

## Polity IV Country Report 2010: Uganda

<b>Score:</b>	2009	2010	Change	
<b>Polity:</b>	-1	-1	0	
<b>Democ:</b>	1	1	0	
<b>Autoc:</b>	2	2	0	
<b>Durable:</b>		5		
<b>Tentative:</b>		Yes		

SCODE	UGA	CCODE	500	Date of Report	1 June 2011
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### Polity IV Component Variables

XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP
2	0	0	3	3	3

### Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)

End Date	27 July 2005	Begin Date	28 July 2005
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**Polity Fragmentation: No**

<b>Constitution</b>	1995
<b>Executive(s)</b>	President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni (NRM); initially seized power in January 1986; initially directly elected in 1996; most recently reelected, 18 February 2011, 68.38%
<b>Legislature</b>	<p>Unicameral:  National Assembly (375 seats; 215 directly elected, 79 women directly elected to represent each of the country's districts, 15 members representing special interest groups are indirectly elected [5 youth representatives, 5 representatives of persons with disabilities, and 5 worker's representatives], 10 members represent the Uganda People's Defence Force [army], and another 10 are ex-officio members; most recent elections, 18 February 2011)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"> National Resistance Movement (NRM): 263  Forum for Democratic Change (FDC): 34  Democratic Party (DP): 12  Other parties: 12  Non-partisans: 43  Vacant: 1  UPDF: 10  Ex-officio: 10</p>
<b>Judiciary</b>	Court of Appeal; High Court

## **Narrative Description:<sup>1</sup>**

### **Executive Recruitment: Gradual Transition from Self-Selection (5)**

Political instability and authoritarian rule have long defined politics in Uganda. After a brief struggle between federal and tribal authorities in the early independence years, the 1966 coup by Prime Minister Obote centralized political authority and ushered in a system of one-party rule. Obote's rule was interrupted in 1971 when Major General Idi Amin seized power in a military coup. President Amin's bloody tenure in office was abruptly ended in 1979 when the Ugandan National Liberation Army, with the active support of Tanzanian troops, forced Amin to flee the country. After a series of short-lived provisional governments and yet another coup, legislative elections were held in 1980. In these elections, which were marred by significant irregularities, Obote's Ugandan People's Congress party won a majority of seats in the National Assembly and Obote was subsequently proclaimed president of Uganda. In response to the fraudulent nature of these elections, three guerrilla movements organized an effort to unseat President Obote. Yoweri Museveni led the largest of the three guerrilla organizations, the National Resistance Army (NRA).

Increasing human rights violations and deepening fissures within the military between its two main ethnic factions (Acholi and Langi) marred President Obote's rule during the early 1980s. In the summer of 1985 these factional struggles erupted into open warfare and Obote was forced to flee the country. The military regime that replaced Obote, led by General Tito Okello, proved to be extremely fragile. Faced with factional struggles from both within the military and from society at-large, a power vacuum quickly developed in Uganda. The NRA took advantage of this deepening anarchy and, in January 1986, forced the military government to resign. Yoweri Museveni was subsequently sworn in as president and promised a return to democratic politics within three years. A full decade later, Ugandans cast their ballots in their country's first presidential election in sixteen years. Prior to these elections, multi-party politics were abandoned in favor of a "no-party movement system."

Despite the return to electoral politics in this country, the dominance of Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) within Uganda's "no-party" system weakened the democratic nature of executive recruitment. In the controversial 1996 election President Museveni was elected with seventy-four percent of the popular vote. While organized party politics were severely curtailed, nevertheless, most international observers deemed the election to be generally free and fair. Presidential elections were held once again in March 2001 and, not surprisingly, Museveni was re-elected with sixty-nine percent of the vote. Museveni appeared to pursue a heavy-handed campaign and on several occasions called in the army to reinforce police in areas carrying substantial support for his main rival. One candidate withdrew from the race claiming that his life had been threatened. While incidents of political violence and claims of electoral irregularities marred the 2001 campaign, nevertheless, independent monitoring groups once again declared the election to be generally clean in its conduct. In April 2003 President Museveni indicated his support for the establishment of a multi-party system prior to the 2006 elections.

According to the constitution, President Museveni was prohibited from seeking a third term in office. In early 2003, however, the highest organ of Museveni's National Resistance Movement agreed to actively seek to remove the two term limit on presidential rule. The proposal to re-write the constitutional limits on executive tenure and re-establish multiparty politics was supported in a national referendum in June 2005. Museveni won the subsequent multi-party election for president in February 2006 with fifty-nine percent of the vote. Although the elections were considered free and fair by international observers, the period prior to the election was marked by harassment of opposition candidates. Museveni was again reelected in presidential elections held 18 February 2011, receiving 68% of the vote and defeating rival Kizza Bisigye of the Forum for Democratic Change.

### **Executive Constraints: Slight to Moderate Limitations (3)**

The Ugandan constitution ushered in after the collapse of the central government in 1986 was drafted and promulgated by the Constituent Assembly in which President Museveni's quasi-party, the National Resistance Movement (presently the "Movement"), held an overwhelming majority. As such, the constitution ensured a preeminent role for the "Movement" by severely restricting the opposition's ability to mobilize supporters. Under this political order the president exercises broad powers as chief of state,

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head of government, and commander of the armed forces, including the appointment of the prime minister (who assists the president in the supervision of the cabinet) and other ministers from among elected legislators. The accountability of the president to the legislature was extremely limited as “Movement” supporters controlled the vast majority of seats in the National Assembly. Nevertheless, the Parliament occasionally initiates some independent legislation, which could be increased with the adoption of multi-party politics in 2005-06. The judiciary is formally independent, but in practice is not free from the executive branch. It is hampered by poor training and lack of resources.

The military and security forces are securely under the authority of the president. In April 2004 President Museveni formally retired from the military, but not before promoting himself to the rank of general. In preparation for the return to multi-party politics, a new legal requirement bars military personnel from being active members of a political party. Despite his formal retirement, Museveni will remain commander-in-chief of the armed forces and the military bureaucracy will remain under his complete control.

### **Political Participation: Factional/Restricted Competition (6)**

Despite the return of electoral politics to Uganda in 1996 and multi-party politics in 2005-06, decades of political violence and authoritarian rule have weakened both democratic norms and institutions within this country. Under the leadership of Idi Amin (1971-79) and Milton Obote (1979-85), over 400,000 Ugandans were killed in acts of political violence. Underlying this violence were deep ethnic and tribal divisions that continue to pose a threat to political stability and democratic politics in this country. There are about forty different tribes within Uganda that can be loosely organized into four main ethnic groups: the Bantu, who are the largest group, the Eastern Nilotic, the Western Nilotic and the Central Sudanic. Also contributing to the ethnic mix are Rwandan, Sudanese, Congolese and Kenyan minorities. Prior to 1986, northern leaders, most of them Nilotic in origin, dominated Ugandan politics. Museveni and most of his closest colleagues, however, are generally from the southern and western Bantu groups. In addition to these tribal/ethnic cleavages, the Ugandan polity has also been weakened by the politicization of religious identification. Divisions between Roman Catholic, Protestant and Muslim communities have in the past contributed to the chronic political instability of Ugandan politics.

In an effort to limit the politicization of ethnic and religious divisions within Uganda, starting in 1986 President Museveni advocated a “no-party” political system. For the next seventeen years President Museveni continually claimed that a multi-party system was not appropriate for Uganda because it would bring “divisiveness” to the country’s politics. Under President Museveni’s “no-party” system, political activity was allowed to operate only within the supposedly all-inclusive “Movement” (formerly NRM). The 1995 constitution allowed political parties to exist in name, but outlawed all the activities normally associated with political parties. In a June 2000 referendum, over ninety percent of voters chose to continue the “Movement” system for five more years; less than ten percent of the electorate supported a return to a multi-party system. However, less than fifty percent of the electorate participated in the vote. Most of the opposition boycotted the vote because they claimed that the ban on party political activity and the lack of funds for arguing in favor of multi-party politics meant that they could not effectively get their message to the electorate, just as they could not compete fairly in general elections.

Critics of Museveni’s government maintain that the “no-party” actually laid the foundation for a hegemonic party system which allows the “Movement” to institutionally entrench itself and guarantee its own leaders’ domination of the political agenda. In May 2002 the Political Parties and Organizations Act was passed by parliament. The new law, aimed at regulating opposition parties, required all existing parties to re-register themselves or be deemed illegal. Moreover, the law prohibited parties from opening offices below the national level, restricted party activities to their respective headquarters and allowed them only one delegate conference per year. In a surprising decision in March 2003 the Constitutional Court deemed this law to be illegal. Openly flouting this legal decision, in April 2003 the government claimed all active political parties to be illegal because they had failed to re-register.

In early 2004 a group of opposition parties in Uganda announced that they would form a broad-based coalition in an effort to defeat the Movement in the 2006 elections. Naming themselves G7, this coalition included the Democratic Party, the Ugandan People’s Congress, the Conservative Party and the Reform Agenda. While actively organizing to contest the February 2006 elections, nevertheless, the G7 parties initially refused to formally register and, instead, challenged the Political Parties and Organization Act in court. In 2005 Museveni initiated and passed a law allowing the return of multi-party politics, allowing opposition parties easier access to participation.

Despite these developments participation remains strongly factionalized and restricted by the Museveni/NRM hegemonic regime. In addition to institutional restrictions that favor President Museveni's incumbency, the regime systematically represses, obstructs, and intimidates opposition activists. International organizations have reported unlawful arrests and beatings of opposition politicians and their supporters by the police, the military and armed civilian militias. Opposition supporters are frequently detained and held without charge by security forces. The government continues to fight insurgent forces based mainly in the north, some religious-based, others ethnically-based, and others political. Inter-ethnic violence in Uganda, particularly in the country's southwest between the indigenous Banyoro and the immigrant Bakiga, has also become intense in recent years. During 2007, the government made concerted attempts to negotiate an end to the rebellion of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that has plagued the northeast region since 1980; as a result, violence was greatly diminished in the northeast since late 2007.