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THE HISTORY OF ELECTIONS IN GHANA, KENYA AND UGANDA

What We Can Learn From These "National Exercises"

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ABSTRACT

A large literature has described the years after independence from colonial rule as a period of 'departicipation': Africa's new rulers – whether driven by personal venality or a sincere commitment to nation-building – swiftly gave up on elections, or at best held elections that, by denying choice, left violence as the central dynamic of African politics. This article draws on the cases of Kenya, Ghana and Uganda in the late 1960s to argue that the emphasis often placed on the 'speed and ease' of this process has been overstated. Instead, Africa's politicians and civil servants valued elections as a means to educate and discipline the public, even as they feared their possible outcomes. Building on a literature that focuses on the individual experience of elections rather than the presence or absence of parties, we argue that the rhetoric of politicians and civil servants shows that they saw elections as 'exercises' – a revealing term – that would train and test their new citizens. Yet this is not the whole story: voters understood their participation in their own terms and played a role in how early experiments with elections played out. The political closures of these years were real, but their course was unplanned and contingent, shaped partly by popular involvement. These points are not only of historical value, but also provide important insights into the extent to which contemporary elections are instruments of elite power or the drivers of democratisation.

INTRODUCTION

In 1966, a few months after the overthrow of Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, one of the men who had led the coup published a justificatory book. The author, Akwasi Afrifa, revealingly chose to publish his work in the UK. He and his fellow members of what they called the National Liberation Council (NLC) were acutely aware of international scrutiny, and absolutely clear that in – a Cold War context – they were aligned with the West. The book presented Nkrumah as a demagogue who had torn up the constitution: 'the coup was necessary to save our country and our people' (Afrifa 1966, p. 37). Kofi Busia, one of the leaders of the opposition party banned by Nkrumah, contributed a preface praising Afrifa as 'a citizen with an impassioned faith in the value of democracy', describing the book as 'a challenging defence of democracy' (Afrifa 1966, pp. 9-10). The book made much of the flagrant rigging of a referendum in 1964 which had made Ghana into a one-party state, and the 'elections' of 1965 in which no ballots were cast since every candidate was nominated, unopposed, by Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP). This was the logic for the coup: as Afrifa boldly declared 'we will stand against anything undemocratic' (Afrifa 1966, p107).

The book had rather less to say on the elections of the 1950s, in which the CPP had repeatedly and resoundingly defeated a succession of opposition parties with which Busia had been associated. Afrifa briefly explained those defeats as the consequence of a lack of education: 'Kwame Nkrumah played hard on the illiteracy of his fellow men and women, marshalling the majority of the 80 per cent illiterate citizens around himself [at] independence' (Afrifa 1966, p. 54). Yet that explanation left Afrifa and the NLC with a problem: if they were committed to elections as the basis of democracy, how could they prevent the rise of another demagogue like Nkrumah?

Afrifa's dilemma was a particular version of a much wider challenge. Some scholars have described the years after independence from colonial rule as a period of 'departicipation': Africa's new rulers – whether driven by personal venality or a sincere commitment to nation-building – swiftly gave up on elections altogether, or at best held elections that, by denying choice, left violence as the central dynamic of African politics

(Coleman & Rosberg 1968, p. 8; Huntington 1965; Kasfir 1976; Lewis 1965; Zolberg 1968, p. 86). As we will show, the emphasis placed by some on the 'speed and ease' (Coleman & Rosberg 1968, p. 664) of this process may be overstated, for Africa's politicians and civil servants valued elections as a means to educate and discipline the public, even as they feared their possible outcome.

In revisiting the history of these years, we are motivated partly by more recent electoral history. Since the 1980s, the uncertain outcome of the reintroduction of multi-party elections – initially hailed by some as a 'third wave of democratization' (Huntington 1991) – has revived debate: can elections change the nature of politics (Young 1996)? This has reprised the arguments of the 1950s and early 1960s. These pitted Seymour Martin Lipset's (1959) classic argument that the 'social requisites' (notably wealth and education) for democracy were lacking in Asia and Africa against the cautious hopes of William Mackenzie (1958) or Edward Shils (1960) that multi-party elections would embed liberal state authority. The contemporary debate has again set optimists, who still see the possibility that elections and a particular set of liberal values will become locked in a virtuous cycle (Lindberg 2006), against sceptics who argue that liberal democracy is a Western import, that may be simply impossible in current circumstances (Collier 2009) – or that the ballot is in itself not enough to achieve the social and economic transformation needed for true democracy (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2006). Critical voices suggest that elections will either lead to violence or create an electoral façade for authoritarianism (Levitsky & Way 2002; Ninsin 2006). For the current protagonists of either view, the story of the 1960s appears as no more than a prologue: evidence of the premature stifling of liberal possibility or early confirmation that elections are either unsuitable or are too easily appropriated by entrenched interests. We argue that a closer look at the debates and events of the 1960s can make a valuable contribution to contemporary conversations.

Our re-examination of the debates of the 1960s draws also on a rather different literature on elections in Africa and elsewhere – largely from historians and social anthropologists – that has taken the individual experience of elections, not the presence or absence of parties, as its focus (Bertrand et al. 2007). Echoing nineteenth-century critics (and picking up on an argument made by Stein Rokkan (1961)), this literature foregrounds the moment of individual choice – secret but public – as central to an individualisation of politics. The ballot, it is argued, extracts people's political lives from the multiple social communities in which most live as church-goers, family members, or professionals. In

offering choice and political involvement, the ballot also limits these to that one moment. 'Electoral citizenship', Alain Garrigou (1992) argued, changed how voters thought about their relationship to the state in France; in England, the nineteenth-century electoral reforms engineered what James Vernon (1993, p. 250) has called a 'disciplining and closure' of public politics. That approach resonates with 1970s studies (Hyden & Leys 1972) of the 'elections without choice' (Hermet et al. 1978) that had become common in Africa. This work suggested that, far from being irrelevant vestiges of a lost liberal moment, these ballots consolidated the role of adult suffrage – under close control – as an instrument of elite power. Adult suffrage, it was suggested, was both 'educational and anaesthetic' (Hermet 1978, p. 14), allowing a controlled participation that would strengthen state institutions, rather than overwhelm them.

As we will show, the rhetoric of politicians and civil servants in 1960s shows that they really did see elections as 'exercises' – a revealing term – that would train and test their new citizens. This is not the whole story, however. Recent research on Africa, and other parts of the world, argues that voters' involvement in elections does not lead straightforwardly to an individualised, private politics that abstracts people from society (Banégas 2007; Bertrand 2007; Lawrence 2009). Voters may understand their participation on their own terms, and even controlled elections may lead politics in new directions. The social meanings of electoral behaviour – like the meaning of the word 'democracy' itself – are neither universal nor readily predictable (Schaffer 1998).

We draw on those insights here to revisit elite debates over elections in the late 1960s, drawing on the experience of Ghana, Kenya and Uganda to reveal something of the variety of forms and paths which these conversations took in Anglophone Africa. First, by asking what Africa's new rulers sought to achieve through elections, and what kinds of election they imagined, we show that one-party rule was by no means a straightforward answer to the challenges facing the new leaders of independent Africa. There was, as Staffan Lindberg (2006, p. 11) has pointed out, 'interesting experimentation' in elections in these years. The course of this experimentation was contingent, tentative and uncertain, with the subsequent political closure taking diverse paths and forms.

Second, we suggest that this experimentation may be understood as a precursor to the emergence from the 1990s of what is often now called 'electoral authoritarianism' (Schedler 2006). Politicians and civil servants sought to manage and control electoral outcomes – and

to secure or maintain power for themselves – in multiple ways. Yet our third point is that we should beware crediting politicians and civil servants – in the 1960s, or more recently – with more foresight or control than they possess. The focus of this article is on elite debates – the preserve of the educated minority, very largely male, who dominated politics and civil service employment. But the public were a constant presence: whether voting or abstaining, cheering at rallies or listening in sullen disapproval. Schemes of electoral discipline became entangled with popular aspirations that involved multiple ideas of community; powerful as the language of decolonisation and nationalism may seem, national citizenship was not the only way for people to make claims in Africa in these years (Ndegwa 1997). This was a time of hopes, frustrations and suspicions about the state, citizenship and the promise of prosperity; the political closures of these years were real, but their course was unplanned and contingent, shaped partly by popular involvement (Cooper 2012).

'YOUR VOTE IS YES': DISCIPLINE, INDISCPLINE AND SINGLE PARTY RULE

In focussing on Ghana, Kenya and Uganda, we do not mean to imply that these countries represent all of Africa, nor that that they were closely connected – though Kenya and Uganda are neighbouring countries, and Nkrumah did make a determined effort to influence Ugandan politics (Agyeman 1975). They are chosen rather to show what different paths these debates might take. All three countries shared the fundamental legacy of colonial rule: a political system rooted in racial difference and violence, mediated by the late-colonial obsession with economic development. In all, the government's payroll had grown rapidly since the late 1930s, as had the formal structures for the regulation of trade, health, agriculture and almost every other aspect of life. An emergent African cadre of state employees took up the assumptions and the self-appointed duties of the late-colonial 'modernizing bureaucrats' (Cooper 1997). All three countries came to independence with parliamentary systems based on first-past-the-post constituency elections, and with a volatile combination of high popular expectations and recent experience of mass political mobilisation.

There were significant differences, however: Ghana became independent in 1957, earlier than most sub-Saharan African colonial territories, and its new leaders were both empowered and burdened by an especially strong sense that they were on show to the world, an African example: '[w]e are on a conspicuous stage', Nkrumah told Ghana's parliamentarians at independence, echoing Edmund Burke, 'and the world marks our performance' (Nkrumah 1957, p. 4). Uganda and Kenya, on the other side of the continent,

became independent in 1962 and 1963 respectively. The first rulers of independent Ghana and Uganda were radical, pan-Africanist and anti-imperialist in their rhetoric, and their relationship with the UK – and US – governments was increasingly tense (Austin 1970; Mutibwa 1996); in Kenya, by contrast, the bland avowal of 'African socialism' by Jomo Kenyatta's government was combined with a decidedly unradical economic policy and a continued close relationship with the west (Ochieng' 1989).

Beyond rhetoric and timing, there were other differences. Ghana was relatively prosperous at independence, its economy buoyed by small-scale African cash-crop production. Nkrumah was deeply suspicious of an established social stratum of traders, professionals and customary chiefs whose wealth and influence rested on that commerce and who were a powerful presence across Ghana – especially in the kingdom of Asante, where there was an incipient movement for autonomy (Rathbone 2000). Uganda was less wealthy than Ghana, yet the regional tensions were even more acute; the kingdom of Buganda was the economic and political centre of the colonial state, but its leaders had no commitment to a post-colonial nation-building project that promised to spread wealth and power more evenly. Like Nkrumah, Obote saw himself as beset by internal enemies all too ready to make alliance with the forces of imperialism. In Kenya, independence had come after an anti-colonial insurgency and a counter-insurgency campaign that was brutal even by the standards of time, and which left power largely in the hands of those who had worked with the colonial state – albeit to their own ends - rather than fought against it (Branch 2009). Threats to Kenya's existence came from its margins in the north and on the coast, not from its centre (Brennan 2008; Whittaker 2014). But in all three countries, the nationalists who took office at independence were all too aware that the nation had only a limited hold on the affections of the former colonial subjects who were now to be citizens.

African nationalism looked forward to the 'nation of the future' (Reid 2015); its enemy, even more than colonialism, was the proliferation of alternative political possibilities, for local ethnic patriotisms raised the possibility that there might be other future nations. Against those threats, elections by adult suffrage and the secret ballot – with their bureaucratic, territory-wide processes of registering, nomination, listing, queueing and counting – had made both the nation and its counterpart, the loyal individual citizen, briefly and tantalizingly visible at the end of empire (Willis et al. 2018). Elections drew together nationalist politicians and colonial officials who shared a strong awareness that they were subject to a sceptical international gaze.

In the wake of the formal independence which followed close on those polls, Africa's new leaders pinned their legitimacy to the developmental transformation of African society. They demanded the support and commitment of populations whose own expectations of modernity were high. The challenge of early independence quickly resolved itself as one of discipline and order: how could people be persuaded that the future had been postponed until they, as citizens, could learn to work and behave in new ways? Nkrumah could tell the public that 'I expect every one of you to be hard-working and law-abiding' – but would they obey?[1] Some of Africa's new leaders made clear their doubts over the viability of elections in this context, fearing that they would compromise the unity that nationalism exalted and derail the work of development (Kaunda 1964). Across the continent nationalists worried that, as Grace Ibingira, a Ugandan politician, put it, 'all politicians … will be forced, in order to get votes from the common man… to speak in terms of tribe or religion' (Kasfir 1976, p. 206). In similar vein Uganda's vice-president, John Babiiha (1967), commented 'The remarkable results of hard work – don't jeopardise it all with elections'.

Ibingira had cause to worry. Educational leaflets *Jifunze uraia* (1963, 1967) may have assured voters that to cast a ballot was to 'teach yourself citizenship'. Yet in late-colonial election campaigns they had behaved as both more and less than that. People whose experience of government had been shaped by the apparently capricious and violent colonial state sought moral political relationships through local and/or ethnic patrons, as Peter Ekeh (1975) has argued. Single-party rule readily suggested itself as a technique to manage this: elections could be held without the need for a political opposition which, as Kenyan nationalist Tom Mboya (1963, p. 657) put it, 'irritates the government, which is engaged in the work of nation-building' (also Nkrumah 1955; Nyerere 1960). Party names laid claim to the role of singular national movement: the Kenya African National Union (KANU), the Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC). Yet experience soon showed that even single parties might lack the internal discipline and organisation to realise the dream of electoral order.

In Ghana independence had come in the wake of a clear electoral victory in 1956 for Nkrumah's CPP, against largely regional opposition parties that demanded a degree of devolution. Initially reluctant to hold that final late-colonial election, Nkrumah had then seized upon it as a demonstration to the world of Ghana's unity and readiness for self-government. After independence, he repeatedly turned to the ballot box as a way to demand public obedience: in 1960, there was a combined referendum/election on a new constitution

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[1] United Kingdom National Archives (UKNA) DO 195/10: Text of New Year's Broadcast, 1961.

and the choice of president; in 1964 another referendum on the introduction of one-party rule. During the former, Nkrumah told Ghanaians to 'do their duty' and 'vote in an orderly and disciplined manner' (Nkrumah 1961, p. 208); during the latter, voters were told that the referendum was a 'national exercise', 'in which all must play their part'. To vote was to be a good citizen, committed to development: 'when we vote yes we shall be voting … for the speedy and tranquil development of our resources to the era of Work and Happiness for all.'[2] The popular response was less than wholehearted, especially in 1964 when, despite a reported overwhelming endorsement of single-party rule, rumours of rigging circulated widely.

Yet single-party rule proved not to be enough. Nkrumah had long suspected that some CPP members lacked zeal and commitment, and he had struggled to assert central control of the nomination process against the multiple local networks which actually constituted the CPP. In the elections of the 1950s, voters had overwhelmingly supported parliamentary CPP candidates and their promise of early independence. But those candidates had also relied on a very local politics of promise and reward, in which attentiveness to the particular needs of constituents and material generosity were prominent. Nkrumah came to suspect his own MPs as 'self-seekers and careerists' and announced that Ghana needed 'a new type of parliamentarian': 'men of integrity and honesty of purpose'.[3] With elections scheduled for 1965, Nkrumah hoped for 'sterner discipline at all levels'. But even with a single-party he feared that voters might choose, or be bribed into choosing the wrong representatives. After a brief build-up in which the government-controlled press made much of the national bureaucratic exercise of electoral preparation – the recruitment of staff, the demarcation of constituencies – the election was in effect cancelled. CPP candidates were chosen by a central committee and declared elected, unopposed. The CPP party newspaper hailed the 'complete absence of corruption', observing censoriously that in the past 'the tendency had been for people seeking parliamentary election to indulge in unscrupulous practices using money to influence the electorate and thus buy their votes.'[4]

Nkrumah's overthrow a few months later was through a coup, not a popular uprising. But the lack of popular resistance to the coup, and the apparent public jubilation that greeted it, allowed observers to draw discomfiting lessons about the consequences of abandoning

[2] See the header on the *Ghanaian Times*, 7 January 1964, p. 1; 'Dacko wants single party', *Ghanaian Times*, 11 January 1964, p. 1; 'Editorial: the people's democracy', *Ghanaian Times*, 10 January 1964.
[3] Nkrumah's concerns about incumbent MPs were long-standing: UKNA DO 195/10,'Osagyefo's broadcast to the nation of 8 April 1961'. For 1965, see 'Parliament dissolved', *Evening News*, 25 May 1965, p. 1; 'Editorial. Wanted: true Nkrumahists', *Evening News*, 26 May 1965, p. 3; see also 'Editorial: a historic day', *Ghanaian Times*, 28 May 1965, p. 1.
[4] 'Editorial: There is victory in the horizon', *Evening News*, 1 June 1965, p. 3.

elections (Mazrui 1966). In Uganda, Obote reportedly worried that Nkrumah had become 'out of touch' with the people; in Kenya, newspapers likened Nkrumah to Hitler and accused him of seeking to 'insulate' himself from the people.[5] These judgements reflected local circumstances, as much as those in Ghana; for the coup in Ghana came at a critical moment of debate over the possibilities of party politics in both Uganda and Kenya.

Shortly after independence in 1963, Kenya's main opposition party had dissolved itself and joined KANU; the country remained nominally multi-party, but there was no formal alternative to KANU. Yet by early 1966 chronic disputes were tearing that party apart, along lines defined by the intersection of personal, ideological and ethnic differences. Oginga Odinga, Kenya's vice-president and the leader of a radical group within KANU that looked to a redistributive politics and nationalisation, had also become the voice of the Luo of western Kenya. Many Luo resented what they saw as the domination of government by an inner elite who were, like Kenyatta, Kikuyu from central Kenya. In a few dramatic weeks in early 1966, Odinga and his allies were effectively driven out of KANU, and founded a new party, the Kenya People's Union (KPU) (Gertzel 1970). That they were allowed to form an opposition party was significant: at the KANU meeting which saw the expulsion of Odinga, Kenyatta – who had previously expressed a preference for the unanimity of one-party rule – declared that Kenya was not 'ready' for such a system as 'our people value the basic freedoms entrenched in our Republican constitution'. Those freedoms, he argued, encouraged a discipline that was achieved out of self-control, and which was therefore superior to any imposed unity.

In Uganda too, Nkrumah's fall came at a critical moment. Obote had come to power as prime minister in 1962, just before Uganda became independent. The electoral victory of his UPC had rested on an entirely opportunistic alliance with the supporters of the *kabaka*, or king, of Buganda. The *kabaka* demanded a federal constitution and special status for his kingdom in an independent Uganda; Obote offered this, and made the *kabaka* the nominal president of Uganda after independence. The alliance was a fraught one – but so too was Obote's relationship with his own party. Like Nkrumah – whom he lionized – Obote mistrusted the local big men whose networks and influence had given the UPC a presence across the country. Nationalists though they were in terms of political goals, their politics had relied at least in part on presenting themselves as trustworthy, moral, actors: members of

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[5] UKNA FCO 31/713, Valedictory letter, Scott, British High Commissioner Kampala to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 26 January 1970; 'Editorial: The great debate', *East African Standard*, 28 February 1966, p. 4; see also 'Editorial: Nkrumah's mistakes', *Daily Nation*, 25 February 1966, p. 6; 'Editorial: The people's will', *East African Standard*, 3 March 1966, p. 4.

local, sub-national, communities who shared a sense of proper behaviour, of obligations and responsibilities (Gertzel 1974, pp. 51-2, 77; Ocitti 2000, pp. 133-35). What has been called moral ethnicity (Berman et al. 2004) loomed large in the way that aspiring politicians mobilised support, in Uganda as elsewhere. Obote always suspected that such local moral logics were a threat to his vision of a national party that was truly committed to his vision of development and modernisation (Mujaju 1976). In 1966 he arrested some of his rivals within the UPC and used the army to abolish the Buganda kingdom and the federal constitution. He introduced a new constitution that made him president, and postponed elections; while still insisting on the electoral basis of his own authority.[6]

Yet elections presented a challenge for Obote, as they had for Nkrumah. The problem was not the opposition Democratic Party (DP), which had been reduced to ineffectuality by defections and intimidation. Obote was so little concerned by it that the DP's few remaining parliamentarians were allowed to retain their seats even after the party was nominally banned in 1969. Obote's difficulties were with persistent hostility to his government from many in Buganda and from the local leaders of the UPC, whom he explicitly denounced as a privileged group of 'tribalists'. In Obote's view, dominance meant that any election would simply produce 'an assembly of peace conference delegates', each representing a different 'tribal force' (Obote 1970, p. 27).

Obote sought to resolve this dilemma through a radical economic and political approach that would sideline these local big men. To this end, he issued a 'Common Man's Charter', which promised large-scale nationalisations while demanding 'hard work by all'. The Charter – formally 'Document Number 2 of the Move to the Left' – emphasised the need for 'massive education' lest the 'misguided' be led astray by 'the well-to-do, the educated and the feudal elements' who 'serve the interests of foreigners'.[7] Obote (1970, p. 14) went on to warn repeatedly of the dangers posed by 'tribal masters' who would use their wealth to become 'owners" of the Party', at a local level and so undermine the 'total involvement of the people in building national institutions'.

Obote – and his opponents within the UPC – pursued their rivalry through a debate over the electoral system that rested on a shared premise: that voters were uneducated, and

[6] US National Archives and Record Administration (NARA) RG 59 Central Foreign Policy files (CFP), Box 2258 POL 15-1, Stebbins, Kampala to State Department, 11 April 1967; 'Felix Onama's speech at West Mengo', 9 February 1969, *Summary of World Broadcasts* (*SWB*) ME 2998 B/2; 'Ochola's address on internal "enemies", 4 February 1970, *SWB* ME 3299 B/10.
[7] UKNA FCO 31/468, 'Common Man's Charter'.

therefore susceptible to being misled. On the other hand, they agreed that: 'elections serve a useful purpose in nation-building, in the mobilization of political consciousness'.[8] Obote's solution to the dilemma involved the direct election of the national president in a yes/no vote with a single candidate, combined with a complex system of competitive but single-party parliamentary elections. Every candidate would have to compete with others in four constituencies – a base one, and three others spread across the country: the '1 + 3' system, as it was called. Victory required support across all four constituencies, so that candidates could not simply play to their own ethnic group and local allies (Obote 1970). The elections would become, as Obote put it, 'Operation Know Uganda' – demanding a national approach from politicians as well as the public. Obote's critics – led by Felix Onama, the secretary-general of UPC – were sceptical of the '1 + 3' system, but focussed their opposition on the direct presidential election, arguing that the head of the party, chosen at the annual conference, should automatically be president. Reasonably enough, they saw Obote's plan as a device to assert his own absolute control over the party in the name of the popular will, though they expressed their concern through reference to popular ignorance rather than elite rivalry:

> There is a grave danger in exposing the leader of a Revolution to an election before the Revolution itself is wholly understood by the masses . . . he might be compelled to start speaking in the language that is understood by the masses, and popular with the masses, which might not be the language of the Revolution.[9]

The debate over the election proposals was fierce (Willetts 1975), despite the suspicion amongst diplomats inclined to overstate Obote's power that Obote was stage-managing it. Obote circulated thousands of copies of his proposals, printed as 'Document Number Five of the Move to the Left' and denounced those trying to put a 'barrier' between president and people. His supporters declared that 'we detect the crafty hands of reaction behind this move to shield you from the verdict of the masses', and argued that elections were key to popular mobilisation: 'for the revolution to succeed the people of Uganda as a whole must be involved'.[10]

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[8] 'Representation of the People Bill', 10 November 1970, *SWB* ME 3532 B/1.

[9] UKNA FCO 31/170, clipping from *The People*, 28 August 1970.

[10] 'Obote on need to curb reaction', 22 August 1970, *SWB* ME 3465 B/1; '"People must elect the president"', *Uganda Argus*, 28 August 1970, p. 1; Otim Oryem, 'Uganda's part in the African revolution', *Uganda Argus*, 27 August 1970, p. 1; Gingyera-Pincwa, 'The impact of the election proposals', *Uganda Argus*, 28 August 1970, p. 5.

Obote won the struggle, formally. By early 1971, an extraordinary party congress had approved the introduction of both the '1 + 3' system and direct presidential elections. Party elections for new constituency-level positions, closely supervised by Obote, had partly side-lined his rivals.[11] But those party elections had also revealed the persistence of a political culture that defied Obote's vision of a disciplinary electoral citizenship. Those who emerged as winners had spent lavishly on gifts, entertainment and transport for voters; presenting themselves as leaders who were virtuous because they were accessible and generous to a local community, not because they 'knew Uganda'. 'Money has been invested liberally in the recent mini-elections'; complained one parliamentarian. There were allegations that the country had been 'flooded with money'; that voters were 'bought'; that 'some people get a lot of money which they can throw around without much problem'.[12] 'How does one book all the hotels, bars, in the town?', demanded one aggrieved UPC member of parliament, 'How does one book all the transport means in the area?'. Meanwhile, it was rumoured that such local big men were making pacts with one another across regions, building alliances that would thwart the intention of the '1 + 3' system (Cohen & Parsons 1973).

The '1 + 3' elections never happened; they were forestalled by the coup of January 1971. That coup was propelled by Idi Amin's awareness that Obote intended to remove him from his role as head of the army; and Amin himself never held the elections that he promised when he took power. But Amin, initially at least, had the support of Onama and others in the UPC who were threatened by Obote's efforts to suppress the local politics of patronage on which their position as leaders rested. In Uganda, as in Ghana, the attempt to use one-party elections to mobilise the public as citizens had been complicated by a combination of the rivalries and ambitions of politicians, and the tension between two possibilities of elections: as exercises in civic virtue that performed the nation, or as opportunities for the expression of the mutual moral obligations of local patrons and clients.

'MEN OF INTEGRITY; MANAGING THE VOTE BY LAW

In contrast to Nkrumah and Obote, Ghana's coup-makers were ideologically opposed to single-party rule. Their search for a means to control electoral outcomes and to avoid a return

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[11] 'Consideration by party of constitutional amendments', 15 December 1970, *SWB* ME 3562 B/1; 'Resolution of the Mbale UPC delegates' conference' 19 December 1970, *SWB* ME 3566 B/1; 'Obote's statement on UPC elections', 14 October 1970, *SWB* ME 3509 B/1; 'President appoints supervisors', *Uganda Argus*, 15 October 1970; UKNA FCO 31/713, Redshaw, British High Commission Kampala to Purcell FCO, 23 October 1970.

[12] 'Elections – this national duty', *Uganda Argus*, 12 November 1970, p. 4; 'Aftermath of the election', *Uganda Argus*, 6 November 1970, p. 3; 'Assure next polls', *Uganda Argus*, 16 November 1970, p. 6; 'Uganda's poll system "unique"', *Uganda Argus*, 11 November 1970, p. 4.

to what they called 'tyranny' (Ghana Constitutional Commission 1968, para 23, 28) – that is, rule by Nkrumah and his supporters – turned to other legal and constitutional devices.

The debate in Ghana was pursued very publicly; in newspapers, through a series of commissions, and finally through a constituent assembly, itself elected not by universal suffrage but indirectly, through local government and professional bodies. The tone was consistently and self-consciously learned and elitist, and the loudest voices here were those of Ghana's established elite, who prized their learning. The preferred points of reference were from Rousseau to Bryce, by way of Madison and Bagehot, European and North American philosophers and models. A commission expressly designed to advise on the constitution argued that the answer lay in ensuring the rule of law: 'the myth known as the sovereignty of parliament should be exorcized' (Ghana Constitutional Commission 1968, para. 72), with a strong president who was indirectly elected as the guarantor of the constitution against the foibles of directly-elected politicians. Elections were nevertheless necessary, because they had 'an educational value for the citizen' and parties should be allowed, because they would 'make opposition respectable'. But the danger that 'poor villagers' might be manipulated into voting for the wrong people meant that the constitution, not parliament, must be supreme (Ghana Constitutional Commission 1968, paras 396, 78-80, 295-96). Other commentators argued that parties themselves should be banned to encourage a national consensus; or that the number of parties should be controlled.[13] A commission on elections, which catalogued in colourful detail the electoral malpractice of the Nkrumah era, suggested controlling electoral outcomes by ensuring that candidates were all 'men of substance' and 'men of honesty and probity'. There should be property and education qualifications for candidacy, and politicians who had been associated with the CPP should be banned from holding elected office (Republic of Ghana 1967, pp. 15, 18, 22, 26-28). An indirectly-elected constituent assembly, which first sat in 1969 and whose members seem to have been primarily concerned with their own electoral prospects, finally approved a constitution only months before the elections. Former CPP politicians would be banned from standing and there would be a parliament chosen through multi-party elections, which would itself choose a president with limited powers (Luckham & Nkrumah 1975; Twumasi 1968).[14] Controls on candidacy would be

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[13] 'No-party government will satisfy Ghana', *Ghanaian Times*, 6 July 1967, p. 7; Seth Debi-Dankwah, 'Politics without parties', *Ghanaian Times*, 6 September 1967, p. 6 and 'The quest for a new basic law', *Ghanaian Times*, 11 September 1967, p. 6; Letter, Kwadzo-Mensah, *Ghanaian Times*, 17 July 1967, p. 7.
[14] UKNA FCO 65/83 Lewis British High Commission Accra to Middleton, FCO, 14 and 23 December 1968 and 15 February 1969; 'House's work is slow', *Daily Graphic*, 19 February 1969, p. 1.

combined with a longer-term process of civic education, centred on elections, which would help voters to exercise their choices responsibly.

The subsequent elections foregrounded that idea of education. The NLC had already created a National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) in 1967, intended, in the words of the government-controlled press, to prevent the return of a 'government of nincompoops'.[15] This soon came under the leadership of Kofi Busia, the erstwhile United Party (UP) politician who had endorsed Afrifa's book, and was closely associated with Edward Akuffo-Addo, the chair of the constitutional commission (Ephson 1968, pp. 74-84). Busia had used his position at the NCCE to argue for multi-partyism, and to promote his own prospects and those of his former UP allies. The NCCE also ran voter education events explaining that citizenship, hard work and elections were all connected – 'every citizen is expected to work and contribute towards the building of a true democratic society' – and reminding Ghanaians that the world was watching to see to see if they would vote for 'the right type of persons'.[16] When political parties were formally allowed to re-establish themselves, Busia promptly resigned from the NCCE and became the leader of the new Progress Party (PP) which was widely understood as the political vehicle of the established elite who had opposed Nkrumah.

In this endeavour, Busia enjoyed the strong and unsubtle backing of Afrifa, who had become the dominant figure in the NLC. While there were ostentatious public assertions of the impartiality of the state in the elections, it was understood that Afrifa meant the PP when he insisted that voters must choose 'men of integrity' to whom the military would hand power. Busia's main rival was Komla Gbedemah, a one-time ally of Nkrumah who had left the CPP long before the coup. Gbedemah's party, the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL) was subjected to multiple administrative obstructions through dextrous manipulation of the bureaucracy around imports, with campaign materials, vehicles and printing presses all delayed at customs. At the same time, the possibility of disqualification hung over Gbedemah himself, as the precise terms of the regulations on former CPP members were changed and debated.

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[15] 'Let's rebuild a democratic state – Busia', *Ghanaian Times*, 15 July 1967, p. 3; Editorial: 'Civilian rule – it's up to us', *Ghanaian Times*, 4 July 1967, p. 6.

[16] 'Future political activity', 4 February 1969, *SWB* ME 2994 B/6; 'Elect honest men to parliament – Busia', *Daily Graphic*, 27 March 1969, p. 3; 'Avoid ostentatious life – Busia', *Daily Graphic*, 31 March 1969, p. 9; 'Busia's guide to the young voter', *Daily Graphic*, 21 April 1969, p. 3; 'Ghanaians told to exhibit maturity', *Daily Graphic*, 22 April 1969, p. 4; 'Vans for elections', *Daily Graphic*, 24 July 1969, p. 8.

Candidates for both parties made very similar promises when they spoke at rallies, assuring voters that they would deliver development in very material forms – piped water, electricity, health care (Owusu 1975; Twumasi 1975). Their offer was, as one candidate usefully summarised it, 'heaven on earth'.[17] The electoral commission presented the election process as a bureaucratic exercise in national mobilisation (Crabbe 1975). But the promise of heaven was particular, driven by a popular expectation mobilised by local community leaders or businessmen. Busia complained of 'tribal' organisations, which operated as 'pressure groups' demanding that parliamentary candidates show that they could be relied upon to share the rewards of office with their constituents and their own ethnic group.[18] This politics might be seen as entirely instrumental: as one observer put it 'leaders and the led . . . . [were] held together primarily to get what the political system is primarily designed to give – that is, status, jobs and material benefits' (Owusu 1975, p. 239). Press reports suggested that 'millions of cedis [the Ghanaian currency] were 'secretly passing into the hands of the electorate'.[19] Yet there was a moral aspect to this: the virtuous leader was one who could be relied upon to be generous and accessible, and promise-making and local gift-giving were central to this, as was a shared sense of ethnic or local identity (Twumasi 1975). Ethnic politics mapped onto divisions in the NLC to shape an emergent wider rivalry between Akan-speakers (largely supportive of the PP) and Ewe, members of Gbedemah's ethnic group.

The PP won the election decisively, a victory underlined shortly afterwards, when Gbedemah was disqualified from taking up the seat in parliament which he had won. Parliament, dominated by the PP, went on to choose Akuffo-Addo as Ghana's president. The elite politicians who had been defeated and then persecuted by Nkrumah had finally secured elected power, able to do so partly through a combination of controls on candidacy that were rooted in a profound elitism and the support of the NLC. But while their electoral engineering had sought to teach 'educational' lessons in citizenship, the electoral campaigns had foregrounded generosity and accessibility as the key to electoral success.

ADMINISTERING ELECTIONS

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[17] The campaign was described in the 'Political roundup' column in the *Daily Graphic*: see for example 16 July 1969; 4 August 1969; 21 August 1969; 25 August 1969; also 'NAL promises to revolutionise agriculture', 'PP rally at Bukom Square' and 'NAL holds rally at Tamale', *Daily Graphic* 7, 16 and 23 August 1969.

[18] NARA RG 59 Box 2141 POL 13 Ghana 1/1/67, McElhiney, US Embassy Accra to State, 16 November 1968.

[19] 'Have Ghanaians learnt this lesson?', *Daily Graphic*, 20 August 1969, 5; UKNA FCO 65/91 'Ghana: the election campaign', 18 September 1969 and BHC Accra to FCO, 28 August 1969; NARA RG 59 Box 2140 POL 2 Ghana 1/1/69 Foley US Embassy Accra to State Dept, 2 August 1969.

Elections, or preparations for them, in Ghana and Uganda relied heavily on administrative structures that were the legacy of the colonial state. Electoral commissions in each case were small bodies with limited resources, and it was administrators, whose everyday role was to govern and order, who did the work of registration and managed the polls. This was even more evident in Kenya, where the presence of white settlers and the campaign against the Mau insurgency had created an unusually large, and effective, colonial administration. After independence, that administration was not only maintained, but strengthened. The network of provincial and district commissioners, khaki-uniformed and pith-helmeted, embodied the Kenyan state. The ruling party, by contrast, was institutionally weak; administrators had firmly rebuffed the claims of local KANU officials to authority and status, and even before the split of March 1966, party offices and branches across Kenya had become moribund.

Kenya's administrators had learned from their late-colonial mentors the potential of elections as disciplinary projects that exalted their role as bureaucrats. Electoral 'exercises', as administrators liked to call them, were projects of 'National importance', an opportunity to remind all other government servants that the administrators were ultimately in charge.[20] Provincial and district commissioners had learned too that elections could do multiple other kinds of work: a way to pass the cost of vehicle repairs or the buying of equipment onto someone else's budget; an opportunity to exercise a little local patronage through the employment of temporary staff and the paying of overtime.

In the multiple by-elections of 1966, Kenya's administration had been ostentatiously ordered to display impartiality in the handling of the polling itself: '[n]ot only has justice to be done, but it has to be seen to be done'.[21] But the whole campaign was carried out in the shadow of the physical intimidation of KPU supporters in much of the country, and a very explicit collective threat (Mueller 1984). Prosperity was contingent upon obedient support for the government, and constituencies that returned KPU candidates would be deemed hostile to government, and would not receive the rewards of development. Faced with this threat, only voters in Odinga's home area – who believed that the government was biased against them anyway – voted for KPU. The campaign underlined an assumption already prevalent in Kenyan politics: that the elected representative was an intermediary, who would organise

[20] KNA CB 1/10 Supervisor of Elections to all DCs, 5 July 1967 and DC Kilifi to District Agricultural Officer, County Education Officer, Medical Officer, 21 December 1967; KNA DC KTI 3/1/12 Provincial Commissioner (PC) Eastern to all DCs, 29 April 1967 and DC Kitui to members of parliament, 31 July 1967; KNA CQ 11/2 DC Mombasa to Noah Andoh, 26 January 1970; KNA DC KMG 2/16/11 DC Kakamega to all Heads of Department, 20 November 1969.
[21] KNA DC KTI 3/1/11 Mbela, Supervisor of Elections to all DCs, 6 May 1966,.

local displays of good citizenship and commitment to development and would in return bring funds for schools, clinics, roads or piped water. As KANU's election leaflet put it: 'People cannot eat slogans. They want to see action and material benefits'.[22]

The 1966 elections entrenched KANU's political dominance. But Charles Njonjo, the Attorney-General and one of the most powerful figures in the government, reproved the administration for the low turnout: 'enthusiasm did not appear to be sufficient to make an exercise like this as successful as one would like'.[23] In 1968, local government elections saw flagrant manipulation: district commissioners disallowed the nomination of every single KPU candidate on technicalities, so that all KANU candidates were elected unopposed, without a ballot (Mueller 1984, p. 416). In parliament, opposition and backbench MPs drew ominous parallels with events elsewhere in Africa, and revealed a chronic concern with international opinion:

> . . . we should learn from what we have seen in other countries like Nigeria, where this sort of thing too place, and what we find now in Nigeria is that people are being slaughtered like animals . . . people will say that in Africa there is no democracy.[24]

The newspapers printed a carefully filtered selection of critical letters sent in by the public – and let it be known privately that there were many more such letters. Similarly private disapproval came from the British and US governments, on whose financial and military support Kenya relied.

Kenyatta himself then launched a public debate over how candidates for parliament should be chosen. On the anniversary of independence, in a speech that – as usual – urged the public to work hard for development, he unexpectedly announced that in future KANU parliamentary candidates would be chosen through primary elections: only thus could the party be sure that those standing in its name would be genuinely popular. In the wake of the low turnout of 1966 and the popular hostility to the uncontested local government elections, Kenyatta's interventions suggests that multiple questions were troubling him and those

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[22] KNA DC KTI 3/1/11, KANU leaflet, 'Where the truth lies'; 'Personal feelings must be subordinate to general welfare says government', *East African Standard*, 15 April 1966, p. 1. See also 'Kandara voters urged to oust Mr. Kaggia', *East African Standard*, 16 May 1966, p. 5; 'Accept bribes but vote for Kanu says President', *East African Standard*, 21 May 1966, p. 1; 'Kanu only party for progress', *East African Standard*, 11 June 1966, p. 1.

[23] KNA DC KTI 3/1/11, statement issued by the Hon. Charles Njonjo, 14 July 1966.

[24] Okello Odongo, *Proceedings of the Kenya National Assembly*, 25 October 1968, col. 2289; also Obok, *ibid*. cols 2290-91.

around him. How could dominance by a single party be combined with popular participation? What if wealthy candidates simply bought the party nomination and were then returned unopposed? These questions became entangled with another: how to deal with Tom Mboya, the articulate and effective KANU politician from western Kenya. Mboya's political ambitions were evident; both Odinga and Kenyatta's inner circle, opposed on most topics, were agreed that Mboya should not be allowed to succeed Kenyatta as president. Mboya was not an enthusiast for multi-party elections; but he saw open and active participation in KANU as both a tool for nation-building and a route to his own advancement (Branch 2011).

Several months of intense debate over the proposed primaries saw Mboya, in alliance with backbench KANU MPs, insisting on a direct, popular vote to choose the party's candidates. Kenyatta's inner circle argued first for an indirect vote, through delegates chosen by party branches, but Mboya and the backbenchers argued against this, insisting that it was a device to allow powerful civil servants or cabinet ministers to impose their own candidates against the popular will. A dramatic by-election victory for the KPU in Luo Nyanza – the heartland of Odinga's support – tipped the debate, for it was widely argued that a locally unpopular KANU candidate had been foisted on the voters, ensuring defeat. One of Kenya's two (privately-owned) national newspapers editorialised on the importance of genuine choice in KANU primaries – reportedly on the direct orders of Kenyatta.[25] Njonjo then proposed legislation introducing primaries by popular vote; but with voting by public queuing, not by secret ballot. The parliamentary debate on this bill came at a febrile moment days after Mboya had been murdered, in a killing widely assumed to be the work of those close to Kenyatta. MPs denounced the 'big fish with big money' who sought to create 'clique elections' and evoked the international gaze, saying that the local government elections had 'brought a shame on the nation'; and recalled that: '[o]ur struggle for independence was to allow people to vote'. Others derided queue voting as 'primitive'. They insisted that voters must be given electoral choice: 'where every line is blocked, people will be frustrated and you will end [up] exchanging the freedom of the secret ballot for the freedom of the bullet'.[26] The government conceded; party primaries would be competitive, with adult suffrage and a secret ballot.

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[25] UKNA FCO 31/350, telegram, British High Commission Nairobi to FCO, 12 May 1969 and Edis British High Commission Nairobi to Tallboys, FCO, 19 May 1969; see also for example letter from Haji Ismail, 'Gem defeat a warning to Kanu', *Daily Nation*, 19 May 1969, p. 6.

[26] Mwithaga, *Proceedings of the Kenya National Assembly*, 23 July 1969, cols 2352 and 2356; Shikuku, *Proceedings of the Kenya National Assembly*, 23 July 1969, col. 2387; Wariithi, *Proceedings of the Kenya National Assembly*, 29 July 1969, cols 2562 and 2566; Munyi, *Proceedings of the Kenya National Assembly,* 31 July 1969, col. 2724. 5

The outcome was hailed as 'nation-building', and, perhaps not coincidentally, the Kenyan press carried reports that same month of the success of Ghana's multi-party elections.[27] But that still left the problem of the KPU. Some powerful figures around Kenyatta insisted that multi-party elections would go ahead. But Odinga had a strong following in his home region, Nyanza, and was widely believed to have been very successful in raising funds from overseas for election campaigns in the early 1960s. This raised troubling questions – what if he were able to offer patronage of his own, to rival that of the government? Mass events were organized, presumably by people close to the president, since many took place at his home, or even at official residences, at which Kikuyu were asked to swear oaths to keep power in central Kenya. In October 1969, at a public event in Nyanza, the crowd turned hostile when Kenyatta criticized Odinga; the president's bodyguards panicked and opened fire, killing a number of people. In the following few days, Odinga and other KPU leaders were detained; then the party itself was banned. One backbench KANU MP resisted the ban, arguing that this would make Kenya 'a laughing stock in the continent of Africa', and making direct reference to lessons from Ghana: 'Dr Nkrumah thought he was dealing Dr Busia a final blow. Where is Busia today? Is he not the head of the Ghanaian state?'[28] But most KANU MPs stayed silent, and KPU was banned. Kenya did not become a formal one-party state, as the state-owned radio station was quick to point out; but no other parties were permitted to register.

Within two weeks, Kenyatta announced that elections would be held in December, with party primaries two weeks before the national polls. Now that KPU had been banned, KANU was the only legally registered party; the candidates selected through the primaries would be automatically declared elected. The administration mobilised what was described as a 'massive army' to run the process; the public were enjoined to show 'respect for law and order'; the Commissioner of Police declared that voting would show 'unity of purpose in building the nation'. A leaflet 'Guide to the General Elections' was sent out to administrators, who summoned politicians to address meetings, and marshalled voters to listen to them. Kenyatta urged the public to regard candidates as patrons, and to vote for those who could 'demonstrate to Kenyans that they would be able to help them'. Government radio commentary offered ambiguous counsel: 'Drink free beers, take free rides, eat free

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[27] 'Primary poll move praised', *Daily Nation,* 8 August 1969, p. 3.
[28] Muliro, *Proceedings of the Kenya National Assembly*, 29 October 1969, cols. 1179 and 1180.

sumptuous dinners, but do not sell your vote'.[29] The polls became a 'bargaining game between voters and candidates': '[m]oney was of paramount importance', noted one US diplomat who watched the elections, but he also observed that 'voters reviewed the candidates for the individual most likely to bring them more schools, roads, water holes, medical services etc – faster' (Hyden & Leys 1972, p. 402).

The elections swept many sitting members of parliament from office. In their wake, Kenyatta was swift to remind the public that they were responsible for their choices: 'Kenyatta did not elect those who will represent you. You *wananchi* [citizens] elected for yourselves, and if you elected badly it is up to you'. He was similarly blunt in his advice to those elected on the duties of a parliamentarian: these were 'to go around his constituency and help his people'; and to 'meet the wishes of the wananchi [citizens] in nation-building' rather than to engage in 'unconstructive criticism'.[30] Kenya's elections combined the deployment of an unusually powerful administrative machinery with an explicit embrace of patronage politics.

CONCLUSION: ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION AND VIRTUOUS CITIZENSHIP

After the 1969 elections, Kenya's electoral experiment came to be seen as something of a success story. This was all the more striking when, in 1972, Busia's government in Ghana was toppled by a coup which went as unresisted as that which had overthrown Nkrumah. By contrast, Kenya's rulers seemed to have managed to square the electoral circle, holding elections by secret ballot that strengthened, rather than undermined, the legitimacy of the government. The 'national exercise', as Kenyan civil servants continued to call elections, could, perhaps, be a successful tool for teaching citizenship, yet still be combined with an overt emphasis on the role of politicians as wealthy, generous, attentive patrons. The model was maintained through successive elections in 1974, 1979 and 1983. However, it began to break down in the 1980s when Kenyatta's successor, President Moi, made a clumsy effort to further limit popular choice in parliamentary elections.

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[29] 'Kanu governing council meeting in Mombasa', Nairobi, English, 28 August 1969, *SWB* ME 3165 B/2; 'President Kenyatta's Kenyatta Day address', Nairobi, Swahili, 20 October 1969, *SWB* ME 3209 B/1; 'Voice of Kenya commentary', Nairobi, English, 12 November 1969, *SWB* ME 3230 B/3; 'Eastern province out in force for president', *East African Standard*, 1 December 1969, p. 1; 'Kenyans to vote on December 6', *Daily Nation*, 12 November 1969, p. 1.
[30] 'President Kenyatta's Independence Day address', Nairobi, English and Swahili, 12 December 1969, *SWB* ME 3255 B/1; 'Kenyatta's address to Western Province MPs', Nairobi, English, 31 December 1969, *SWB* ME 3268 B/4; 'President's advice to MPs', Nairobi, English, 9 Jan 1970, *SWB* ME 3276 B/3.

Yet we should be cautious in making judgements as to the political genius of Kenyatta and his cronies. The elections of 1969 were co-produced. Their terms were the contingent outcome of the intransigence of back-bench MPs and the enthusiasm of voters as much as of elite scheming: Njonjo, after all, would have preferred a much more controlled ballot. Even the banning of KPU was not inevitable; the 'Guide to General Elections' that was circulated so widely in late 1969 assumed a two-party poll. Nor should we overestimate the singular power of elections in maintaining Kenya's civilian government. Kenyatta's government was protected from overthrow at least partly by the belief that the United Kingdom would intervene to forestall any coup (an assumption that remained widespread even as the likelihood of such intervention rapidly dwindled in the 1970s (Cullen 2017)); and by Kenyatta's maintenance of a relatively small and loyal force (Katumanga 2020). Kenyatta was protected too by his determined maintenance of the provincial administration inherited from the colonial state, which kept a tight hold on the police and paramilitary security forces. The resilience of Kenya's competitive single-party system was a product, as well as a cause, of the relative strength of state institutions.

That does not make the debates and experience of the 1960s inconsequential, or irrelevant. They affirmed the possibility that elections should be a tool for nation-building, performing an ideal of virtuous citizenship and stateness: subsequently, even those who flagrantly manipulated elections, or overthrew civilian governments, have consistently claimed commitment to the electoral ideal. At the same time, they provided models and ideas that were to recur: constitutional commissions in Ghana, accusations of petty tribalism in Uganda, debate over primary elections in Kenya. They also offer a comparative story that is relevant to a more recent wave of electoral innovation in Africa. The electoral experiments of the 1960s looked to elections to impress on voters their duty as citizens.

From the 1990s, electoral engineers – often working for international organisations or the development agencies of aid-donor countries – saw the ballot as a means to force politicians and civil servants to adhere to norms of liberal governance: good citizens would use elections to hold their leaders to account. Yet the consequences of their engineering have been uneven. That might be readily explained as the consequence of cheating: there are many ways to manage electoral outcomes (Cheeseman & Klaas 2018), and Africa's rulers have been practising since the 1960s, as we have shown. But there is a further lesson from this history. There continues to be vigorous and often enthusiastic public involvement in elections: not only in Ghana, where there has been repeated peaceful alternation of elected

governments since the end of the 1990s; but in Kenya and Uganda, where elections since the 1990s have been associated with intimidation, violence and repeated allegations of malpractice, including vote-buying. How is popular electoral participation compatible with what seems to be persistent misgovernment?

The answer may be that the linkage between electoral participation and virtuous citizenship is complex (Cheeseman et al 2020). Politicians are expected to be personally generous to their constituents, both during and between campaigns. Like their predecessors in the 1960s, voters in the twenty-first century are given voter education, and they register, queue and cast their ballots as virtuous citizens. But their voting decisions may be influenced more by their estimations of the generosity, wealth and accessibility of candidates, and by an awareness of the power of moral claims embedded in ethnic, local and personal ties (Kramon 2017). Resources are scarce; voters suspect that politicians will forget them once they are in office, so they demand material evidence of their commitment. Elections may be national exercises; but they can be managed and manipulated in many ways, and they allow the exercising of multiple other ideas of rights and responsibilities. Those are lessons that the electoral engineers of the early 21st century could perhaps learn from studying more closely the electoral experiments of the 1960s.

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