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ELECTORAL CONTESTATIONS AND CREDIBILITY OF ELECTIONS IN UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the electoral process and elections in advancing the cause of free, fair and credible elections in the Uganda. Using secondary data, the focus is put on four selected contested issues: transparency of the electoral management bodies; inclusiveness; accountability and competitiveness. Two theoretical perspectives (Realism and Liberalism) are explored in order to probe the key contested issues related to the credibility of electoral processes and elections in Uganda. The irony is that, acceptable democracy cannot exist without a credible election. But while elections continue to be conducted in the entire Uganda, several issues subject to contestation remain pertinent to both direct political players and to indirect actors. After analyzing selected regimes in Uganda over the past two decades, regular elections can be seen to have fallen short of delivering a desirable democratic dispensation. The concern is whether regular elections in Uganda can be relied upon to deliver a credible democratic system.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study set out to examine the relationship between electoral contestations and credibility of the elections in Uganda. The study is timely seeing the growing consensus that credible elections are necessary both for the legitimacy of government and for empowering citizens to ensure accountability of government (African Union, 2002). Previous elections, in much of Sub-Saharan Africa, have not been appreciated by election losers and election observers seeing that they failed to pass the credibility test (Jarabinský, 2015:90). Researchers have put the liability to different stakeholders. A study by Bland, Green and Moore (2013:360) reveals that in terms of the credibility of elections in developing countries, the focus should be put to Election Management Body (EMB) due to its principal function.

Across several African countries, the credibility of elections remains volatile. In Northern Africa, an alliance led by the chief of armed forces ousted a legitimate President of Egypt (Mohammed Morsi) in response to demands by protesters to have him removed upon serving one year (Wedeman et al., 2013a). In Southern Africa, the results of Zimbabwean Presidential Elections that were held in 2007 were withheld by the EMB for more than a month and although the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) prayed for the intervention of the Supreme Court, the incumbent (Robert

Mugabe) was arbitrarily declared the winner. In Eastern Africa, Raila Odinga was leading in the vote counts that followed the Kenyan general elections of December 2007 however, the EMB declared the incumbent Mwai Kibaki as winner (Shah, 2015:48). As a consequence, Kenya was plunged into bloodshed as supporters for each of the two fought each other. In 2017, the Kenyan Supreme Court concurred with the petitioners following the Presidential elections, nullified the results and directed the EMB to conduct fresh elections within ninety days. In Uganda, the Supreme Court of Uganda likewise concurred with the petitioner that there was non-compliance with the law, lack of transparency and the principle of free and fair elections was compromised in both the 2001 and 2006 Presidential Elections but failed to annul the results (Murison, 2013:496). All patterns point to the significance of the EMB in ensuring a credible election.

This study comes at a time when there is considerable apprehension among a number of political players including the civil society about the credibility of future elections in Uganda. According to Orji (2013:395), the political history of the country demonstrates that a number of elections have been marred contestations directed to the EMB, candidates, the voters and observers regarding the credibility of elections. Studies (such as Höglund, 2009:414) reveal that the credibility of elections in countries that are transiting from dictatorship such as Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Burundi, postures a challenge in international politics. This is so because issues of contestations related to elections many a time result into violence as election losers decline to concede defeat on account of rigged elections (Cole, 2013:256). This suggests that when a country fails to maintain its internal peace and security following a contested election, every neighbour is forced to absorb the impact. As a consequence, the issue of credibility of elections becomes essential even if some researchers consider the issue to be elusive (Ampofo et al 2011:852).

A credible election is not to be seen as a pre-condition to achieving a democratic dispensation but one of the means to attaining sustainable development. It can be noted that while a number of EMBs aim to preserve the *status quo* by preserving the incumbents in power even when such leaders have lost popularity, such as in Cameroon, they have to ensure that those elections are credible (Wahman, 2014:220). The Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe devotes itself to guarantee that the resolve of the citizens serves as the foundation of the authority of government by, among others, having elections held under universal and equal suffrage at realistic intervals (Spiro, 2000:30). It can be acknowledged that political concerns regarding elections are an essential component of democracy even if there are challenges regarding tolerable standards for measuring the degree of credibility in an election.

Ahmed (2011:144) reveals that there are a number of debates over what should constitute a credible election. One of the potential motivation behind the debate is whether every country should adhere to the same standards for credible elections or different countries should have specific classifications. While the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (1996) was founded to promote credible elections, there is no mention of having a universal standard for measuring credibility on the continent. Consequently, there are different views on the role of EMBs in abetting manipulation of opposition parties, by the ruling party and incumbents. This view is important in a credible election seeing that every contestation associated with elections is blamed on the competence of EMBs and their collusion with ruling parties. Since 2000, elections that were held in Uganda have attracted wide condemnations directed at the EMB regarding electoral malpractices (Makulilo, 2009:436). These malpractices occur amidst rising demands for an independent EMB that is free from manipulation of the ruling party. Van Ham (2015:718) looks at the EMB as an instrument used to maintain the

incumbent's hold onto power.

Uganda re-opened its political space, through the referendum of 2005, to allow political parties to compete for political leadership. Ever since, political parties have demanded an independent EMB rather than one that submits to the ruling party (De Torrenté, 2013:532). They note that an independent EMB should be:

- Nominated by all political parties,
- Vetted by the Judicial Service Commission or,
- Appointed by the Public Service Commission (Opitz et al 2013:718).

As a consequence, an independent EMB would allow the country to enjoy the benefits of democracy (Gouws, 2011:3) and facilitate the conduct of an objective electoral process (Ward, 2007:160). While it is over a decade since multiparty democracy was re-introduced, the same demands are still on the table, something which *throws a shadow* on the prospects of credible elections in Uganda.

1.1 Describing an Election

There is a broad consensus that an election is when registered citizens, of voting age, select their leaders to govern and administer a body of institutions for running state affairs on behalf of the citizens (Bogaards, 2007:85). Usually, elections are conducted at different levels depending on the structure of authority (Garrity, 2012:204). They are structured with a number of objectives, *viz*: enable citizens to value voting as an obligation; ensure that every eligible voter is on the voters' register; enable voters to follow the voting procedures; and allow vigilance at polling stations (Hill, 2015). In Uganda, the first elections were conducted in 1961 and 1962 acknowledging, for the first time, the right of the people to choose their own government (Kabwegyere, 2000:4). As a consequence, elections have become one of the means through which good governance is enhanced as well as an essential principle of liberal democratic procedures and practice.

A study by Linhart et al (2010:238) discloses that regular elections should be a landmark in every democratic system and should consist of inclusive participation. Uganda, like many nations, electoral management is a preserve of the EMB that is mandated to organise and supervise the processes that seek to allow an election (Murison, 2013:495). The EMB is mandated to develop measures designed for preventing every form of election malpractice, which can affect the credibility of elections. For example, issues of ethnicity, gender, religion or party alignments, which tend to hold voters back from making genuine choices, should be defused during elections (Kabwegyere, 2000:3). Thus far, the issue of whether the EMB performs its functions to produce a credible election is essential to every democrat (Wonka, 2007:170). The EMB, of Uganda, requires every political leader to be selected through universal adult suffrage and in accordance with the Constitution (1995) so as to achieve the desired democracy. Scholars (such as Graber, 2006:168) suggest that when voters select leaders to implement the national programmes, presented in the form of manifestos, those leaders have a duty to work in the interest of every citizen. This view presupposes regular consultation between the voted and the voters as a fulfilment of one of the pillars of popular democracy (Pretorius, 2006:752). As a consequence, the credibility of an election is assessed basing on the degree of citizen involvement in terms of a number of electoral activities such as voter registration and attending campaign meetings or gatherings (Koelble & Lipuma, 2008:2).

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Selected theories are explored with the aim of establishing the dominant theory so as to explain the four selected issues in this paper, namely; transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, and competitiveness.

2.1 Liberalism

This theoretical imperative offers two divergent perspectives to explain the motivation for elections. The initial perspective assumes that Neoliberalism advocates for individual liability, suggesting both the voter and the voted have obligations to meet in an election. On the affirmative, neoliberalism can exert pressure on the poorest peoples by requiring them to seek out explanations over shortages of basic social services from the government. However, critics (such as Golooba-Mutebi & Hickey, 2010:1217) consider the individual liability as a channel likely to cause damage to welfare programmes, attack the rights of labour, and phasedown social programmes. As a result, governments should place humanistic values and social values at parity with economic efficiency between election times.

Central to Neoliberalism is the view that elections are motivated by the desire to deliver an accepted regime or remove an unwanted system from office based on either success or failure in socio-economic and political policies (Hewison, 2005:312). A study by Sören et al. (2015:80) demonstrates the power of elections by observing that by using peaceful and democratic means, an unwanted government can be removed from power through a well-managed electoral process. While the ideas are supportive of previous findings, such as Biagini, 2003:62) and further echoed by Griffiths (2011:303), an unwanted government can persist in office, abusing the rights of citizens, failing to provide effective management of state affairs, and promoting conflict and general oppression. This has been the case with Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea and Paul Biya of Cameroon (AFP, 2018).

2.2 Utilitarian liberalism

The second theoretical imperative Utilitarian Liberalism, which supports representative democracy and underscores democracy as the optimum means by which governments can promote the interests of every person (Minogue, 2013). This theory presents a narrow conflict with Neoliberalism, which, as regards the change of leaders and or regimes tends to favour the incumbent (Chaney, 2013:2). Consequently, state machinery can be applied and the incumbent can retain an upper hand over the opposition. For instance, the Supreme Court of Uganda, while delivering its judgement regarding a Presidential Election Petition No. 1 of 2001, concluded that:

Although malpractices had occurred, they were not found to have affected the outcomes of the election in a substantial manner, and that the defendant (the incumbent President) had neither personally committed or his knowledge directed others to commit an illegal practice. There had been non-compliance, by the EMB, of the provisions of the constitution, the presidential elections Act and the electoral commission Act, while conducting the said elections on the issues of voter registers, casting ballots and counting of results. (*Murison, 2013:496-497*)

Despite the view that bench of Judges observed non-compliance with some electoral regulations, they did not reverse the election outcome. On the affirmative side, the Supreme Court of Kenya made the same observations and were convinced by the petitioner (Raila Odinga) to annul the victory of Uhuru Kenyatta in 2018. One of the contributions to the Utilitarian Liberal debate is Habibi's (2007:9) critique demonstrating how incumbent regimes maintain their hold on power through less violent elections. For example, the regime of Daniel Arap Moi, in Kenya, persisted in office for a long time on the ploy of democratic elections even if those elections often failed the credibility test (Steeves, 1999:75). This justifies why there was post-electoral turmoil after first tenure of Mwai Kibaki

particularly when he tried to retain office using unconstitutional means in 2007 (Abuya, 2010:122). In the same way, a number of leaders remain in power not because they win elections but because they have the power to sway the electoral process in their favour. A study by Gherghina (2011:259) reveals that regimes prolong their stay in power by relegating national institutions to objects of the regime. While the ideas of Utilitarian Liberalism are remarkable, their main limitation is inability to clarify an electoral process in terms of how and whether it can be credible, as revealed in a number of works of studies (such as Smith, 2008:37 and Nielsen, 2003:458).

2.3 Realism, Constructivism, and Election theory

Orr (2006:292), one of the enthusiasts of Realism, reveals that an electoral system should enforce four elements, *viz.*: a 'cleaner' electoral process, choice of the voters, strong political parties, and accountable electoral management. As a consequence, Realism demonstrates that a faulty electoral system leads to suspected results, which in a number of countries has resulted in post-election violence and or civil war. Neo-realism attributes a non-credible electoral process to the radical nature of incumbents and or the ruling parties to serve their own interests to the disadvantage of the citizens. Constructivism maintains that electoral processes blend with the political space and facilitate a political structure devoid of the *status quo* (Arnold, 2014:497). The Election theory assumes that democratic states change regimes through free, fair and credible elections and such states tolerate a change of regime, for example, Ghana (Makara, 2011:1). As a consequence, in post-Cold War Africa, countries started to embrace or were required to espouse credible elections as a key element to attaining democracy (Bruce, 2012:14). Thus far, any involvement outside the confines of democratic elections is perceived as an illegitimate action against government and or citizens (Cohen, 2014:241). This article looks at four of the key contested issues during elections in Uganda, *viz.*: transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, and competitiveness.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The primary method for this article was a desk evaluation of obtainable theoretical as well as conceptual works regarding the contested issues on elections in Uganda and other countries in the region and beyond. This method of research involves collecting information from available resources, for example, educational journals, statistical periodicals, systematic and experimental reports. According to the Management study guide (2013), upon the collection of information, a researcher proceeds to document and organise the information along selected or emerging themes. The method has been recognised to be effective and can be applied at any stage of the investigation since much of the basic material can be gathered and used during the study process.

4. THE OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSION

The outcomes of this study are presented and discussed along with the study questions which sought to expose selected issues to elections in Uganda, *viz.*: transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, and competitiveness.

4.1 The issue of transparency

Transparency is one of the key elements essential to a credible election in Uganda and beyond (Pottie, 2001:136). Usually, transparency is required of the EMB which is entrusted with the obligation to organize, oversee and adjudicate the various activities of the electoral process (Mogalakwe, 2015:107). Nonetheless, the issue of transparency has often been contested in a number of past elections in Uganda and, as a consequence, the credibility of many an election is left wanting. For example, both the 2001 and the 2016 Presidential elections were contested in the supreme court of Uganda by candidate Warren Kizza -Besigye and John Patrick Amama-Mbabazi respectively. Article 62 of the

Constitution underscores the view that the EMB shall be independent subject to the Constitution, and shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority in the performance of its functions (Government of Uganda, 1995). Nonetheless, the key indicators of an independent EMB including impartiality, a free and fair process of voter registration, presence of a code of conduct for all political actors, and the extent to which the EMB seeks to ensure that the electoral process is credible remain under contest (Oryem, 2010:1).

While the Political Parties and Organizations Act of 2005 of Uganda empowers the EMB with the responsibility of ensuring that every election officer and candidate complies with the provisions of every electoral legislation in a transparent way, the picture on the ground is different. A study by Kitamirike et al (2015:3) reveals that the elections of both 2006 and 2011 attracted several contests, such as, reliability of the Electoral Commission, honesty of the electoral register, bribery of voters, influence and bullying of voters by officials of security forces during the electoral period on top of rigging of ballots and other associated mal-practices. Also, the European Union Election Observer Report (2011) outlined, among others:

- The influence of incumbency was applied to the level of rendering the political arena among the contending political parties and or contestants lopsided;
- The process of voting was tainted by unnecessary managerial and logistical messes, which resulted into an undesirable number of Ugandan voters being marginalised;
- The Uganda Police Force has failed to appreciate its legitimate duty as a neutral institution for enforcing electoral law without fear or favour. The dearth of police neutrality irritates the prospects of voters.
- The Electoral Commission failed to attract general confidence attributable to the system of appointing Commissioner by the Presidency, with the endorsement of the Legislature. Also, distrust was grounded on the view that the membership of Electoral Commission, did not change since the 2006 polls, yet it was condemned by the Supreme Court for the manner in which it conducted those polls.

Transparency of the EMB is associated with election administration as an element of democratic and legitimate politics and once transparent is abused, democratic elections cannot be achieved (Elklit & Reynolds, 2001:4). Cases, where transparency was abused, include Kenya (2008), Zimbabwe (2008), Burundi (2010 and 2015) and Uganda (2001, 2006 and 2011) something which resulted in post-election violence. Transparency of the EMB requires two basics, namely: (i) promulgating an electoral code as well as a publishing an electoral calendar for the election cycle; and (ii) establishing a strong legal framework. According to Debrah (2011:27) a transparent election is synonymous to a credible election since it guarantees inclusiveness, participation along with reducing the number of post-election petitions. Non-transparent elections have attracted a number of outcomes in parts of Africa, *viz.*: riots, deaths, violence and protests. For example, the riots which resulted from the 2011 Presidential Elections in Nigeria, led to approximately 800 deaths and 65,000 displacements (Sweeney, 2015:1); in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), several deaths resulting from riots ensued when Joseph Kabila won disputed Presidential Elections of 2011 (Ross 2015); in Kenya, the 2008 post-election violence claimed several lives (Muhoma & Nyairo, 2011:412); and in Uganda, the disputed 2011 Presidential Elections results led to walk-to-work protests in the Kampala metropolitan (Fisher, 2013:478). The examples underscore the contribution of transparency as one of the essential elements to attaining a credible election.

The Coalition of Civil Society Organisations in Uganda maintains that the election procedures lack

basic transparency to facilitate a credible election. The group raised a number of concerns relating to the system of appointing EMB, their tenure of office, the relationship between the EMB and the Ruling Party, and representation of different interests (The Citizens' coalition for electoral democracy in Uganda, n.d:2). In a comparable view, the South African EMB worked with the African Union Commission and the African Association of Electoral Authorities, in 2003, to adopt a number of principles, *viz.*: (i) independence of EMBs to be secured in the Constitutions and their budgets allocated by Parliaments; (ii) appointment of Commissioners to be determined by Parliament in a transparent, inclusive as well as being sensitive to gender and to minority groups; (iii) the EMBs to be appointed by their secretariat; and (iv) the EMBs to conduct themselves with integrity, independence, transparency and impartiality (Makulilo, 2009:437). An independent EMB can conduct a transparent election with ease (Opitz et al 2013:725), and so transparency of an election becomes a norm as the EMB works towards achieving a credible poll.

Obtainable studies demonstrate that transparency of the EMB entails unambiguous electoral procedures so as to cope with both real and perceived, external and internal influence (Taddele, 2012:73). Ensuring explicit procedures demands that election petitions relating to the dearth of transparency that has been repetitive in Uganda since 2001 become history or remain very few (Tangri & Mwenda, 2010:36). It can be noted that while dearth of transparency is one of the key catalysts to several incidences of post-election violence, a study by Bakamanume (2012:46) reveals that the EMB of Uganda is rapt by issues relating to the nature and implications of the elections, democracy and peace, legitimacy of rule, and voting patterns rather than transparency.

To sum it, transparency of the EMB affects the credibility of an election and the EMB of Uganda points to the direction of Realism which calls for increased choices among the voters. This is illustrated by the view that dearth of a credible election maintained by Utilitarian Liberalism is likely to remain apparent for much of the near future elections in the country.

4.2 The issue of Inclusiveness

The credibility of an election in Uganda is examined from the line of citizen inclusion in a wide range of electoral activities such as campaign meetings of different parties and or candidates, taking part in actual polling, and monitoring the vote at the polling station. This study reveals that the level of citizen inclusion in the three electoral activities has been relegated to casting the ballot alone. The voter is not involved in the preparation and in the tallying the ballots save the few parties and or candidate agents. While Kitamirike et al (2015:2) reveal that the right to choose leadership is the main substance of any egalitarian society by way of consolidating people's involvement in governance besides increasing responsibility, the ballot alone may not guarantee inclusiveness among the full society until it supersedes the ballot.

Limited inclusion is a concern in guaranteeing a credible election as well as the outcome of that election. Inclusiveness is expected to have an effect at different stages ranging from the preparation period up to ballot tallying. If these activities are not inclusive enough then the final result, of declaring results, cannot be relied upon as the ultimate decision of voters. As a consequence, an election loser can be declared winner while the winner declared loser as the case has been a number of cases. For example, in 2006, the loser of Lubaga South Parliamentary seat (Singh Katongole) was declared the winner as the eventual winner (Moses Kasibante) was declared loser until the Mengo Magisterial court decided otherwise (Uganda Legal Information Institute, 2011).

A study by Shah (2015:45) reveals that while an election is a civic concern of every voter, inclusivity in elections is one of the key elements of a credible election outcome. For example, some of the issues

that have dominated elections in Uganda during the period 2001-2016 include, *inter alia*, limited inclusion of voters at key stages. A number of critiques have noted that failure, by the Executive, to bring forth the relevant electoral proposals before Parliament under the guise of time does not favour inclusiveness; Kitamirike et al (2015) reveal that for the previous 15 years the procedure of electoral reforms has been tainted by last-minute productions of projected laws to the Legislature, non-inclusive discussions and beginning of discussions few months to the polls. As a consequence, issues of deepening democracy cannot be realistic when the issue of inclusive polls is not undertaken from the utmost policy level (Virendrakumar et al 2018). Nonetheless, it should be stated that while inclusion cannot in itself translate into a credible election, it can enable the voter to gain intrinsic satisfaction that their final decision was counted (Kanyinga & Odote, 2019).

4.3 The issue of Accountability

According to Hong (2017:121), an election is one of the essential instruments for ensuring accountability by presenting voters with a mechanism to ensure that elected officials are checked from time to time. This view suggests that in democratic governance, elections and accountability are intertwined since they both are indicators of good governance. However, before an election can aid accountability, that election must be accountable in the first place (Cheeseman et al 2019). For example, the EMB and the political parties should be responsible for every action they take before, during and after an election cycle (González-Sirois & Bélanger, 2018). Such accountability should not only be limited to how the funds allocated were used, for the case of EMBs, but cover every action and or decision which affected, whether direct or otherwise, on the election process. This is so because the EMB is expected to remain impartial throughout its engagements, decisions and relationship with different political actors (Van Ham & Lindberg, 2015:455). Where impartiality is real, then, the EMB enjoys confidence among both domestic and international stakeholders.

In other cases, accountability requires other organs of the state, for example, security forces, which work with the EMB to ensure credible elections to remain answerable to the EMB at all times of elections. However, these organs have, in a number of countries, been involved in abusing and frustrating voters and candidates, and in extreme cases forcing candidates' agents to sign falsified 'Declaration of results' forms at polling centers (Fortin-Rittberger, 2014:96). An exploration of east African community demonstrates that high-handedness of the security forces during elections goes with no one providing accountability. As a consequence, this has led to intra-state violence as the case was during 2015 elections in Burundi. However, when the security forces are subordinate to the EMB, which is a civilian authority, the level of accountability improves. In Uganda, the EMB works with different security forces (such as Uganda Police and Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces) in aspects of logistical support; e.g., in transporting poll materials to hard-to-reach areas (such as Rift valley centres and Karamoja), as well as offering security to candidates before, during and after campaigns. As a result, the role and involvement of security forces in the election process require that those agencies remain accountable to the EMB.

One way of ensuring accountability is ensuring that every partner agency that works with the EMB (including civil society organisations) during an election remains accountable to the civilian authority (Kleinig, 2014:86). Nonetheless, a study by Murrison (2013:497) discloses that during the three elections in Uganda, that is; 2006, 2011 and 2016, antagonism over the chain of control was a factor and security officers did not follow civilian instructions proceeding from the EMB as they ought to have done. In view of this, Murrison notes that the security forces were deployed with the intention to shock members of opposition parties as well as participate in election malpractices in favour of the

ruling party (Murison, 2013:497). Nonetheless, on the progressive side, it has been revealed that the security forces offered positive support in distributing election materials during elections given its wider logistic ability compared to the EMB.

4.4 The issue of Competitiveness

Every democratic election are expected to be competitive at the two key levels, namely at the political party level and at the general level. At the party level, political parties are expected to organise primary elections to facilitate every party to choose a party flag bearer to be presented for competition during general elections. In Uganda, every politician is expected to conduct an in-house election, which attracts every willing member to show their ability to carry the party's flag to attract public support. If this process is done within the confines of a democratic process then every losing candidate will support the winner for the good of the party. However, Uganda has an exceptional set of values, in particular, the ruling party wherein the position of the party flag bearer has never been competitive. Available evidence reveals that prior to elections, a member of the ruling party will suggest that this position be ring-fenced in what has come to be labelled "sole-candidate" thus preventing any hope for internal competition. This trend was applied prior to 2016 elections pioneered by the then national female youth member of Parliament. In 2019, the same trend was repeated pioneered by the eastern regional Member of Parliament for persons with disabilities. Also, the party's parliamentary caucus resolved that the incumbent be allowed to rule forever with no one ever competing against him as long as he offers his candidature.

At the general level, political parties are expected to present their flag bearers along with the party manifesto to be used for convincing the electorate to vote for that party. In a democratic nation, every party should be given the opportunity to traverse the country and reach as many potential voters with a view to amassing support for each of the participating parties. With this, a free and impartial poll which permits every registered voter to enjoy their right to vote in a transparent, regular and honest election becomes obvious as this espouses the capacity of the voter to exercise their resolve, decide their political leadership devoid of aggressive force (Kitamirike et al. 2015:2). Thus competitiveness is an essential condition for empowering the voter to dislike in fairness since short of political strength; the voter cannot be able to exercise their rights.

It can be noted that without reasonable competition, leaders lack real accountability and political responsibility. Indeed without political competition, the voting population is likely to remain vulnerable to exploitation from the rulers. By implication, the synergy produced from competition is much higher than that from sole party ruler-ship which prompts the voters and various agencies to seek other means such as the use of arms. The active competition among political parties allows them to realise the goal of democracy. Governments all over the world have realised that political power does not belong to sole candidature or single-party ruler-ship but the existence of and healthy competition among parties. Recent lessons and or experiences, such as that of Muammar Gadhafi of Libya, on democratic governance have proved that even if a ruler supersedes the welfare state, as long as that ruler fails to allow competitive politics, the population will never satisfied with the socio-economic developments.

5. CONCLUSION

This article demonstrates that when examining contested issues related to the credibility of the electoral process and elections, transparency of an election should be integrated into all analyses. Doing so contributes to getting to grips with what Stockemer and Kchouk (2017:419) call a key component for both reinforcing as well as realising democracy. Moreover, the study provides insights

into certain areas of contestation related to the EMB, which is mandated to organize, conduct and supervise elections. The independence and transparency of the EMB, inclusiveness, accountability and competitiveness stood out as key factors on which various contestations are hinged. Although both Realism and Liberalism are interrogated, Uganda appears to be far from realising most of the dictates highlighted in the theories. It is indicated that if the transparency of the EMB is upheld, the credibility of elections will improve proportionately and so will the democratic path. Interests and priorities do not differ across communities in Uganda thus suggesting a need to plan elections that are tailored to democratic principles; electoral processes are required to deliver a true democracy so that voters' priorities are addressed.

The issue of inclusiveness is a severe factor impinging on the credibility of elections. Devoid of an opening to take part in electoral processes, an individual is deprived of nationality and reduced to a level that is insignificant to persons holding authority (Virendrakumar et al. 2018:510). The main problem with the inclusiveness is that it cannot, in practice, be absolute, probably due to constitutional provisions protecting those that exclude sections of the citizenry for example prisoners have not had the opportunity to take part in the politics of Uganda. That challenge requires amending the electoral laws themselves so that every citizen who has attained the voting age irrespective of their criminal record does participate. A major source of controversy is associated with the processes of drafting electoral laws, which is mainly dominated by government and they do so too late at the detriment of an accessible democratic dispensation. Ensuring absolute inclusiveness would be a significant step in a positive direction since the voting population will be empowered enough to be proud and demand accountability of the seating government. Some of the previous studies in Uganda have failed to address the aspect of inclusiveness; this study recognizes that the inclusiveness from major political point of view is closely associated with credible elections. By enhancing inclusiveness in electoral processes, by ensuring accountability, and by promoting competitive politics; the credibility of elections in Uganda will be enhanced.

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