employing this logic, a majority of those scholars who have discussed district creation in Uganda ascribe it to the central government's inability to resist local demands; (Rubongoya, 2007), for instance, claims that Museveni has been 'prone to giving in to popular demands for the creation of more districts.' On the surface this analysis appears plausible, inasmuch as Ugandans recognize the benefits of having their own district and are very vocal in expressing their desires. Indeed, these pressures often take bizarre forms of protest, as seen when residents of Nakaseke district paraded with the skulls of those who had been killed and buried in the district during the civil war of the early 1980s, as well as with residents of Tororo district who publicly ate rats in full view of President Museveni to demonstrate the seriousness of their claim (Buwembo,

2005). These protests have even turned violent, most notably in the aforementioned cases of the split-up of Kabarole district in 1999-2000 and Tororo district in 2006, among others.

However, the idea that district creation has been driven primarily by local demands cannot be sustained for two reasons. First and foremost, the NRM government has been able to resist a variety of other local demands over the course of its reign, most notably in regards to the kingdoms of southern Uganda. While he allowed the restoration of Buganda, Bunyoro, Busoga and Toro kingdoms in the early 1990s, President Museveni halted the restoration of the Ankole kingdom on the grounds that it was divisive and unpopular.¹⁴ Despite continued support for the Ankole restoration among a section of the Banyankole population (Uganda, 2003, p. 248) and a dubious legal standing for denying the restoration (Oloka-Onyango, 1995), the Ankole kingdom nonetheless remains a fiction. Similarly, leaders of the Buganda kingdom have been demanding the restoration of their former federal state ever since the kingdom was restored in 1993, with an overwhelming support of the Bugandan population. Again, despite continued and possibly increasing support for federalism (locally known as *federo*), the NRM government has so far refused to acquiesce to the kingdom's demands (Uganda, 2003). Certainly the ability of the central government to resist demands from leaders of the most numerous and economically powerful ethnic group in the country suggests that it could resist the creation of new districts if it so wanted.

Secondly, if district creation has been driven from below we should be able to explain a sudden popularity for new districts in the 1990s at the local level. We should thus be able to find a political or fiscal change of policy that led to this increased demand, something akin to the way the 1970 modification of the Distributable Pool Account in Nigeria started sending 50% of federal transfers over to states regardless of their size and thereby contributed to the explosion in demands for new federal states (Ekpo, 1994, p. 1132; Nolte, 2002, p. 176). As regards Uganda, there has indeed been a significant change in local government budgets over the past decade, inasmuch as the former main

¹⁴ While a restoration of the Ankole kingdom may not have been very popular, in fact none of the kingdoms other than Buganda held large public support, according to the Uganda Constitution Commission which measured popular opinion on the subject in the early 1990s (Uganda, 1992). There is some speculation that Museveni's decision may have been driven by his worry that, according to Banyankole traditions, a restored king of Ankole would have been politically superior to all Banyankole, including Museveni (Ocitti, 2000).

source of local government revenue, the Graduated Personal Tax (GPT), was reduced from 10,000 USh to 3000 USh per year in 2001 and eliminated completely in 2005 (Therkildsen, 2006). Yet, as noted in Table 2, district creation predates any change in local government budget structures, with 12 districts created in the 1990s. Moreover, upon its abolition the GPT was replaced with an increased transfer of conditional grants from the central government, which are tied to social services like education and health and thus, unlike in Nigeria, are dependent on district size and population. In other words, the logic of state creation in Nigeria after 1970 does not apply to Uganda.

Rather, the incentives for demanding a new district have been constant throughout President Museveni's reign, as they are elsewhere. New districts are examples of what are called 'club goods' in the field of political economy, and their creation is an example of what (Lowi, 1964, p. 690) calls 'distributive policies,' in that their benefits go to a small group of people but their costs are spread out across the entire population. As spelled out by (Olson, 1982) in his analysis of special-interest organizations, such a policy is likely to encounter little opposition since its cost per capita is so low that those who pay for it have little incentive to organize collectively to combat it. In other words, the cost of creating each district per citizen is very small,¹⁵ and as long as new districts are not created along biased lines, all Ugandans have the potential to benefit from a new district in their own area. This logic does not, however, explain why there should have been such a sudden rush in the number of new districts since 1997, and therefore cannot be the primary factor behind district creation.

5. Patronage, Job Creation and Electoral Politics

Critics of decentralization have long noted the way that decentralization reforms have opened up possibilities for local elites to capture decentralized governments and employ public resources as patronage. Indeed, one of the more well-known studies analyzing this process was one that examined the decentralization of education funds in Uganda, where rural elites captured the funds to the detriment

¹⁵ Each district costs the Ugandan state between 685 million and 1.3 billion Ugandan shillings in wages per year (Ocwich, 2005; USAID/Uganda, 2001). With a current population at 28.8 million citizens, each district thus costs between 23.8 shillings (\$0.013) and 45.1 shillings (\$0.024) Ush per citizen per year.

of local schools and used them instead to support local patronage networks (Reinikka & Svensson, 2004). Similarly, despite their intentions to the contrary, decentralization reforms have also been criticized for allowing national politicians to create and extend their patronage networks into the countryside (Crook, 2003).

Fitting in with these analyses, there is strong evidence that President Museveni has indeed used the creation of new districts to create 'a raft of new jobs, each one a patronage opportunity' (Mwenda, 2007, p. 31). This ongoing creation of new patron-client relationships can be seen as part of the same dynamic that has led to the ever-increasing size of the cabinet and the Parliament, whereby potentially dangerous opposition leaders can be brought under the government payroll and thereby neutralized. Indeed, as (Goetz, 2002, pp. 558-559) notes, the creation of new districts has been especially beneficial to women at the parliamentary level, since, as noted above, each new district brings with it a new Woman MP; the result is that Woman MPs as a percentage of all MPs with voting rights have gone from 14.0% in 1996 to 25.0% in 2008. This gender-biased patronage has not gone unnoticed in Uganda; for instance, in a Parliamentary debate on new districts MP Tiperu Nusura (Women, Yumbe) appreciated the 'many more Women Members of Parliament and jobs for the unemployed' (Parliament of Uganda Hansard, 20 July, 2005).

Yet the creation of new districts has not only created jobs in Parliament. While the creation of a district does not entail any new sub-district positions, it nonetheless leads to a significant number of new posts at the district level. First, a whole new set of technical and administrative staff must be hired, including a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Resident District Commissioner (RDC), deputy CAO, deputy RDC, and a District Auditor, Clerk (and Assistant Clerk), Community Based Services Manager, Education Officer, Engineer, Extension Coordinator, Finance Officer, Director of Health Services, Information Officer, Inspector of Schools, Land Officer, National Agricultural Advisory Services Officer, Personnel Officer and Planner, among others. A new set of district councilors representing special interest groups (such as women, the youth and the disabled), averaging out to around 12 per new district, must also go on the payroll. Finally, a new district must also accommodate a district Chairman,

who earns 500,000 Ugandan shillings per month, in addition to six executive secretaries (USAID/Uganda, 2001). The result of all of these new jobs at the district level is a cascading effect as lower level officials are promoted upwards, thereby creating new job openings at all levels of local government. Indeed, when asked about the benefits of district creation, sub-county councilors in Nakaseke primarily answered by noting the new jobs and promotions for local citizens who had formerly been unemployed by the previous Luwero district administration.¹⁶

Moreover, district creation has also led to the creation of non-governmental jobs. As many donors in Uganda have increasingly interacted directly with district administrations since 2000, the creation of new districts has led to donors setting up office in the new districts and thereby both creating new jobs and, through budget support of conditional grants to the districts, adding to potential local patronage opportunities (Walford, 2006). In addition to donors, NGOs have also increased their presence in new districts; in Nakaseke councilors noted the added presence of both World Vision and the Adventist Development Relief Agency in particular.¹⁷

The use of districts as patronage fits well into a political history of Museveni's Uganda, and explains why they began to multiply in the 1990s. Initially Museveni was able to buy off opposition through the creation of a broad-based government, which included such rivals as the then President of the Democratic Party Paul Ssemogerere, Second Deputy Prime Minister from 1988 to 1995. Yet as Museveni moved towards reintroducing national elections and eventually towards the re-introduction of political parties, he began to reduce the number of opposition cabinet ministers in fear that they could use their positions to build up support against him (Kasfir, 1998). Furthermore, as noted above, this period also coincided with the implementation of liberalization and privatization reforms, which endeared Museveni to donors but simultaneously reduced his ability to use patronage to buy off potential opponents.

These reduced patronage opportunities were, however, countered in part through district creation as the number of new districts announced in the five years prior to national elections grew from

¹⁶ Interviews with Bushanda Peace and Kayigwa Sekesi, Nakaseke, 12 July 2007.

¹⁷ Interviews with Bushanda Peace and Kayigwa Sekesi, Nakaseke, 12 July 2007.

five (1996) to sixteen (2001) to twenty-two (2006). Indeed, the increasing number of new districts, coupled with Museveni's diminishing electoral support over the years, fits in well with patronage theory that the more vulnerable an incumbent politician is, the more likely he/she is to use patronage to win votes (Stein & Bickers, 1994). To gain maximum electoral advantage, in 2000 and 2005 Museveni chose to create new districts just a matter of months before presidential elections the following year, while in both the presidential elections of 1996 and 2006 he gave promises to create new districts after the election if citizens voted for him, leading to the creation of six new districts in 1997 and ten new districts in 2006, respectively. Museveni's use of new districts as an election ploy sits alongside his other election year promises and changes, including both a promise to reduce the level of graduated tax in the 2001 campaign and its abolition only months before the 2006 election, not to mention the creation of the Constitutional Review Commission four weeks before the March 2001 poll.

A Quantitative Test

The above qualitative evidence suggests that district creation has been driven by patronage. If this explanation is indeed the best one, we should be able to test it quantitatively through the use of a series of logistic regressions, with district creation as a binary dependent variable. As I do not have a full set of data for the districts created before the 2002 Ugandan census, I only analyze here the 22 districts whose creation was announced in 2005: thus, of Uganda's fifty-six districts in 2001, sixteen were later split in 2005 or 2006. As we would assume that there would be some relationship between district size and splitting – whereby the larger ones would be more likely to be split up – I have controlled for both district size (Km^2) and district *Population*, with data on each from (Uganda, 2002); I have also controlled for district *Age* as we would also hypothesize that the older the district, the more likely it is to be split.¹⁸

Operationalizing my patronage thesis is more difficult, as it means being able to create an independent variable that captures where Museveni would have chosen to create new districts.

¹⁸ All three control variables, when regressed alone, are significant at the 5% level or better.

Measuring and quantifying patronage is indeed one of the more difficult tasks a political scientist can undertake, especially in the developing world (Kitschelt, 2000; Miguel & Zaidi, 2003; Wantchekon, 2003). However, for a theory of patronage which can help us with this problem we can turn to (Wilson, 1961, p. 373)'s classic analysis of patronage in mid-twentieth century Chicago, which claims that, 'were vote maximization the single goal, and were the boss secure in his position, patronage would be allocated to the wards in accord with its marginal product.' In other words, if Museveni did not fear being overthrown and if his goal was to win elections, he most likely create new districts in those areas which heretofore benefited from relatively little patronage and would therefore be more likely to respond positively to a new district than other areas.

Indeed, what has been clear from Museveni's reign is that he has prioritized the allocation of patronage to potential rivals in order to shore up his position. This strategy, while very successful in preventing any political instability, has however inevitably favored the Bantu-speaking areas of southern and western Uganda. Specifically, since the early 1980s Museveni's area of core support has been among his own Banyankole ethnic group as well as other ethnic groups of western Uganda, while in fighting his guerilla war in the central region of Buganda he forged an alliance with the Baganda, the largest and historically the most economically and politically powerful ethnic group in the country, that has continued to the present day. In order to placate westerners and the Baganda Museveni has thus kept a regular amount of patronage flowing to them via posts in the armed forces, the cabinet (which includes an ever-increasing number of presidential advisors) and various semi-autonomous government agencies and ambassadorships. To take a recent snapshot of the cabinet as an example, of the nineteen senior ministers in 2003, eleven were from the west and five were from Buganda, with only two from the North and one from the East (Mutumba, 2004). Similarly, since he came to power two of Museveni's three Vice-Presidents alongside three of his four Prime Ministers have been Baganda, while five of the six army commanders, as well as two of the three Inspector Generals of Government responsible for fighting government corruption, have been westerners.

The non-Bantu areas of the north and east have thus failed to benefit from patronage in Kampala. Moreover, both areas have generally failed to benefit from the government policies so praised by donors: while the east has generally been neglected for the past two decades, the north has suffered from a bloody civil war between the Ugandan army and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army. In this light we could thus expect Museveni to target district creation in the non-Bantu areas for the purposes of vote maximization. As noted above, this strategy is exactly what would be predicted by (Wilson, 1961, p. 373)'s 'marginal-product principle of patronage distribution.'

Thus to test my hypothesis I introduce a *Bantu* dummy, whereby Bantu-majority districts are coded as one and non-Bantu as zero; if I am correct the variable should be negative. To assess whether districts have been created for development purposes, I use data from (UNDP, 2005), which lists both the human poverty index (*HPI*) and a human development index (*HDI*, measured on an inverse scale) per district. While I cannot test the other aforementioned hypotheses due to a lack of district-level polling data or levels of ethnic diversity, I can nonetheless test two hypotheses not already examined. First, the former Minister of Local Government Jaberu Bidandi-Ssali has argued that Museveni has created new districts in opposition areas in order to undermine the ability of districts to challenge the centre and build up some fiscal independence for themselves.¹⁹ As such I have created a variable (*Museveni Vote*) that measures the percentage of the vote in each district allocated to Museveni in the 2001 presidential election; if Bidandi-Ssali is correct, its coefficient should be negative. Second, I have introduced another variable, *Marginality*, which measures how marginal the district was in the 2001 election.²⁰ This variable might help to explain district creation if Museveni was concerned about the NRM maintaining the district in the multi-party parliamentary elections in 2006; if so, we would also expect it to be negative (as a perfectly marginal district would have a value of zero). I have also examined two other dummy variables which appear as significant in (Malesky, 2005)'s statistical analyses of province creation in Vietnam, namely whether or not a district borders another country or

¹⁹ Interview with Jaberu Bidandi-Ssali, Kampala, 13 July 2007.

²⁰ I calculate *Marginality* as $|0.50 - \text{Museveni Vote}|$.

was previously split; both variables fail to reach significance even before introducing the control variables.

The results, which can be found in Table 4, clearly indicate that the *Bantu* dummy is clearly negative and significant after taking into account the control variables in regression 1. Moreover, none of the other independent variables is significant in regressions 2-5, and both the *Museveni Vote* and *Marginality* variables even have the wrong sign, indicating that new districts were more likely to be created in areas which were non-marginal and had previously voted for Museveni in 2001. In regressions 6 and 7 I add other variables to test the robustness of *Bantu*. As *HDI* is highly correlated with *HPI* (-0.90) and moderately correlated with *Bantu* (0.61), I only include *HPI* here; as *Museveni Vote* and *Marginality* are correlated at 0.54 I include them in separate regressions alongside the other variables.²¹ The results again confirm the significance of *Bantu*, as well as the wrong signs for *Museveni Vote* and *Marginality* (which appears as significant in regression 7).

[Insert Table 4 here]

Electoral Results

There is considerable debate in the literature on patronage on how politicians monitor whether or not voters respond positively to patronage. On the one hand, (Robinson & Verdier, 2003, p. 1) argue that, for a politician to make sure a group of voters supports him/her over time, he/she must either be able to observe voter behavior (through open ballots) or utilize reversible forms of patronage like jobs in the central government bureaucracy or tariffs which can be later withdrawn from uncooperative voters. On the other hand, however, the literature is resplendent with examples of non-reversible patronage, such as water projects in the United States (Ferejohn, 1974, pp. 48-51), state farms in Ghana and Nigeria (Bates, 1981, pp. 114-115) or privatized parastatals across Africa (Tangri, 1999).

²¹ *Museveni* and *Bantu* correlate at 0.53; all other correlations are 0.47 and below.

District creation in Uganda would not seem to fit into (Robinson & Verdier, 2003)'s framework, as Uganda has employed secret ballots since the early 1990s and Museveni has yet to rescind the creation of any new districts, thereby indicating that districts are not a reversible form of patronage. Nonetheless, as seen in Table 5, the electoral evidence from Uganda seems to provide more evidence that non-reversible patronage can function well for politicians, inasmuch as voters in new districts rewarded Museveni with 14.9%, 3.1% and 14.3% more support than the Ugandan average in the 1996, 2001 and 2006 presidential elections, respectively. As MPs operated under a no-party system up until 2005, it is impossible to judge how voters responded to district creation through older parliamentary election data; however, we can analyze the 2006 elections to see if voters in new districts gave the NRM more support than other parties. Again, the results in Table 6 are clearly positive for both directly elected MPs and Women MPs, whether measured through the total number of votes across constituencies or the number of seats won by the NRM. Finally, an analysis of the 2006 district chairperson elections similarly shows that voters also supported the NRM above average in new districts. While the use of more systematic statistical examinations here is limited by several factors, including the lack of more detailed parliamentary and district chairperson election data as well as the 'noise' that exists from not being able to run a field experiment, it is clear that all the data points in the right direction.²²

[Insert Tables 5 and 6 here]

Conclusion

This paper has made two contributions to the literature on patronage. First, it comprises the first empirical demonstration that sub-national administrative units can be a source of patronage. Indeed, what is remarkable about district creation in Uganda is that it has arguably been more successful than

²² For an example of how a field experiment can show evidence of a link between patronage and voting behaviour, see (Wantchekon, 2003).

other types of patronage like new cabinet posts and new parliamentary constituencies in maintaining Museveni's support, inasmuch as it was only the latter type which came in for near-universal criticism as wasteful and inefficient in the solicitations of the Constitutional Review Commission (Uganda, 2003, p. 109). The different reception of these two types of patronage is initially puzzling, in that the Olsonian logic noted above (that as long as the costs of a patronage opportunity are spread among the entire population, opposition to district creation will be minimal) applies equally to all types of patronage. However, this anomaly becomes clearer if we remember that, whereas cabinet ministers and MPs can siphon off their salaries for personal reasons, the creation of a district necessarily brings money to the countryside and thereby benefits locals at least to some degree. Moreover, as districts have little say in policy formation in Kampala, Museveni can afford to create new districts in marginal and even opposition areas without the fear of local leaders later threatening his rule; this again marks a contrast to the more ethnically and regionally biased appointments in the cabinet and the armed forces noted above. The success by which Museveni has wielded these different types of patronage thus helps to resolve the puzzle noted in the introduction by confirming (Manzetti & Wilson, 2007)'s argument that corrupt governments can maintain public support through the skilled manipulation of clientelistic networks.

This analysis also might explain why what is taking place in Uganda is extreme but not unusual across Africa, as it is highly possible that several governments have used the exact same strategy as President Museveni in recent years. In West Africa, President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso created 15 new provinces in 1997, in time for a parliamentary election that year and his successful first re-election the following year, while in Benin President Mathieu Kérékou doubled the number of his country's provinces from 6 to 12 in 1999, two years before his re-election. President Idriss Déby of Chad also doubled the number of his country's prefectures from 14 to 28 (and renamed them departments) in 1999, two years before his first successful re-election. In Anglophone Africa, President of Malawi Bakili Muluzi's government created three new districts in 1998, a year before his re-election, while in Ghana President John Kufuor's government created 28 new districts in 2003 and another 28

districts in 2007, in both cases a year before presidential and parliamentary elections.²³ In Sudan, President Omar al-Bashir tripled the number of federal states from 9 to 27 in 1994, two years before his first election. Finally and most recently, the new constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) increased the number of provinces from 11 to 26; while the provinces do not exist as yet the constitution came into force in February 2006, five months before the first round of the country's presidential elections. As with Uganda, in all seven cases the Presidents were incumbents seeking (re)election and, with the exception of the DRC, the highest level of local governments had no official representation at the national level.

The paper's second contribution is in demonstrating that donor attempts to eliminate patronage, either through structural adjustment or decentralization, have not succeeded in Uganda. Indeed, just as with Uganda, the governments of Burkina Faso and Ghana were formerly touted as 'star pupils' by the international donor community in the 1990s before going on to create new sub-national administrative units just before national elections. In all three cases structural adjustment programs promoted privatization, liberalization and devaluation, thereby reducing the patronage resources available to leaders just at a time when they were simultaneously democratizing and decentralizing their states. If, as noted by (Van de Walle, 2001), African politicians have been highly capable of manipulating these economic reform processes to entrench their power, it would be remiss to assume that they were not similarly capable of using decentralization reforms to create new patronage opportunities in order to win elections and stay in power.

Certainly the analysis presented here would suggest that more research be done on the creation of sub-national provinces and districts across the developing world. If Uganda is indeed paradigmatic in this sense, it is possible that, as with the structural adjustment reforms previously, the mixed outcomes of decentralization have less to do with poor applications of public administration theory and more to do with the way local leaders always instrumentalize reforms for their own benefit. In

²³ While Ghana's 166 districts are not its highest level of local government (an honour held by its ten regions), they are, however, the highest level local government to have elections. I owe this point to Lindsay Whitfield.

countries like Uganda the links between government reform and patronage will therefore need to be rethought if governance reforms are to aid developing countries in any significant way.

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Interviews (by date)

Francis X. Drake Kabanda, Kiboga District Land Officer, Kiboga, 16 November 2001.

Jabieri Bidandi-Ssali, Former Minister of Local Government (1994 – 2003), Kampala, 11 July 2007.

Bushanda Peace, Nakaseke Sub-County Community Development Officer, Nakaseke, 12 July 2007.

Kayigwa Sekesi, Nakaseke Sub-County Vice-Chairman, Nakaseke, 12 July 2007.

Vincent Ssekono, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government, Kampala, 13 July 2007.

Anthony Atube Omach, Amuru District Chairman, Amuru, 16 July 2007.

Alia Seraphine, Chief Administrative Officer, Amuru District, Amuru, 16 July 2007.

Sanja Tanna, Minister of Parliament for Tororo Municipality, Kampala, 19 July 2007.

Table 1: Sub-National Administrative Units (Highest Level) for Sub-Saharan African countries with a population of more than twenty million, by number
 (Source: CIA World Factbook, US Census Bureau)

<u>Country</u>	<u>Name of Unit</u>	<u>Number of Units</u>	<u>Population/Unit</u>
Uganda	Districts	79	383,071
Nigeria	States	37	3,563,784
Sudan	State	26	1,483,077
Tanzania	Region	26	1,555,923
Ethiopia	States	11	7,011,545
DR Congo	Province	11	5,694,182
Mozambique	Province	10	1,945,182
Ghana	Region	10	2,347,800
South Africa	Province	9	5,397,444
Kenya	Province	8	4,692,250

Table 2: District Creation in Uganda
(Sources: (Ocwich, 2005; Uganda, 1987), US Census Bureau)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Districts</u>	<u>Population per District</u>
1959	16	443,000
1962	17	456,365
1968	18	513,711
1971	19	526,853
1974	37	292,211
1979	33	368,115
1990	34	513,412
1991	38	476,474
1994	39	514,256
1997	45	455,718
2000	56	427,786
2005	69	402,843
2006	79	383,071

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics, District-Level Support for Museveni in Three Presidential Elections (Source: Uganda Electoral Commission)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Num. of Districts</u>	<u>Minimum (%)</u>	<u>Maximum (%)</u>	<u>Mean (%)</u>	<u>Std. Deviation</u>
1996	39	8.5	99.8	74.9	27.8
2001	53	11.5	97.8	70.4	23.1
2006	69	7.9	92.6	61.5	24.3

Table 4: Logistic Regressions
(dependent variable: district split in 2005/06)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bantu	-2.305* (0.966)					-6.966** (2.344)	-6.309** (2.25)
HPI		0.06 (0.062)				-0.201 (0.12)	-0.117 (0.093)
HDI			-12.379 (7.713)				
Marginality				0.052 (0.035)			0.18** (0.066)
Museveni Vote					0.264 (1.574)	0.099 (0.039)	
Age in 2001 ²⁴	0.059 (0.06)	0.076 (0.057)	0.064 (0.058)	0.072 (0.059)	0.074 (0.057)	0.058 (0.079)	0.047 (0.078)
Population (Log)	6.495** (2.406)	5.195* (2.334)	6.598* (2.702)	5.447* (2.285)	4.131* (1.935)	10.956** (3.892)	14.181** (5.063)
Km ² (Log)	1.57 (1.111)	1.399 (1.134)	0.948 (1.172)	1.261 (1.094)	1.865 (1.056)	3.436 (1.878)	0.597 (1.394)
Constant	-42.701** (14.538)	-38.523** (14.52)	-36.793** (13.443)	-38.698** (13.641)	-32.179** (12.333)	-71.962** (24.766)	-80.939** (29.138)
N	56	56	55 ²⁵	56	56	56	56
Nagelkerke R ²	0.525	0.422	0.452	0.448	0.405	0.672	0.715

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; standard errors in parentheses.

²⁴ For districts created before Museveni took office in 1986, I give 1980 as their creation date as that was the previous year districts were reorganized.

²⁵ HDI data is missing from Pader district.

Table 5: Presidential Election Results for New Districts
(Source: Uganda Electoral Commission)

Election	Type of District	Museveni (%)	Other Candidates (%)
1996:	New Districts (6: 1990, 1991, 1994)	89.2	10.8
	Ugandan Average	74.3	25.7
2001:	New Districts (16: 1997, 2000)	72.5	27.5
	Ugandan Average	69.4	30.6
2006:	New Districts (13: 2005) ²⁶	73.6	26.4
	Ugandan Average	59.3	40.7

Table 6: Parliamentary and District Chairperson Election Results, 2006
(Source: Uganda Electoral Commission)

	Type of District	NRM Candidates (%)	Other Candidates (%)
Directly Elected MPs			
Total Votes	New Districts	66.7	33.3
	Ugandan Average	51.4	48.6
Proportion of Seats	New Districts	84.6	15.4
	Ugandan Average	66.0	34.0
Women MPs			
Total Votes	New Districts	61.7	38.3
	Ugandan Average	53.1	46.9
Proportion of Seats	New Districts	76.9	23.1
	Ugandan Average	71.0	29.0
District Chairperson²⁷			
Proportion of Seats	New Districts	76.9	23.1
	Ugandan Average	72.5	27.5

²⁶ Of the 22 new districts which were announced by Parliament on 20 July 2005, only 13 had been created by the time of the February 2006 poll, inasmuch as the district was listed as extant by the Electoral Commission.

²⁷ Voting data for the 2006 District Chairperson elections broken down by political party is unfortunately poor, with 15 out of 69 districts missing data, so I have not included it in an analysis here.