

Patronage, District Creation and Reform in Uganda

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Abstract:

The effects of economic and political reforms on patronage in Africa remains unclear. In particular there is much disagreement about whether or not structural adjustment programs and democratization have helped to make patronage less pervasive in African politics. Here I examine the case study of Uganda, which has received much praise for its large-scale economic and political reforms since the late 1980s. However, at the same time Uganda has also experienced a near explosion in the number of districts (the highest level of local government), going from 39 to 80 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 functioned as a source of patronage. Specifically, I show that President Museveni's government has created new districts as a means to compensate for other patronage resources lost through reforms, and that new districts have helped him to continue to win elections. This paper thus constitutes the first rigorous demonstration that the creation of new sub-national political units can constitute a form of patronage, and suggests that similar processes may be currently taking place across Africa.

For God and My Country
National Motto of Uganda

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

The consequences of economic and democratic 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 the fiscal crises and structural adjustment programs of 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 evaluate candidates on policy differences rather than clientelistic offers (Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi 2005; Lindberg and 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 maintain patron-client relations, 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 develop their clientelistic networks through the allocation of jobs in the cabinet, civil service and armed forces.

Alongside these reforms many African countries have increasingly experimented with decentralization programs as a means to further reduce the scope of leaders' abilities to allocate resources. Indeed, both donors and governments in developing countries has been seen decentralization 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 and 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 political 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, changes in the nature of centre-local transfers and ethnic conflict management, among others (Fitrani, Hofman, and Kaiser 2005; Malesky 2009; 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 two reasons. First, Uganda's economic and political reforms have attracted a great deal of praise since President Yoweri Museveni assumed power in 1986. Regularly cited as one of Africa's few "donor darlings," Uganda's structural adjustment program 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: 325). However, despite the lavish attention given to these reforms in the scholarly literature, there exists as of yet no analysis of sub-national political unit creation under Museveni's rule.

A second reason to examine Uganda here is its extreme nature of unit creation, whereby the number of districts (the highest level of sub-national government) has gone from 33 in 1990 to 80 and counting today, or more than any country in the world over this time period. 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 political units per state,¹ 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 political 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 (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 most important explanation is the use of new districts as patronage. More specifically, I ascribe the rise of district creation in the 1990s to the consequences of Uganda’s dual economic and political reforms and the resultant need to find new sources of patronage. In this sense I argue that district creation in Uganda, while extreme, can be 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 to the “redistribution syndrome” from which so many of these states suffer (Azam 2007). As with the failures of structural adjustment, the failure of decentralization programs to curb patronage thus adds to existing evidence that top-down 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 series of logistic regressions and examine election data, both of which strengthen my argument. Finally, I conclude with three broad implications of the paper.

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, he and his ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) initially attempted to alleviate the country's wide-ranging economic problems without donor support, but inflation rates of over 300% forced him to turn to a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1987. Placated with a large increase in donor aid, the NRM government lost its initial distrust of market reforms and adopted such SAP reforms as the devaluation of the Ugandan shilling, the privatization of over 90 large parastatals like the Uganda Commercial Bank and the Kampala Sheraton Hotel, the elimination of the state marketing board monopolies over coffee, cotton and produce and the reduction of tariff levels to some of the lowest in Africa (Reinikka & Collier 2001). Additional reforms included the repeal of Amin's Land Reform Decree (which had nationalized all land in 1975) and the reduction in the sizes of the civil service from 320,000 in the early 1990s to 256,000 by 2007 and the army from 100,000 to 45,000 over the same period (Government of Uganda 2007).²

These reforms have thus led to a sharp reduction in the availability of the central government rents which had previously provided politicians across Africa with patronage resources (Bates 1981). As a result Uganda has been consistently ranked as one of the top four 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.³ Moreover, Museveni's reforms (alongside a serendipitous boom in world coffee prices in the mid-1990s) are 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. This happy 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 three years (Moehler 2007). During this process Museveni oversaw 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, his government 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.

Another reform was the introduction of the Local Council (LC) system of local government, which had initially begun as a local support system for the NRM while it fought against the Ugandan government in the early 1980s (Kasfir 2005).⁴ Elections to village-level councils (LCIs) began in 1987, alongside indirect elections to parish (LCII) through district (LCV) councils; 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 2008). 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 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 the prebendalistic practices common to Africa at the time (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: 121-123). However, no such review took place, and, as Table 1 demonstrates, Museveni's government continued to add districts in 1994, 1997 and 2000 before announcing the creation of 24 new districts in 2005, the largest ever increase in Uganda's history.⁵ Thus, despite increasing concern from donors about the feasibility of the new districts (Namutebi 2007, USAID/Uganda 2001), Uganda now has 80 districts, or more than twice as many as when Museveni took office and more than four times as many as when Amin took office in 1971.⁶

[Insert Table 2 here]

In the next section I thus examine four potential reasons behind this trend, namely 1) the improvement of service delivery, 2) ethno-linguistic conflict management, 3) the inability of the central government to resist local demands for new districts, and 4) 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 others (Akinyele 1996; Malesky 2009). 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, Uganda's very high population growth rate mean that its population/district ratio is still higher today than it was in the late 1970s (see Table 2). Moreover, 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 (interviews with Omach 2007; Seraphine 2007). 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).

Of course, if the creation of new sub-national political units were necessary for economic development, we would have seen much more of it in the developing world. Yet, there is little evidence from successful “developmental states” that there is any relationship between sub-national political unit and economic development. For instance, by only adding five new provincial-level regions over the past half-century China has seen its population per region increase from 23.2 million in 1960 to 40.3 million today. Moreover, as already noted, Indonesia has seen a large increase in the number of its sub-national political units since the late 1990s; however, under Suharto’s rule (1967-1998), Indonesia saw prolonged economic development but no expansion in the number of its sub-national political units (Fitriani et al. 2005). Thus, despite the addition of seven new provinces since 1999, Indonesia’s population per province has increase from 5.2 million in 1967 to 7.1 million today.⁷

Similarly, while it is possible that some new districts in Uganda have been created in order to improve service delivery, there is no concrete evidence that new districts have on the whole been created in deprived areas or that their creation has benefited citizens. One way to measure public service delivery across Uganda is to examine district-level measurements of the UN’s Human Poverty Index (HPI), which incorporates data on access to safe water, access to health services and literacy rates, and the Human Development Index (HDI), which is based in part on school enrolment, life expectancy and expenditure and income per capita (UNDP 1999; 2005). Binary logistic regressions using HPI data from 1996 and HDI data from 1995 as predictors for the creation of new districts in 1997 and 2000, however, produce no significant results (later in the paper we show that the same result obtains for districts created in 2005). Using the same data, we can also compare the change in HPI and HDI data over time to see if performance in the new district and the older but smaller “mother” district improved compared to other districts in Uganda. Yet again, a series of OLS regressions confirms that

district creation in 1997 and 2000 had no effect on changes in HPI (1996-2003) or HDI (1995-2004), whether or not one controls for district population and size.⁸

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 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 [interviews with Omach 2007; Seraphine 2007]). More importantly, important files and documents often linger for years in mother 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 its mother district in 2001, according to its district land officer at the time (interview with Kabanda 2001). Considering that local governments as well as donors have been complaining about these problems for years (USAID/Uganda 2001), it strains plausibility to suggest that the central government in Kampala has been unaware of these issues when deciding to create new districts.

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 examples of India and Nigeria (Mawdsley 2002; Suberu 1991). In Uganda, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government, Vincent Ssekono, has similarly claimed that the creation of new districts has enabled ethnic minorities who were formerly marginalized to obtain their own district. One example comes from northwest Uganda, where the Aringa ethnic group were formerly an ethnic minority within Arua district before the creation of Yumbe district in 2000 allowed them to speak their own language at

council meetings (interview with Ssekono 2007). 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 fractionalized state (Alesina et al. 2003).

However, Ssekono's explanation falls flat for two reasons. First, there is no evidence that ethnicity has played a primary role in the creation of new districts over the past two decades. Of the 47 districts created over Museveni's reign, only 13 or 27.7% have led to a minority ethnic group becoming a majority in either the new or the mother district.⁹ In other words, while ethnicity could explain some one-quarter of the districts created since 1986, that still leaves three-quarters of the new districts unexplained.

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 ethnic minority inhabitants of Kabarole district for their own district in the late 1990s led to a reaction from the Batoro ethnic 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.¹⁰ 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 and Mugisa 1999). Similarly, the Tororo district of eastern Uganda 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, which is split between the two ethnic groups, 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 (interview with Tanna 2007).

3. 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: 110), for instance, claims that Museveni has been "prone to giving in to popular demands for the creation of more districts."¹¹ 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 unusual 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; they have also 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.¹² Despite continued support for the Ankole restoration among a section of the Banyankole population (Uganda 2003: 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 popular support for federalism (locally known as *federo*) in Buganda, 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 (Suberu 1991). As regards Uganda, there has indeed been a significant change in local government budgets over the past decade, inasmuch as the former main source of local government revenue, the Graduated Personal Tax (GPT), was reduced from 10,000 US\$ to 3000 US\$ per year in 2001 and eliminated completely in 2005. 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 akin to what in the United States might be called "pork," inasmuch as their benefits go to a small group of people but their costs are spread out across the entire population (Stokes 2007). As spelled out by (Olson 1982) in his analysis of special-interest organizations, the creation of pork is likely to encounter little opposition at the national level since its cost per capita is so low that those who pay for it have little incentive to organize collectively against it. As to be expected, in Uganda the cost of creating a district per citizen is very small,¹³ and, as

long as there is no institutional barrier to creating districts across Uganda, all Ugandans have at least 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.

4. 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, defined here as the allocation of material benefits for political support. Indeed, one of the more well-known studies analyzing this process examined the decentralization of education funds in Uganda, where rural elites captured the funds to the detriment of local schools and used them instead to support local patronage networks (Reinikka and 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). In particular there has been discussion about the explosion in the number of Nigeria's local government areas (LGAs) – the country's second highest level of local government – from their initial number of 301 in 1976 to 744 today. More specifically, there have been accusations that the Nigerian federal states have created LGAs for patronage reasons, although it would seem that the creation of LGAs has been also tied up with the same reasons for state creation noted above.¹⁴

Indeed, there is strong evidence that President Museveni has used the creation of new districts to create “a raft of new jobs, each one a patronage opportunity” (Mwenda 2007: 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: 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 one MP 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 six executive secretaries, 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. Second, the payroll must include a new district chairperson and a new set of district councilors representing special interest groups such as women, the youth and the disabled, which in total average out to around 13 per district. 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 (interview with Bushanda 2007; Sekesi 2007).

Moreover, district creation has also led to the creation of non-governmental jobs. First, due to the aforementioned policy that district capitals are to be created in the centre of districts, new districts are a boon to local construction firms who are employed to create the district headquarters *ex nihilo*. Secondly, 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 offices in the new district capitals and thereby both creating new jobs and, through budget support of conditional grants to the districts,

adding to potential local patronage opportunities (Walford 2006). Finally, 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 (interview with Bushanda 2007; Sekesi 2007).

The use of districts as patronage also 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, as 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 five (1996) to sixteen (2001) to twenty four (2006). Indeed, the increasing number of new districts, coupled with Museveni's diminishing electoral support over the years, fits in well with the literature on patronage that suggests the more vulnerable an incumbent politician is, the more likely he/she is to rely upon patronage to win votes (Stein and Bickers 1994). This literature also suggests that politicians in states with competitive elections are likely to allocate patronage at election time in what are termed "political business cycles" (Block 2002; Pepinsky 2007), and again the evidence from Uganda fits the theory very well. Indeed, in 2000 and 2005 Museveni's government created new districts just a matter of months before presidential elections the following year, while in the presidential elections of 1996 and 2006 Museveni promised to create new districts after the election if citizens voted for him, leading to the creation of six new districts in 1997 and eleven 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 the aforementioned promise to reduce the level of graduated tax in the 2001 campaign and its abolition only months before the 2006 election, as well as the creation of a Constitutional Review Commission four weeks before the March 2001 poll.

A Quantitative Test

The above qualitative evidence suggests that district creation in Uganda 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 24 districts whose creation was announced in 2005. Of Uganda's fifty-six districts in 2001, sixteen were later split in 2005 or 2006 into 24 new districts; I therefore code these 16 districts as 1 and the other 40 as 0. 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.¹⁵ To assess whether districts were 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.¹⁶

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. There are basically two competing theories of where politicians most likely to target patronage, namely the “core” and “swing” voters theses, whereby politicians target core political party supporters and swing voters, respectively (Stokes 2007).¹⁷ I can test both of these theories through the use of electoral data: in the first case, 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 the “core” voter thesis is correct, its coefficient should be positive. To test the “swing” voter thesis I have introduced another variable, *Marginality*, which measures how marginal the district was in the 2001 election;¹⁸ if correct, we would expect it to be negative (as a perfectly marginal district would have a value of zero).

Both of these theories could be thought of as demand-based, in that the allocation of patronage is determined by the political leanings of the clients. However, there is a third, supply-based way to theorize how patronage might be distributed: if we assume, as with the other two theories, that politicians wish to maximize the probability that a voter “will vote for the incumbent as a result of a unit change in net transfers” (Schady 2000: 289), it could be the case that the voters most likely to respond to patronage are the ones which had received the smallest amount of patronage in the past. In other words, what matters here is not whether a given area contains “core” or “swing” voters, but rather how much patronage, relative to other areas, a given area had previously received. To return to the Ugandan example, this theory would thus suggest that Museveni would be most likely to create new districts in those areas which heretofore benefited from relatively little government patronage and would therefore be more likely to respond positively to a new district than other areas.

In our analysis, however, we should first remember (Wilson 1961: 373)’s classic discussion of patronage in mid-twentieth century Chicago, which hypothesized that a city boss would only allocate patronage to city wards “in accord of its marginal product” if he was first “secure in his position.” Indeed, what has been clear from Museveni’s reign is that he has prioritized the allocation of central government 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 fighting his guerilla war in the central region of Buganda he also 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, not to mention preferential treatment in the privatization of state-owned companies (Green 2006; Mwenda and Tangri 2005; Tangri and Mwenda 2001). To take a recent snapshot of the cabinet as an example, of the nineteen senior ministers in 2004, eleven were from the west and five were from Buganda, with only two from the North and one from the East (Mutumba 2004). Similarly, two of Museveni’s three Vice-Presidents and three of his four Prime Ministers have been Baganda, while five of six army commanders, as well as two of the three Inspector Generals of Government responsible for fighting government corruption, have been westerners. Finally, some posts have been split between these two groups: for instance, of the five Ministers of Finance since 1986, three have been Baganda while two have been westerners.

The non-Bantu-speaking areas of the north and east have thus failed to benefit from patronage in Kampala.¹⁹ 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 would therefore expect, according to this third theory of patronage distribution, that Museveni would target district creation in the non-Bantu areas for the purposes of vote maximization.

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. The results, which can be found in Table 3, clearly indicate that the Bantu dummy is negative and significant after taking into account the control variables in regression 1.²⁰ 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 independent 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 3 here]

Electoral Results

Scholars differ on how responsive voters are to “pork” and patronage, with some suggesting that there are numerous intervening variables that confound attempts to show a direct relationship between patronage and election results (Samuels 2002; Stein and Bickers 1994). Moreover, measuring how voters respond to patronage and clientelism is difficult due to all the other factors that can influence election results, which is why there is an increasing body of literature that uses field experiments to exclude the “noise” that exists in non-experimental settings (Vicente 2008; Wantchekon 2003). However, short of obtaining permission from the Ugandan government to split a randomized group of districts just before an election, such experiments are obviously impossible to replicate in Uganda. Yet relying upon already-extant data poses its own problem, since, as elsewhere in Africa, data is poor and often non-existent; additionally, Uganda’s status as a “no-party” state between 1986 and 2005 excludes analysis of parliamentary data during this period.

With all of these limitations, it is still possible to use presidential and parliamentary election results to examine how voters have responded to district creation in Uganda, and the data presented in Tables 4 and 5 seems to provide some evidence that district creation has indeed been an electoral boon for Museveni and the NRM. Table 4 shows that voters in new districts rewarded Museveni with more support than both the Ugandan average across the 1996, 2001 and 2006 presidential elections. Table 5 presents data from the 2006 parliamentary elections, which again demonstrates more support for NRM candidates 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. An analysis of the 2006 district elections similarly shows that voters also supported the NRM above average in new districts for both chairperson and councilor elections.

[Insert Tables 4 and 5 here]

Conclusion

This paper has suggested that, while other explanations have some merit, the recent creation of new districts in Uganda can primarily be explained by the need for President Museveni's government to create political patronage. As such, this paper has made three contributions to the literature on patronage. First, it comprises the first rigorous, empirical demonstration that sub-national political units can be a source of patronage. In addition to helping us to understand the mechanisms of Museveni's rule in Uganda, the analysis here also might explain why what is taking place in Uganda is extreme but not unusual across Africa, as there is circumstantial evidence that several governments have used the exact same strategy as Museveni's government during periods of democratization. Indeed, not only is there circumstantial evidence that politicians used the creation of new LGAs as patronage during Nigeria's Second Republic between 1979 and 1983 (see footnote 13), but that Africa's recent wave of democratization has been correlated with the creation of new sub-national political units across the continent. For instance, in Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaoré's government 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 neighboring Benin President Mathieu Kérékou's government doubled the number of his country's provinces from 6 to 12 in 1999, two years before his re-election. President Idriss Déby's government also doubled the number of Chad's *prefectures* from 14 to 28 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 the

Ghananian government created 28 new districts in 2003 and another 28 districts in 2007, in both cases a year before presidential and parliamentary elections.²² 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.

Secondly, as with (Horiuchi and Lee 2008), this paper has suggested that the "core" and "swing" voter hypotheses cannot explain the full range of patronage distribution policies across the world. It suggests a new theory of patronage targeting, namely that the citizens most likely to respond to patronage may be those groups which had heretofore previously benefited the least from patronage. In the Ugandan context this theory suggests that Museveni has been able to allocate different types of patronage to different constituencies in order to remain in power. Indeed, what is remarkable about district creation in Uganda is that it has arguably been more successful than other types of patronage like new cabinet posts and new parliamentary constituencies in maintaining Museveni's support, inasmuch as it was only the latter which came in for near-universal criticism as wasteful and inefficient in the public solicitations of the Constitutional Review Commission (Uganda 2003: 109). The different reception of these two types of patronage is initially puzzling, in that the Olsonian logic noted above (that as long as a patronage opportunity can potentially benefit all citizens and its costs are spread among the entire population, opposition to patronage will be minimal) applies equally to both types. However, this anomaly becomes clearer if we remember that, whereas cabinet ministers and MPs can siphon off their salaries for personal consumption, 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's government can afford to create new districts in marginal and even opposition areas without the fear of local leaders later threatening NRM rule in Kampala; this

again marks a contrast to the more ethnically and regionally biased appointments in the cabinet and the armed forces noted above.

Third and finally, the paper demonstrates that 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 political 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; moreover, evidence from post-reform Peru would suggest that this problem is by no means limited to African countries (Schady 2000). In fact, if the redistribution of patronage is necessary to maintain peace in these countries, then a disruption of this system may lead to civil war, as (Azam 2007) argues has been the case recently in both Chad and Côte d’Ivoire.

Certainly the analysis presented here would suggest that more research be done on the creation of sub-national political units across the developing world. If Uganda is indeed paradigmatic in this sense, it is thus possible that decentralization reforms have had mixed outcomes in developing countries not so much because of donor pressures or poor applications of public administration theory but because of the ways local leaders always instrumentalize reforms for their own benefit. In 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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Table 1: Sub-National Political 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	District	80	378,283
Nigeria	State	37	3,563,784
Sudan	State	26	1,483,077
Tanzania	Region	26	1,555,923
Ethiopia	State	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
1980	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	80	378,283

Table 3: Logistic Regressions
(dependent variable: district split in 2005/06)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Bantu	-2.305* (0.966)					-6.978** (2.345)	-6.309** (2.25)
HPI		0.06 (0.062)				-0.202 (0.121)	-0.117 (0.093)
HDI			-12.379 (7.713)				
Marginality				5.194 (3.548)			18.026** (6.633)
Museveni Vote					0.264 (1.574)	9.937 (3.87)	
Age in 2001 ²³	0.059 (0.06)	0.076 (0.057)	0.064 (0.058)	0.072 (0.059)	0.074 (0.057)	0.057 (0.08)	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)	10.967** (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)	3.428 (1.868)	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)	-71.992** (24.807)	-80.939** (29.138)
N	56	56	55 ²⁴	56	56	56	56
Nagelkerke R ²	0.525	0.422	0.452	0.448	0.405	0.673	0.715

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

**Table 4: Presidential Election Results for New Districts
(Source: Uganda Electoral Commission)**

<u>Election</u>	<u>Type of District</u>	<u>Museveni (%)</u>
1996:	New Districts (N=6)	89.2
	Ugandan Average	74.3
2001:	New Districts (N=16)	72.5
	Ugandan Average	69.4
2006:	New Districts (N=13)	73.6
	Ugandan Average	59.3

Table 5: Parliamentary and District Election Results, 2006
(Source: Uganda Electoral Commission)

	Type of District	NRM Candidates (%)
Directly Elected MPs		
Total Votes	New Districts	66.7
	Ugandan Average	51.4
Proportion of Seats	New Districts	84.6
	Ugandan Average	66.0
Women MPs		
Total Votes	New Districts	61.7
	Ugandan Average	53.1
Proportion of Seats	New Districts	76.9
	Ugandan Average	71.0
District Elections²⁵		
Chairperson; Proportion of Seats	New Districts	76.9
	Ugandan Average	72.5
All Councilors, Proportion of Seats	New Districts	79.2
	Ugandan Average	73.6

¹ The first three are Russia (83 federal subjects), Turkey (81 provinces) and the Philippines (80 provinces plus the National Capital Region).

² These numbers are even more striking when one remembers that Uganda's population has more than doubled since 1986.

³ Uganda has ranked among the top four African states eleven out of fifteen years since the index was begun in 1995, including every year since 2004. Cf. <http://www.heritage.org/Index/>.

⁴ The LCs were known as Resistance Councils until 1995.

⁵ The districts were created in two sets, with thirteen inaugurated in 2005 and another eleven in 2006.

⁶ In May 2009 the central government proposed the creation of fourteen new districts; however, as the parliament had yet to approve the districts by the time this article went to press, I have not included these districts in my analysis here.

⁷ All population data from the US Census Bureau.

⁸ Regression results available from author.

⁹ Data on district ethnic majorities/minorities were calculated by the author. For this reason we can also reject the claim that district creation has been primarily driven by ethnic gerrymandering.

¹⁰ While districts 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.

¹¹ Also see (Crook 2003; Goetz 2002).

¹² 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).

¹³ 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 31.4 million citizens, each district thus costs between 21.8 shillings (\$0.010) and 41.4 shillings (\$0.018) Ush per citizen per year.

¹⁴ Despite being created in 1976, the explosion of LGAs did not begin until democracy was restored in 1979, when it coincided with a more general expansion in public sector employment, and all new LGAs were abolished after the military coup of 1983 (Bach 1989). However, there is also evidence that LGA creation since 1983 has been driven by concerns over ethnic conflict regulation and that the guarantee of federal and state funding for LGAs has created incentives for Nigerians to demand new LGAs (Ukiwo 2006).

¹⁵ All three control variables, when regressed alone, are significant at the 5% level or better.

¹⁶ Unfortunately I cannot test the other aforementioned hypotheses due to a lack of district-level polling data or levels of ethnic diversity.

¹⁷ I encountered the reverse of the "core" voter thesis in an interview with former Minister of Local Government Jaberu Bidandi-Ssali, who 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 (interview with Bidandi-Ssali 2007). Naturally the regressions can test for both the "core" voter thesis and Bidandi-Ssali's thesis with the same variable.

¹⁸ As with (Schady 2000), I calculate *Marginality* as $|Museveni\ Vote - 0.50|$.

¹⁹ There are some Bantu-speaking areas in eastern Uganda, most notably the Busoga region centered around Jinja; as a result the correlation between Bantu-majority districts and those districts in the colonially-demarcated North and East regions is 0.72.

²⁰ I have also examined two other dummy variables which appear as significant in (Malesky 2009)'s statistical analyses of province creation in Vietnam, namely whether or not a district borders another country or was previously split; both variables fail to reach significance even before introducing the control variables.

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

²² 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 of local government to have elections. I owe this point to Lindsay Whitfield.

²³ 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.

²⁴ *HDI* data is missing from Pader district.

²⁵ Voting data for the 2006 local government elections broken down by political party is unfortunately poor, so I have not included it in an analysis here.