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## Abbreviations

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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGOA</td>
<td>African Growth Opportunity Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUCADEF</td>
<td>Buganda Cultural and Development Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUFA</td>
<td>Bulando United Farmer’s Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Constituent Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCM</td>
<td><em>Chama Cha Mapinduzi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>COFTU</td>
<td>Confederation of Free Trade Unions in Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Conservative Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>District Administrator</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERP</td>
<td>Economic Recovery Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDC</td>
<td>Forum for Democratic Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEDEMU</td>
<td>Federalist Democratic Movement of Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOBA</td>
<td>Force Obote Back Again</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIPC</td>
<td>Highly Indebted Poor Countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSM</td>
<td>Holy Spirit Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSMF</td>
<td>Holy Spirit Mobile Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBEAC</td>
<td>Imperial British East African Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Criminal Court</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICFTU</td>
<td>International Confederation of Free Trade Unions</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFI</td>
<td>International Financial Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>KANU</td>
<td>Kenya Africa National Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>KY</td>
<td><em>Kabaka Yekka</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Local Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>LRA</td>
<td>Lord’s Resistance Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>MADDO</td>
<td>Masaka Diocese Development Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoFPED</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development</td>
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<td>MoH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoPS</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEC</td>
<td>National Executive Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>Ninth October Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOTU</td>
<td>National Organisation of Trade Unions</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRA</td>
<td>National Resistance Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRC</td>
<td>National Resistance Council</td>
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<td>NRM</td>
<td>National Resistance Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAPSCA</td>
<td>Programme to Alleviate Poverty and the Social Costs of Adjustment</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEAP</td>
<td>Poverty Eradication Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHC</td>
<td>Public Health Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>PMB</td>
<td>Produce Marketing Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNDC</td>
<td>People’s National Defence Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>People’s Redemption Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>Popular Resistance Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRS</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Resistance Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPLA</td>
<td>Sudan People’s Liberation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWAp</td>
<td>Sector Wide Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCC</td>
<td>Uganda Constitutional Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCMB</td>
<td>Uganda Catholic Medical Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDC</td>
<td>Uganda Development Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UFL</td>
<td>Uganda Federation of Labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>UFM</td>
<td>Uganda Freedom Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMA</td>
<td>Uganda Medical Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMWU</td>
<td>Uganda Medical Workers Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNC</td>
<td>Uganda National Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNLA</td>
<td>Uganda National Liberation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNRF</td>
<td>Uganda National Rescue Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPA</td>
<td>Uganda People’s Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPC</td>
<td>Uganda People’s Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPM</td>
<td>Uganda People’s Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPMB</td>
<td>Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPDA</td>
<td>Uganda People’s Democratic Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPDF</td>
<td>Uganda People’s Defence Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>UWESO</td>
<td>Uganda Women’s Effort to Support Orphans</td>
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<td>WNBF</td>
<td>West Nile Bank Front</td>
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## Glossary

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<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Busulu</td>
<td>Ground tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaka mchaka</td>
<td>pro-NRM political training courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envujjo</td>
<td>Portions of the harvest that the tenant would give to the landlord in order to keep in his favour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabaka</td>
<td>King of Buganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lukiiko</td>
<td>Parliament of Buganda kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mafutamangi</td>
<td>A stratum of state created proprietors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magendo</td>
<td>Underground (economy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munno mukabi</td>
<td>“a friend in need”, Community Based Organisation (CBO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shamba</td>
<td>Plot for cultivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda n’Eddagala Lyayo</td>
<td>Uganda Herbalist Association</td>
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Acknowledgements

This book grew out of my doctoral thesis, written over a long period. Consequently, my gratitude extends to a great number of individuals whose invaluable support, over the years, has enabled me to finish it.

Two persons have been particularly important to me when working on this book. Professor Björn Beckman has been my supervisor ever since my undergraduate days and I cannot really express how thankful I am to have benefited from his wisdom, sharp intellect and generosity as a mentor, colleague and friend over the years. It has been a wonderful learning experience in the best sense.

Haruna Bukenya in Masaka, Uganda, has become much more than a research assistant, as the term goes. He is a colleague and a friend, with whom I have shared all the practical and intellectual ups and downs of fieldwork as well as wonderful meals in his home.

Many people have commented on this work at various stages of its development. In the Department of Political Science, Stockholm University; special thanks go to Henrik Berglund, Drude Dahlerup, Eva Hansson and Magnus Lembke. During the final stages, I received very valuable comments from Henrik Angerbrandt, Maud Eduards, Lasse Lindström and Rune Premfors.

Other people whose comments and criticisms have strengthened the arguments in this book immensely are: Emmanuel Akwetey, Gunilla Andræ, Yusuf Bangura, Helena Bjuremalm, Jeremy Gould, Ben Jones, Raufu Mustapha, Cyril
Obi, Lars Rudebeck, K. Sivaramakrishnan, Olle Törnquist, and the late Mariken Vaa.

Also in the department, Lena Helldner and Claes Linde offered invaluable support. Merrick Tabor skilfully copyedited the manuscript into readable English. Peter Mungai provided formatting expertise towards the very end.

The research was generously supported by Sida/Sarec, for which I am most grateful. An early travel grant from the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala was also very valuable.

In Kampala, the Centre for Basic Research (CBR) became a second home. Thanks to everyone at CBR for the assistance and friendship. During my first visits, the then executive director, the late Nyangabyaki Bazaara, with typical generosity supported me with practical assistance, intellectual discussions and enjoyable music. May you rest in peace.

For comments on various drafts at CBR seminars, I wish to thank Godfrey Asiimwe, John-Jean Barya, Nyangabyaki Bazaara, Nicholas de Torrenté, Frederick Golooba-Mutebi, David Kibikyo, Mwambutsya Ndebesa, Joe Oloka-Onyango, Samson Opolot and Edward Rubanga. Simon Rutabajuuka read and commented upon the entire manuscript. Sallie Simba Kayunga, Richard Ssewakiryanga, David Ouma Balikowa, Anders Jeppsson, and Sam Okuonzi were all very helpful at different stages. Other friends in Kampala and Nairobi who have always given me of their precious time and immense knowledge are Andrew Mwenda, Ibrahim Ssemujju Nganda, Charles Onyango-Obbo and Sylvia Tamale.

In the past, I was repeatedly treated to hospitality and friendship in Nairobi by Per and Lilian Karlsson. I am happy to be able to pay back that particular debt now! Ros-Mari Bålöw, Mia Haglund-Heelas and Paul Heelas, and Pernilla Trägårdh and Fredrik Malmberg at various times opened their homes for me in Kampala. Thank you all.
In Masaka, I would particularly like to thank Michael Ssali, Eddie Ssejjoba, Vincent Basajja, John Kinsman, Sabina Bergsten and Nils Fagerberg, who all did their very best to make me feel at home. There are also innumerable other people in Masaka who assisted me in different ways, many without knowing it. And above all: to everyone in Bulando who took their time and shared their experiences with me – *mwebale nnyo*!

A special thank you extends to Per Karlsson and Sverker Finnström for our ongoing informal seminar on Ugandan politics and society. It has been great – long may it continue!

My parents, Eva and Ragnar Sjögren have always supported me to the full in every way possible. I am immensely thankful to you. Finally, my deepest and most heartfelt gratitude goes to Helena and our children Mikael and Rebecka, whose love, support, endurance and shared interest in Ugandan politics have exceeded all I could ever hope for.

Anders Sjögren
Stockholm
*October 2012*
Map of Uganda
Introduction

In the wake of the socio-economic crisis of the 1980s, African states and societies have been reshaped in the context of global patterns of economic liberalisation and by specific forms of intervening reform programmes designed to transform state-society relations. Externally imposed economic liberalisation and state reform packages soon came to be discussed under the rubric of “governance reforms”, promoted with the stated aim of transforming the “problematic” nature of African state-society relations. Governance reforms were closely related – at the discursive level – to the promotion of greater scope of influence for civil society groups, as well as the institutional recomposition of civil society. During the same period, governments lacking in developmental and democratic credibility have constantly been challenged by social forces. The interaction between these external and internal sets of processes has restructured state-society relations along a wide spectrum of political regimes, ranging from intensified authoritarianism, to limited political
liberalisation and in some cases to democratisation of the state and of social relations in a broader sense.

The diverse political dynamics of changes associated with governance reforms warrant investigations of the shifting bases of political rule in different political arenas. This study attempts to analyse such changes through the case of Uganda. It sets out from Bangura’s (1994) suggestion that while governance reforms have certainly changed African states, they have not done so merely in line with proclaimed intentions. Reforms were from the start beset by inherent contradictions between the technocratic orientation of the stated political aims of institutional remodelling and the deeply contested political nature of social processes and struggles, reflecting the different political agendas of the actors involved. The fact that political struggles have not conformed to the expectations of governance reforms can be understood as their being shaped by state withdrawal and resulting informalisation in relation to the contestation of authoritarian rule by manifold actors in society, making claims for autonomy and participation in decision making.

Uganda’s economic and political crisis during the 1980s was deeper than most. Following years of military rule, economic decay and civil war, the central state had all but collapsed by the mid-1980s. Only a decade later, in the late 1990s, was Uganda frequently mentioned as a prime example of state resurgence, exhibiting stabilised institutions, a booming economy and a vital civil society participating in relatively successful poverty reduction policies – all in all, an exponent of the “African renaissance” and a governance showcase attracting attention and resources. Yet, a series of rebellions had kept war raging in the northern parts of the country since 1986. Uganda’s military had become deeply involved in the DR Congo civil war, with high-ranking officers and politicians accused of human rights abuses and also of looting natural resources. At home, the government faced allegations of authoritarianism and corruption.
This book is about the formation of the Ugandan state and civil society in this conjuncture. It addresses the scope for political forces to democratise the state in a context characterised by seemingly contradictory expressions of state-society relations – a “participatory governance” success story on the one hand, lingering militarism on the other – by tracing the historical roots of contemporary formation of state and civil society. In so doing, the study seeks to analyse state-society relations as these are embedded in the wider political economy. The overarching theoretical problem of the study concerns the social basis of political rule: how social relations block or promote political democracy. More specifically, the aim is to explore state-civil society relations in contemporary Uganda in order to illustrate and explain the scope for and capacity of different social forces to create access to and democratise the state.

The study interrogates state-civil society relations as these are expressed through forms of interest representation and conflict regulation in different political arenas. This takes place in the contemporary context of economic liberalisation and state reform. How have these changes affected state-society relations? How does the state attempt to shape its relations to different social forces? How have social forces sought to influence the state? What explains the scope for interest groups to intervene and influence policy making and ultimately either open up the state to make it more responsive to wider sections of the population, or to block the access to it for others?

The study addresses these issues through the lens of the political regulation of the health sector, and more specifically by analysing the relations between the state and a selection of interest groups that operate in this sector. Health sector politics illustrates a central feature of liberalisation and state reform – public sector reform and semi-privatised social development.
State-society relations

A useful starting point for analysing the research problem, the scope for social forces to democratise the state, is that these issues essentially concern the organisation and distribution of power. The main argument of the study is that the democratisation of the state hinges upon relations of domination in society, within the state itself and among international actors. Political forces at all these levels attempt to access, control and shape the state for very different purposes, and the state promotes some social forces at the expense of others. In that sense, the state is rooted in society, and the form as well as content of state institutions, including their capacity and legitimacy, is structured by relations of power in society as reflected in and shaped by the state itself.

Such power relations are of many kinds, based on for instance; property, status and hegemony and are articulated along lines of class, gender, ethnicity, religion and so on. This is obviously not to claim that such forms of domination in society are translated into state power in a direct sense. The state wields enormous resources, and relative institutional autonomy allows state managers the potential scope and capacity to reshape and institutionalise social relations. Nevertheless, where deep-rooted economic and social inequalities prevail, as they do in Uganda, they can be predicted to correspond fairly closely to political inequality in a real as opposed to a formal sense.

A preliminary analytical point of departure, then, is the rather established perspective that views the state as a relatively permanent structure of domination and coordination of social relations. The state is both an arena of struggles between competing social forces, and an actor, involved in such struggles either directly as a player or more indirectly as regulator of social relations, creating and upholding rules for resolving conflicts. Such a perspective means viewing state formation as an ongoing overlapping process that occurs in many arenas and on many
levels. This general remark is vividly illustrated by the Ugandan case, where political instability has made state formation a very much unfinished and fluid process indeed. A crucial dimension of this is that the historical development of the Ugandan political economy has entrenched deep regional inequalities. One can therefore expect dramatic regional shifts with regard to both state institutions and the composition of social forces.

What is then meant by the democratisation of the state? Beyond the obvious meaning of the constitutionalised regulation of national politics capable of safeguarding the establishment of democratic institutions and procedures at that level, this study the forms of regulation of interest representation and conflicts in numerous institutions at different levels of the state. Economic liberalisation and state reform have all over Africa transformed the role of the state, including downsizing and decentralisation, and have set off a proliferation of associational life. Large sections of society have developed a multiplicity of strategies to cope with crisis and restructuring. Even where the state has largely withdrawn from its previous role, as in the field of welfare provision, it still intervenes and regulates development. Different sections of civil society, including community groups, social movements and local and foreign NGOs, all seek to engage the state, hoping to influence the direction of policy. According to one view, civil society groups can, in the face of fragile political institutions, be expected to hold political power-holders or bureaucrats accountable on behalf of the citizenry. Another more pessimistic version of the political content of state-society relations in the current conjuncture holds that appeals to civil society and good governance largely function as token devises, employed by political elites who seek to conceal persistent patterns of patronage politics.

Do restructured relations between state and society open up for democratic interest representation? Or do they reinforce
authoritarian relations? The study sets out from the assumption that the interplay between institutional restructuring and wider social processes contributes to a recomposition of state-society relations, immediately visible as a shift in the division of labour with regard to, for instance, social service provision, but also in terms of how this restructuring affects the way social interests are given political expression. The research problem will be approached within a framework that stresses the interaction between the balance of power among various social forces and the strategic intervention of the state to regulate conflicts in different arenas in society. Ruling groups seek to enforce control and support within structural constraints of resource extraction and in relation to demands from contending social forces. This results in a variety of regulatory forms that may be formal or informal, arbitrary or predictable, legitimate or illegitimate, authoritarian or democratic, and so on. Therefore, the study analyses the degree to which different social forces are capable of shaping forms of regulation in the direction of, for instance fairness and access in form and substance and to what extent they may defend or expand political space. The latter notion may be thought of as the institutional and discursive scope for exercising politics.

Most African countries, including Uganda, were from the early 1980s subjected to economic reforms by the international financial institutions as part of structural adjustment programmes. This followed upon economic stagnation due to a combination of international recession and domestic political mismanagement. Reforms typically included devaluation, price stabilisation, privatisation and reduction of public expenditures. After nearly a decade of continued dismal performance under market policies, institutional reforms were introduced in order to make neo-liberal economic adjustment more “embedded”. Governance reforms included measures such as new public management techniques, civil service reforms and decentralisation. There were protests
in many countries against worsening economic conditions that followed upon withdrawn subsidies to or privatisation of health and education, as well as the often heavy handed imposition of these policies. Hence, demands for political reforms were made in the context of structural adjustment. In Uganda, state withdrawal was not primarily a consequence of economic liberalisation; it had already occurred in a dramatic fashion. Rather, economic liberalisation came to be associated with state restructuring and growth. This proved to be of significance for the way interest groups responded.

In Uganda, the constraints of resource extraction are very much set by the high level of dependence on foreign development aid. Economic growth and institutional restructuring remain donor-dependent. For many years, between 40 and 50 per cent of the state budget has been financed by externally provided resources. Donors have offered these resources in exchange for the government’s continued commitment to donors’ preferred direction of economic policy making and state reform. In this sense, Uganda’s development model seems to be fundamentally shaped by external requirements. Yet, to stop there would be simplistic. Clearly, the Ugandan government seeks to adapt to the requests of donors and ultimately to the imperatives of globalised capitalism. As Harrison (2004: 6) suggests, the retooling of the state through administrative reforms and management techniques should, in a wider sense, be thought of as a strategy for embedding liberalism, or as “the politics of the encounter between the institutions of global capitalism and African nation states.” To follow Harrison further, the politics of this encounter cannot however be reduced to a model of foreign domination. For one, the main dividing line is not between “national” and “international” interests, even though such conflicts do exist. Just as the state is shaped by competing political projects in Ugandan society, this applies to external intervention as well. A plethora of external actors, from bilateral donors to NGOs,
from the UN system to religious organisations, seek to shape the Ugandan state, in alliance with domestic forces within or outside the state, although the government has to a large extent been able to skilfully mediate these interventions for its own purposes.

There is more mutual dependence between donors and Uganda than a cursory presumption would suggest. Donors have invested much commitment and prestige in Uganda as a success story. Hence, the content of governance reforms is mediated and shaped by struggles between competing constellations of domestic and foreign political interests that pull and push the state in different directions. This holds for state formation anywhere, of course, but Uganda’s heavy reliance on foreign funding clearly highlights the ways in which external interests do not merely push the state from outside but are internalised into it at all levels – and how they are in the process remoulded by relations of domination in Uganda itself.

**State and society in Uganda**

State formation in Uganda has been, and still is, a complex and tortuous process with regard to its institutional, social and territorial dimensions. As will be shown in greater detail in Chapter 2, colonial rule was built on a diversity of social orders and perpetuated the fragmentation of these within the colonial protectorate, alongside promoting an economy that was deeply unevenly developed among regions. Those structural features created the conditions for inherent political destabilisation, which after twenty-five years of independence had resulted in two military coups d’etat; one war with a neighbouring country and a bloody civil war.

The conventional story told of contemporary Uganda is one in which the process of institutional collapse was followed by subsequent resurrection under the incumbent National Resistance Movement (NRM) government, in power since 1986.
After the NRM had come to power, its leaders pledged to break with the political past. This past was said to be characterised by a corrupt and repressive neo-colonial state ruled either by bourgeois sectarian politicians or by the military, both groups unable and unwilling to overcome economic dependence and underdevelopment.

The new government promised a “fundamental change” with a nationalist – and initially socialist – orientation. Socialism was soon substituted for capitalism, but growth and stability lay the ground for economic recovery in the southern part of the country, something that attracted the attention of donors and creditors as well as foreign investors. Uganda, or at least its ruling strata, was incorporated into the circuits of global capitalism. Governance reforms such as decentralisation, new public management techniques and eventually debt and poverty reduction programmes were often tested first in Uganda, with its perceived farsighted and competent leadership, before they were applied elsewhere. One good thing, it seemed, led to another in a virtuous circle of converging aspects of modernisation.

This view of Uganda overlooked the ongoing strife and biting poverty in the north and parts of the east. This was for a long time neglected or seen as a temporary aberration by the international community. Reality was more complicated, of course. The Ugandan state, just like all states, but manifested in a very pronounced way during a period of rather dramatic shifts, is the meeting ground of contradictory forces and demands in

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1 The NRM’s “Ten-Point Political Programme” included the following components: restoration of democracy, restoration of security, consolidation of national unity and elimination of all forms of sectarianism, defending and consolidating national independence, building an independent, integrated and self-sustaining national economy, restoration and improvement of social services and rehabilitation of war-ravaged areas, elimination of corruption and misuse of power, redressing errors that have resulted in the dislocation of some sections of the population, co-operation with other African countries, and following an economic strategy of a mixed economy (Amaza 1998: 242-245).
society, its institutions shaped by tendencies of continuity and change, authoritarianism and democratisation, and with great institutional and regional unevenness. Certainly, the NRM government had brought about a new sense of purpose and cohesion. Yet, instances of erratic decision making, corruption and ruling group’s continued reliance on military force suggested a lingering inherent instability underneath the surface of change.

This study seeks to bring out this more complex story by investigating state-society relations as they have evolved in shaping institutions of the state at various levels. The historical legacy, reinforced in the present, of uneven patterns of development and of state-society relations suggests that an analytical disaggregation of both state and civil society is required. It is necessary to assume that state-society relations as well as the composition of the state and the forms of exercising state power have taken very shifting forms in different parts of the country. The most obvious example is how the composition and effective presence of bureaucratic, welfare and coercive state institutions diverge dramatically between the southern and northern parts of Uganda.

During the years of turmoil and institutional dilapidation in the 1970s and 1980s, the health status of Ugandans worsened disastrously. War and displacement rendered large sections of the population very vulnerable. Poor water and sanitation conditions in the context of the near collapse of the public health care system caused people to die in large numbers from preventable diseases. In addition to this, the HIV/AIDS epidemic struck hard from the early 1980s and tore existing family structures apart. People turned to whatever solutions there were: remaining health units run by religious organisations, relief from various agencies of the UN system, international NGOs, formal or informal private practitioners, traditional medicine and self-medication. Needs were desperate and state capacity to respond to them and to restructure the health sector was seriously limited.
The social crisis produced a complex institutional landscape inhabited by formal and informal public and private providers, poorly coordinated and regulated. Even with political stabilisation in the south from the late 1980s, forms of provision were fragmented and access was uneven. In the north, the situation worsened in the wake of conflicts. Throughout the 1990s, donors entered, but institutional reforms and international intervention are, as previously stated, mediated by coping strategies and political struggles. By approaching state-society through an of one sector, health, at national, district and village levels, it is possible to bring out in a detailed manner how different forms of state-society relations have evolved – and how they are continuously reshaped, as state formation in Uganda is very much an unsettled and an ongoing process.

Scope and organisation
The book is organised as follows: In Chapter 1, the research problem is situated in its empirical and theoretical contexts of recent changes in state-society relations in Sub-Saharan Africa and of theoretical perspectives on this. I develop the theoretical argument about state formation analysed as the regulation of power relations in various arenas in society and suggest how such a perspective is able to make sense of the contradictory tendencies of Ugandan state-society relations.

It may appear superfluous to stress that states and societies are fundamentally shaped in complex ways by their history. However, much prescriptive literature and intervening policy making – and this is very much so with regard to contemporary Uganda – is curiously ahistorical in its prescriptions of getting institutions right, in spite of historical institutionalists’ reminders to the contrary. Therefore, a historical is undertaken in Chapter 2, where I outline the main features of state formation from colonial times until 1986. It relates the historical trajectory of the
regulation of health and welfare to these main features. To take only one example, just like most other social relations during the 1970s and 1980s, health provision was subject to thoroughgoing informalisation. The specific forms of informalisation were in turn shaped by existing forms of health provision. This legacy was not easily changed by institutional reforms, and it lingers on to this day, as is discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

These chapters review shifts in the formation of the Ugandan state and civil society under the NRM government, that is to say, from 1986 to the mid-2000s. Chapter 3 discusses the period from 1986 to the early 1990s, during which the NRM, from a position of political vulnerability and having inherited a very weak state, sought to establish control over society. Within these constraints, what strategies did state managers employ, and how did different social forces respond? How did overall changes in state-society relations affect health provision? Chapter 4 moves on to analyse developments after the early 1990s, a period characterised by a high degree of influx of foreign development assistance and one often thought of as marked by consolidation of state power – yet, as shall be shown, the particular mode of consolidation generated strong undercurrents of destabilisation, which would later become manifest. This chapter also incorporates international actors into the analysis.

External influence has not been limited to the expansion of monetary resources from overseas. As suggested above, the Ugandan state has become a testing ground for many governance reforms and, again as already hinted, it has been referred to as a leading example of success. This rising status gradually gave the government more leverage and leeway in relation to foreign providers of resources. In what ways did the political constellations brought about by external influence and resources shape the Ugandan state and civil society? How were conditions for democratisation of the state affected by economic liberalisation and state reform?
Another prominent feature of state reform throughout the period under study is decentralisation. Local politics often carries specific (sub-) regional traits which shape the local state, in its real as opposed to formal sense in rather divergent directions, depending among other things on the local political economy and relations between the central and the local state. This is analysed in Chapter 5 through the case study of Masaka District, and an examination of state-society relations there. The Masaka case illustrates how sources of formal and informal power converge and shape local politics in locally specific ways that give specific content to general forms. How has decentralisation affected the scope for participation in and influence on politics? In the concluding chapter, the main findings are summarised and related to the theoretical argument. Some questions nevertheless linger on. To what extent do state-society relations in the health sector differ from those in other political arenas? In what ways does state formation differ between regions? How are different state institutions connected to or detached from one another? A final section of the concluding chapter broadens the scope of the in order to address these issues and to incorporate them into a discussion of comparative experiences of state formation within and beyond Uganda.
States and societies in Africa have long been strained by enduring socio-economic stress and political tension. Relatively successful economic development in many African nations during the 1960s and early 1970s slowed down from the late 1970s due to a combination of international recession and domestic structural weaknesses. Economic stagnation resulted in budget, balance of payment and debt crises, in many cases presided over by authoritarian governments with waning legitimacy, which in turn typically created a political crisis. Most governments turned to the international financial institutions (IFIs), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for credits, which were granted on the condition that governments pursued Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) along the lines of economic liberalisation.
These programmes in most cases did not produce the intended outcomes and were from the late 1980s complemented by institutional reforms. A common denominator of these two generations of programmes was the assumption that state-society relations in Africa exhibited features that impeded growth and development, and that the reform programmes would correct these distortions.

Furthermore, during the early 1990s, in the midst of a global trend of transitions to democracy, expectations were advanced among donors and creditors of a convergence between economic and political liberalisation. Indeed, popular and parallel elite demands for political democracy had for some time been imposed on ruling elites, though just as often by way of protests against economic liberalisation as linked to economic decline and mismanagement and political authoritarianism more broadly. Also, in some cases ruling elites made use of the return to democracy to reinvent themselves and their hold on power.

The outcome of economic and political liberalisation has been mixed. Growth has often been unequally distributed, comes with high social costs and has typically not translated into substantial economic and social development. In many cases where liberal democracy was established, its content has remained shallow with limited scope for real access to the state or influence on decision making for most sections of society.

The manifestations of the crisis extended from relatively modest economic stagnation to deeper institutional decay, or what some authors refer to as “state collapse” (Zartman 1995). By any standard, Uganda experienced an acute crisis of statehood in the mid-1980s. The Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) government that had been fighting a guerrilla army for four years was overthrown in a coup d’état in 1985, and Kampala was effectively divided into zones controlled by factions of the military or various militias. Routine bureaucratic functions of the state had long since been undercut by informal exit strategies of its cadres,
reflecting the informalisation of the wider commercial economy. State welfare institutions were reduced to shadows of their former selves. All sections of society endured through various kinds of coping strategies. Nationhood was, if not falling apart, so at least under serious stress after years of factional rivalry, not least within the armed forces. Such a dramatic predicament with regard to the institutional and territorial dimensions of the state raises fundamental questions about underlying conditions for the formation of state and society.

More than twenty years later, while not pushed to the very edge of survival, Uganda still faces serious challenges of state and nationhood. The country, and particularly so its northern parts, has suffered from a continuous series of armed insurgencies and civil wars, dividing the country to the extent that issues of future national disintegration were raised by political leaders in the north. But even more peaceful parts of the country are marked by underlying tensions and deep mistrust between government and opposition. Recent years have seen recurring conflicts between different state agencies, including a tendency towards a threatening militarisation of the state. In between, though, Uganda has been declared a success story. Its economic recovery and relative political stabilisation is much due to a reconstructed state. While some of the praise heaped upon Uganda by donors and creditors can easily be dismissed as exaggerated rhetoric, many achievements are undoubtedly real.

However, just as these achievements partly have their roots in pre-1986 history, so do some of today’s problems. Unlike what is claimed in semi-official history writing in contemporary Uganda (Amaza 1998), there was no mythical complete break with the past or political revolution in 1986; the crisis in northern Uganda testifies to that.

The more general theoretical point is that state formation is a complex process of intertwined and often contradictory dimensions with different historical roots in society, and hence,
characterised by both continuity and change. It is precisely the contradictory manifestations of state power in Uganda that call for a deeper of how they are related to the overall complexity of state-society relations. Furthermore, just as general forms of intervention, such as economic liberalisation and state reform as imposed on most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, take on their specific content shaped by political struggles in each setting, so are the particular trajectories of these settings in turn shaped by changes in the broader conjuncture. This means that it is necessary to analyse both how, for instance, governance reforms are internalised by political forces in Uganda as well as how economic liberalisation under global capitalism spells out new conditions for those forces to do so. I shall return to the analytical implications of this admittedly abstract argument below by discussing how state managers, external actors and various social forces all seek to shape state policies and institutions to promote them.

At this stage, a conceptual clarification is needed. When I in this study apply the term “technocratic governance” in order to capture some of the characteristics of the contemporary Ugandan state, I do so, as the attribute “technocratic” clearly reveals, with a narrow policy related conception of governance in mind, well aware that the concept is also sometimes used in a generic and theoretically more ambitious ways to designate “any form of coordination of interdependent social relations” (Jessop 2002: 52). The policy related concept was developed in the early 1990s. To quote the World Bank (1992: 1), governance in their view is, “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development”, and incorporates public sector management, accountability, a legal framework for democracy and information and transparency (World Bank 1992: 12).
It should be noted that while the World Bank concentrated on managerial aspects, bilateral donors who incorporated the concept into their thinking were more explicitly political and beyond supporting institutional reforms also in some cases demanded multi-party democracy and respect for human rights as conditions for foreign aid (Leftwich 1993: 606). It is noteworthy, however, that Uganda, although occasionally criticised for human rights abuses, was for long exempted from such pressures (Haynes 2001). The reason for using the narrower and no doubt ideological sense of the concept “good governance” is that it is roughly that conception which, put to practice, has been central in restructuring the Ugandan state and in justifying this project as a success (Nsibambi 1998a). In that sense, “governance” figures in this study both as a descriptive characterisation and, as in “governance state” (Harrison 2004), as an object of analysis; more on this below.

This chapter deepens the probing of the research problem by relating it to, first, the comparative context of crisis, economic restructuring and state reform in Sub-Saharan Africa and, secondly, to theoretical debates about state-society relations in this context. The third section elaborates the theoretical perspective and argument while the fourth situates the preceding three into the Ugandan context. The chapter concludes with a section on methodology.

The comparative context: Economic liberalisation, state reform and pluralised development

The post-colonial accumulation model dominant in most African countries during the first decade and a half after independence was characterised by strong degrees of state intervention in the economy, import-substitution industrialisation and public sector expansion. State-led development models typically incorporated social forces into loyalty and submission, and the political survival of states to a large degree rested on their capacity for delivery of
economic development and social welfare. Such “social contracts” and the various political alliances that underpinned them began to disintegrate as their basis for accumulation were undermined through intertwined processes of declining terms of trade and internal structural problems, resulting in fiscal crisis.

Since the early 1980s, most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have applied programmes for economic liberalisation; Uganda embarked on its first Economic Recovery Programme in 1981. These programmes, whether “home-grown” or explicitly and formally imposed from outside by the IFIs, have involved measures for securing financial stabilisation and promoting export-led growth. Prominent features of the programmes include removal of subsidies, trade liberalisation, devaluation of currencies, and privatisation of the economy (Engberg-Pedersen, Gibbon, Raikes and Udsholt 1996; Mohan et al 2000: chapters 1-2).

The transformation from a state-interventionist to a neo-liberal development model has been underpinned by institutional reforms. State and public sector reforms, such as budget cuts, public sector worker retrenchment, user charges for health and education, privatisation and the introduction of new public management methods have been cornerstones of the reforms. Specific programmes were introduced in order to reduce the social cost of economic liberalisation.

A central feature of state reform has been decentralisation, with the stated aim of improving efficiency in service delivery and creating conditions for popular participation in development. The restructuring of state institutions along market lines has reduced the role of the state as well as transforming the foundations for its popular support. These policies have aimed at shaping managerial efficiency and have shifted the basic logic of welfare provision from universal to targeted policies, with NGOs entering as alternative providers (Bangura 2001: 256-259).
One more or less explicit assumption tied to these reforms is that by restructuring the state and allowing for more demand-led service provision, it is also possible to discipline public action away from patrimonialism towards more “rational” ways of behaviour (World Bank 1997). This in turn is based on views of the African state as overloaded and dysfunctional (Bangura 1994: 819).

Breakdown in state capacity of providing basic social services, including health, has both preceded and been deepened by adjustment programmes. Conflicts over priorities, an underlying feature of health care anywhere, have been exposed, and the problems of the health sector have been magnified in the context of the economic and social crisis of the previous two decades. A combined set of institutional reforms have thus contributed to the tendency of transforming social welfare services from social rights, albeit previously imperfectly supplied, to marketised commodities.

What has been the impact of state reform and economic liberalisation on state-society relations? Here, the focus is on the consequences for state-civil society relations in the context of social service delivery. In most African countries, adjustment policies in the shape of privatisation and downsizing of public expenditure have led to some degree of state withdrawal from previously central assignments in this field. Institutional reforms have been affected by, and set off, a multiplication of survival or coping strategies, following upon a drastic – or, as in Uganda, long-standing – deterioration of living standards. Coping strategies are conceptualised by Bangura (1994: 790-92) as the way individuals and groups organise themselves to make a living. They overlap or diverge, take individual or collective form and affect both structures of provision and patterns of consumption. Key features include diversification and informalisation of modes of livelihood and typically include migration, subsistence
and self-employment. Individuals and households shift between public sector, private and traditionalist forms of health care, depending on accessibility or level of expenses (Bangura 1994; Mustapha 1992).

At the same time, new actors enter into the providing side, including urban-based indigenous or foreign NGOs, district based home area associations, religious organisations, community based self-help groups, and reactivated ethnic-traditional operators (Kiondo 1995; Rudebeck 1990). In Uganda, there were a few hundred NGOs towards the late 1980s. Today there are considerably more, and an unknown quantity of community based organisations (CBOs). The emergence of these actors is associated with external influences, such as the tendency during the late 1980s and early 1990s to channel development aid through NGOs as a way of “rebuilding civil society”. Internal factors include a combination of growing demands of expectations from the population and decreasing financial and institutional capacity of the state (Kanyinga 1995; Therkildsen and Semboja 1995).

It would, however, be misleading to present these changes as a case of privatisation in a conventional sense. Rather, it is more a question of straddling or overlapping between donors, NGOs and states, in terms of funding, staffing and provision. Donors and civil society organisations enjoy a variety of political relations with the state, which has retained and may even have strengthened its close links to some of these actors, although in a new manner (Therkildsen and Semboja 1995: 3-4). As Mkandawire argues, political support can be expected to be closely related to the resolution of development and welfare issues (Mkandawire 2004: 12-13).

These changes are part of the wider paradigm of dismantled corporatist arrangements for regulating relations between state and society outlined above. Institutional reforms and economic
liberalisation restructure state-society relations in a number of ways, including the internal composition of both state institutions and civil society as well as of the constituencies that civil society groups claim to represent. At the same time as the state has been downsized, privatised and decentralised, civil society has undergone a recomposition with implications for power relations. Previously predominant interest groups, such as trade unions and co-operatives, have been sidelined to shifting degrees in the process of liberalisation. NGOs have taken centre stage, at least in the field of social development. The overall effects of this recomposition, Bangura suggests (2001: 262), are pluralisation and fragmentation of both state and civil society, as well as of the regulatory mechanisms that mediate between them. The organisation of collective social projects is complicated by the multiplication of strategies and actors.

To sum up, economic and public sector reforms involve a growing role of NGOs and other minor actors in service delivery, with remaining but transformed importance of the state and a growing influence of donors on policy making. The combination of multiple coping strategies and a diversified development arena points to straddling as a defining feature, both of structures of provision and patterns of consumption, in relation to social institutions, where people move between contexts, loyalties and interests. The political implications of these changes will be discussed in the next section.

This section has stressed general contemporary features at the expense of historical particularities. It therefore needs to be reiterated that general or external intervention is given its content by the political struggles that emerge within specific contexts. While state formation in Uganda by and large conforms to the model of economic liberalisation state reform that operates within the structural policy constraints of a very weak domestic revenue base and subsequent aid dependence, the political impact
of economic liberalisation does not follow a typical pattern of responses to state contraction and dismantled state corporatism. In Uganda, liberalisation has since 1987 been an integral part of a project for rebuilding the state. The intersection between the specific Ugandan trajectory and the general features of the policy context is analysed below.

**State-society relations in Africa: Theoretical perspectives**

It was suggested above that the wider political implications of structural adjustment programmes need to be seen from the perspective of the gradual decline of an accumulation model centred on an interventionist developmental state that had set up corporatist relations with a specified range of interest groups. The emergence of the contemporary orthodoxy in development thinking that accompanied the structural changes outlined above is well recognised and has already been suggested. “Good governance” emerged, in slightly different versions among policy makers (World Bank 1992; 1997) and scholars (see Hydén 1992), as shorthand for a development model where a combination of a restructured state, market forces and civil society are expected to bring about political pluralism and accountability and, eventually, democracy and development in a more substantial sense (Potter 2000; World Bank 1997).

The rise of the good governance agenda to dominant status as a development model has been addressed elsewhere (Doornbos 2001, Williams and Young 1994). Its application involves, among other things, an institutional modification of an earlier generation of structural adjustment programmes and their perceived failure. These were distinguished by rigid enforcement of deregulation, privatisation and trade liberalisation. The World Bank looked for institutional explanations and solutions to their shortcomings (Leftwich 1993: 607-608; Moore 1993: 2).
Such rectification in terms of state reform does not necessarily involve a drastically changed view of the restricted role allotted to the state in economic policy making, but it does underline the perceived developmental and democratic promise of civil society groups.

The contemporary model emphasises the potential of collaboration in more fluid forms between NGOs, local government and, possibly, a revitalised private sector to enhance “participatory development and community empowerment”, through accumulation and distribution of social capital (Williams and Young 1994: 87; Mohan and Stokke 2000). A reformed and decentralised state and a revived civil society become key mechanisms for the realisation of these and a host of other objectives (Crook and Manor 1998: 2; White 1994). Similar beliefs about the propensity of civil society groups to advance political democracy have been shared by some academics, who propose that a pluralised civil society will function as a counterweight to state power, a transmission belt for popular demands and a school for nourishing a democratic culture (Harbeson 1994).

In many cases, economic reforms were, from the late 1980s, accompanied by political liberalisation. Domestic pressures for reforming and opening up political institutions were incorporated into the governance agenda and codified into political conditionalities such as demands for multi-party elections. The great expectations that first met these changes, as being part of the so-called Third Wave of democracy, eventually evaporated. Some countries fell back into military or one-party rule. In other cases, where liberal democracy has been established, observers have pointed to its shallow character and limited reach (Sandbrook 2000: 23-26). These setbacks suggest that patterns of political authoritarianism are deeply rooted and further enforced by structural characteristics of many African social orders. Significant features that impede the consolidation of democracy
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in Africa are said to include deep social and political inequalities; fragile and incapacitated state institutions controlled by elite coalitions; factional political parties without a solid social base; and weak civil societies, often characterised by ethno-regional fragmentation and disrupted links between the urban and rural population (Joseph 1997; Sandbrook 2000: chapter 2).

Another interpretation of state-society relations in Africa is even more pessimistic. On this account, the bright visions of “synergy effects” between state, civil society and the market, supposedly beneficial for democracy and development, need to be not only modified, but completely reversed. The main thesis of this critique is that political reforms are almost certain to be captured by prevailing structures of clientilism and that the resources that come with them will instead serve to reinforce patronage networks (Chabal and Daloz 1999: chapters 1-3).

This view is derived from a neo-patrimonialist perspective on state and society in Africa, which sets out from the Weberian distinction between rational-legal and patrimonial modes of authority. The latter, which is said to prevail as the core feature of politics in most African societies, is distinguished by personalised authority, privatisation of state power and informalised networks for distributing services and spoils among loyal clients. These characteristics constitute an informal system of rule that runs alongside and erodes formal legal-rational institutions (Bratton and van de Walle 1997: 61-63; Sandbrook 2000: 59-60). Neo-patrimonialism is said to follow from basic features of the social structure, primarily from particularist political identities along ethnic, regional and religious lines which reinforce clientilism.

The neo-patrimonialist argument echoes well-known propositions by Clifford Geertz on the specificity of state, nation and citizenship in the third world. In his seminal article, Geertz (1973 [1963]) argued that people in developing countries within the foreseeable future would sustain their close ties with
ethnic, religious or equivalent kind of primordial communities –
primordial basically in the sense of resting on persistent cultural
idioms and modes of interaction. Similar arguments can be
traced in an influential article by Peter Ekeh (1975), in which the
author argues that colonialism left Africa with two publics: one
civil, the other primordial, each with its own psychological and
political logic.

The interaction between the two publics created a moral
vacuum. While the virtues of the civic public were officially
upheld, most people neglected its exhortations and remained
loyal to their primordial publics. This clash of norms and
interests between the two publics eventually generated two
distinct features of African politics: tribalism and corruption
(1975: 110). Incidentally, the patrimonialist motif reappeared in
Ugandan political discourse, as it constituted the NRM’s main
argument against political pluralism.

The explanatory emphasis is sometimes placed on these
structural-cultural logics, which penetrate the state and create
systemic effects described as an “economy of affection” (Hydén
1983) or a “politics of the belly” (Bayart 1993); sometimes
on cunning instrumental intervention from the state based
bureaucratic-economic elite itself, creating vast networks of
patronage in exchange for political loyalty (Bates 1981). On this
view, state interventionism after independence, for instance, was
not primarily a strategy for creating development but amounted
to a tapping of public resources for maximising personal or
sectional interests, by and large a symptom of an underlying logic
of leaders distributing spoils to selected vested interest groups.
Thus, while governance theorists claim that proper civil society
is stifled by a hostile state, the neo-patrimonialist thesis holds
that weak states are overpowered by an excess of communalist
forces, or the downside of civil society.
Critique of the governance orthodoxy, and in particular of its perceived shallow conceptualisation of politics and power, is now commonplace (Mohan and Stokke 2000; Harriss 2002). This study shares this critical view and sets out from the assumption that contemporary development models to significant degrees are shaped by unintended but fundamental contradictions between institutional reforms (such as decentralisation and New Public Management), and social (such as informalisation and individual and collective coping strategies) and political processes (such as the intervention of ruling groups in society to reproduce their political base). Against the governance model, this study stresses the seemingly obvious, namely that state reform is an inherently political as opposed to technical process. The argument proposed here sets out from the premise that the realisation of decentralisation and local governance reforms will be shaped by deliberate efforts by the ruling class to structure its relations with other social forces due to central features of the political economy. Such efforts are likely to include pressures or concessions in relation to interest groups or regional or local elites to establish or consolidate the political influence of the regime (Boone 2003).

Against the patrimonialist argument, on the other hand, the proposition advanced here is that there is indeed scope, although often narrow and uneven, for interest groups to open up political space in a more democratic direction. While patronage politics is common – factionalist politics based on ethnicity and religion has certainly been a main feature of Uganda’s modern political history – and the risks that institutional reforms will turn into “elite capture” by local powerholders are real, it is suggested here that these features are neither inevitable nor exclusive – a view that follows from treating “patrimonialism” as a fact of life.

Neo-patrimonialist theories have been criticised for reducing all forms of politics and interest group pressure to a question of
patronage or “rent-seeking”, isolated from other aspects of social relations. Such reductionism, it is argued, makes it difficult to explain the very different paths and effects of economic policy making found in Africa (Mkandawire 2001: 298-299). It further closes off analyses of different kinds of relations between state and society by treating these relations as largely antagonistic and civil society itself as homogenous (Gibbon 1992: 4-5; Beckman 1993: 23-24). Also, it can be added, subsuming all social relations under a catch-all patrimonialism concept conceals what patron-client or any other relations are all about, the contexts that have created these relations and what they promote in terms of regulatory mechanisms as well as policy content.

The concept says very little about the capacity or propensity of ruling or subordinate groupings to translate patronage ties into productive accumulation or conspicuous consumption, elitist exclusion or populist inclusion, tight control or broadened accommodation. It is entirely possible, for instance, that just as some individuals or groups may make use of formally democratic channels in order to bypass them by informal particularist favours, others may take advantage of clientilist networks to promote demands for equal access and fairer forms of conflict regulation. That is to say, while it is not difficult to identify examples of patronage, the argument is conspicuously void of convincing explanations of such examples, explanations which need to be related to a broader understanding of power relations that structure access and influence of social forces in order to make sense of the content of the political projects of either “patron” or “client”.

Institutional reforms take root in different ways due to the ways in which social forces seek to appropriate them. Bangura (1994) suggests that informalisation and coping strategies to deal with economic crisis all over sub-Saharan Africa have produced underlying contradictions in relation to the institutional reforms
mentioned above. This, according to Bangura, is due to the weak capacity of the state to intervene and address problems in relevant ways and a subsequent destabilisation of institutions.

A range of forces, not necessarily with democratic or egalitarian orientation, including reactivated traditionalist groupings, religious institutions and local and foreign NGOs, enter into the development arena to assert their relevance. This pluralisation of development actors involves a multiplicity of development interventions. “Intervention”, of course, is a rather heterogeneous category. Development aid projects for agricultural modernisation, state penetration of rural areas for political support and social movement mobilisation seeking recognition all have their own roots and orientation and set off parallel forms of institutional connections and regulation. The next section deepens the theoretical argument and elaborates a framework for addressing the problem.

**Framework and argument**

How then do we approach the research problem, the scope for and capacity of social forces to create access to and democratise the state?\(^2\) It is proposed here that in order to go beyond both the prescriptive optimism of the governance agenda and pluralist political science and the reductionist pessimism of neopatrimonialist theory, state-civil society relations need to be theorised from a perspective that stresses relations of domination in overlapping arenas at the level of both state, civil society and among international actors. The study sets out from the proposition that interest representation and conflict regulation at the level of civil society is critical for the restructuring of state institutions. The institutional composition and political orientation of the state are seen as shaped by the regulation of demands and power struggles among social forces outside and

\(^2\) For overviews on the massive literature on democratisation, see e.g. Grugel (2002), Mahoney (2003) and Potter *et al.* (1997).
within the state, including transnational structures of power. More specifically with regard to democratisation, the draws on the central argument developed by Rueschemeyer *et al* (1992); Huber *et al* (1997) that a changing balance of class power has historically been crucial in promoting political democracy. It extends their argument to the broader hypothesis that the changing balance of power along different lines in society – not only class ones – and that the way this is interconnected with state structures, will continue to be fundamental for sustained as opposed to shallow democratisation of both state power and social relations.

Changing relations of domination are of crucial importance for democratisation for the simple reason that dominant groups, whether based on class, gender, ethnicity or any other marker of social stratification, are likely to try to preserve their economic, social and political privileges by resisting transitions to or the deepening of democracy. Bangura (1992: 46) argues that:

> the basis for authoritarian rule should be located primarily at the level of material relations, i.e. it expresses a particular resolution of contradictions in particular forms of accumulation. But the dynamics of authoritarian rule and struggles for democratisation develop at the level of civil society.

Hence, any set-up of political institutions is embedded in power relations in the wider social formation, and needs to be analysed in that context. Democratisation of the state involves changes in the balance of power among different political forces and of state-society relations to the effect that the state in the process becomes more autonomous from dominant political classes and social groups and correspondingly more embedded among and responsive to subordinate ones. To continue the argument, it is proposed that states are shaped by struggles between different constellations rooted in the state, in local society and among international actors – for instance international capital, but
also international NGOs or providers of development aid. In contemporary Uganda, the transnational dimension is very obvious as reconstruction largely rests on donor-driven capitalist development.

A similar argument is applicable to the of the local state. Catherine Boone (2003) in her study on variations in local state forms and central-local relations in West Africa, emphasises the mutual determination of power relations in rural society and strategic state intervention. Forces in local society make demands on or respond to interventions by central governments. Differences in political capacity and interest in rural society are shaped by political struggles at that level. Ruling groups seek to penetrate and control various forces in society in relation to the different political and economic challenges posed by the latter.

This framework allows for capturing authoritarian, democratic and patrimonial features of state-society relations but does not predetermine either. In contrast to governance and civil society oriented theories, it incorporates power relations and political struggles at the level of civil society, within the state and internationally. It also goes beyond neo-patrimonialist perspectives in that it considers how “neo-patrimonial” features feed into other and contradictory tendencies and interconnections between them. Even where authoritarian rule at the level of state power is firmly anchored among hierarchical social relations, it is transformed by the dynamics of conflicts and demands set off by the contradictions of development. This theoretical argument is explored empirically by analysing different forms of conflict regulation and interest representation in the health sector. In the rest of this chapter, I move from the general theoretical argument to a contextualised analytical framework.

**Dimensions of state formation**

The argument sets out from a perspective of the state as a historically evolving, yet relatively permanent set of institutions
that aspire to stabilise and regulate social relations of domination, institutions that in the process both reflect and reshape the latter (Jessop 2002: 40). Capitalist states are deeply rooted in economic and social relations by for instance the need to extract resources from society in exchange for concessions and by redistributing those resources and setting rules for conflict regulation. Formal and real distribution of power between central and local institutions and different arms of government impact on important dimensions of state structures such as their institutional capacity (as they may rest on internally either relatively coherent or fragmented state agencies) and democratic accountability (as they may be responsive to, for instance, representative state agencies and different forces in society, or not).

All state managers and ruling groups meet challenges of how to accommodate and balance different dimensions of state formation and reproduction, including requirements often deemed fundamental to statehood, such as preserving territorial integrity, establishing monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, extracting and allocating resources, promoting accumulation and penetrating society to establish control and support through coercion and consent; this arguably involves recurrent crises with regard to such material and ideological sources of power. After constructing such general propositions, however, I will in the following section hasten to deconstruct them to some extent. As should be clear, most of the core concepts used above, including “coherence”, “stabilise”, and “legitimate” are contested, and their content varies depending on the perspective of each actor. For instance, what is considered legitimate about state power for one group in society may be highly illegitimate for another. Likewise, what is considered “fundamental” challenges and how to deal with them is highly contextual and subject to political struggles. What is of concern here, however, is the ways in which a group
in control of state power in a particular society, in relation to demands by other social forces on the state, applies strategies for accumulation and legitimation, conceived as attempts to reproduce its political base and sustain political control through material and ideological resources.

In the study, I analyse the various attempts of the NRM government to establish and maintain control in relation to demands from contending political forces, employing sometimes contradictory, sometimes reinforcing strategies to promote accumulation and legitimation. “Control” includes the various ways in which the state seeks to achieve legitimate or otherwise domination over social groups and the state territory through coercion and consent. These processes are evidently related and contradictory in complicated ways. They are related through the ways in which the state is dependent upon support among at least most significant sections of society for extracting resources. This in turn typically requires concessions in terms of security and redistribution in order to promote normative and instrumental legitimation; none of this is new or surprising. The processes are potentially contradictory not only in sofar as social forces are likely to have different and occasionally irreconcilable interests, meaning that what constitutes and creates “state legitimacy” will differ in relation to various constituencies but also in that the strategies chosen for extracting resources and promoting accumulation, more often than not undertaken within serious constraints, may undercut legitimation or vice versa. In pursuing projects for capitalist accumulation and development, conflicts arise between different political interests and in relation to the various sources of legitimacy these interests draw on, and structural contradictions emerge between strategies for example aimed at rapid but potentially destabilising accumulation and conditions necessary for the reproduction of the political and economic order in a longer perspective. Bruce Berman (1990) has
successfully highlighted such “dialectics of domination” through the case of colonial Kenya, emphasising the inherent instability of the seemingly solid colonial state. The NRM government’s attempts to establish control have taken place within severe constraints created by the preceding crisis and in relation to demands made on the state by different political forces. It has therefore been rather an unstable political project.

The character of state institutions, including the extent and kind of state intervention that characterises economic and social policy, is significantly shaped by the way conflicts and power relations in society are reproduced within the state. Contending forces in civil society attempt to create access to the resources and regulatory intervention of the state. State managers seek to reproduce the effective presence of state agencies at the level of society by mobilising constituencies, crafting alliances and building institutional mechanisms for representation and control – often but not always benefiting dominant social forces and external constituencies at the expense of subordinate ones. These mechanisms are mediated by resistance or compliance, due to the balance of power among social forces; again, social relations of domination are both reflected in and reshaped by the state. The strategies of ruling groups for ensuring control range from coercion to more sophisticated and legitimate forms of the political institutionalisation of social relations.

The argument so far may seem overly structuralist and abstract and needs to be modified and placed in context. It should be clear from the foregoing that these processes are inherently complex and unstable. In cases of fragile states with uneven capacity and weak resource bases, as in Uganda, contradictions between different aims are constantly brought to the fore by demands in different directions on the state by various formal and informal, internal and external constituencies; the latter impinge heavily on the functions of the Ugandan state in view of
its dependence on donors and creditors for resources. The latter point suggests that challenges of control and strategies to meet them by among other things accumulation and legitimation are contextually specific through the ways states are inserted in the international system and in the local social formation with its historically developed institutional landscape. And this leads to the analytical proposition that state formation needs to be studied with careful consideration of context and historical sequence.

The balancing of different dimensions of state formation takes on its conjunctural political expression in many African countries in the context of economic liberalisation, decorporatisation and changing state-society relations outlined above. In the Ugandan case, it is in the context of the specific trajectory of aid-driven capitalist development and state reconstruction. In most cases, including in Uganda between 1981 and 1985, adjustment and liberalisation followed from fiscal crisis and weakened state capacity. In the context of declining revenue bases, states enter vicious circles and face interlinked crises of weakened capacity for material reproduction and destabilisation of legitimacy. In order to secure control, state rulers have found it necessary to either repress or incorporate demands from various groups in civil society, according to the strength of the latter. Uganda’s first adjustment experience during the early 1980s was characterised precisely by the difficulty for the UPC government to balance contradictory demands. In the context of civil war, the government embarked upon measures which sought to secure loyalty from its shrinking power base but which undercut the conditions for its reproduction. In Uganda since the late 1980s, on the contrary, liberalisation has been associated with state reconstruction as opposed to decay. The main sources of legitimation of the NRM government have been peace and security among relevant constituencies, and growth and distribution of public goods.
Civil society shaping the state

The nature of civil society in Africa has long been the topic of a vast literature, with proponents (Bratton 1989; Chazan 1992; Diamond 1994; Harbeson 1994) as well as critics (see the collections edited by Mamdani and Wamba-dia-Wamba 1995; Kasfir 1998; and Comaroff and Comaroff 1999) of the idea that civil society holds the key to democratic transitions in Africa. For an overview, see Sjögren (2001). In contrast to certain contemporary conceptualisations of civil society that tend to view it as a pluralising social phenomenon with relatively homogeneous core properties and liberal-democratic political implications (Diamond 1994), it is argued here that civil society is better understood as an analytical as opposed to prescriptive shorthand term for a wide range of more or less formal social groups without specific pre-determined political properties. Civil society cannot, for instance, be assumed a priority to be autonomous from or opposing the state. Following from this, the formation of civil society in any specific setting is here viewed as rooted in and transformed by the political economy and its different kinds of social stratification, including class, gender, and ethnic relations, and in response to the forms of ideology and representation such stratification sets off (Gibbon 2001; Sjögren 2001). This process does not, of course, occur in any deterministic manner. The composition and political orientation of civil societies cannot be derived straight off from the social structure or from state or ruling class imposed attempts at domination. Another aspect is that very often the distinction between state and civil society is not only blurred but entirely misleading as individuals and resources move freely between the two.

Finally, while not making claims to any absolute defining demarcation, the conceptual distinction between society and civil society made throughout the study refers roughly to “routine
modes of interaction in a social formation” and “organisational forms emerging out of that”, respectively. Therefore, it sometimes makes more sense to speak of state-society rather than state-civil society relations; particularly so at the level of local politics, as shall be discussed in Chapter 5, but sometimes also at national levels where the notion of civil society may constrain rather than expand the understanding of, for instance, the networks of elite politics. Consequently, state-civil society relations may be thought of as a subset of state-society relations.

**Transnational power structures**

Transnational structures of power shape both state structures and social relations in different ways, through changing forms of accumulation, for example international regimes of trade, as well as through direct external involvement with a country’s policies and institutional framework. A defining feature of contemporary Ugandan politics has been the deep and sustained external involvement. Donors and creditors have for years financed approximately 50 per cent of Uganda’s state budget (Tangri and Mwenda 2006), and this external fiscal basis of the state naturally impacts upon internal state-society relations. It also restricts the Ugandan government’s options for policy choices. Furthermore, transnational structures of power also affect both internal class structures and the composition of civil society, as many civil society organisations are either external or externally funded. This again influences state-civil society relations. With regard to contradictions between foreign and national interests, it is clear that the Ugandan political economy remains dependent. It relies on income from primary commodity exports and foreign aid or credit. More advanced production is heavily import-dependent. There is a high degree of penetration of foreign capital. Economic policy making is in a broad sense imposed by external providers of resources in close collaboration with state managers (Harrison 2004). It is also evident that the historical trajectory of the political
economy has in crucial ways been shaped by colonialism and imperialism, including the form class and state formation took on in this context, through the promotion of Buganda region and the deliberate underdevelopment of other regions in the eastern and northern parts of the country (Jørgensen 1981; Mamdani 1976). It is furthermore clear that independent Uganda has occasionally suffered from foreign political intervention – most notably Israeli and British backing of the 1971 coup (Furley 1989). Nevertheless, the form and content of capitalist development and state formation that emerged has been crucially shaped by Ugandan social relations of power and resistance, as reproduced in and by the state. In making this claim, I also assume that the contemporary state, in spite of dependence on external revenue, retains relative autonomy as regulating instance, although in a slightly new manner.

At this point, conceptual clarification is required. The shorthand notions “external” / “foreign” and “internal” / “domestic” used throughout this book have limited meaning in themselves: evidently, there are strong linkages between local, national and global economic and political factors, blurring clear-cut demarcations. While there are, in principle, contradictions between foreign and national interests, lines of conflict just as often run between different constellations of external-internal forces that, according to power relations, are differently positioned to shape the Ugandan state. Harrison (2001; 2004: 71-74) discusses Uganda as an example of “governance states” or “post-conditionality regimes”, where “[p]ost-conditionality politics is both more interventionist and less starkly coercive” (Harrison 2004: 71). This kind of state – the main features of which are particularly prominent in administrative reform processes – are according to Harrison characterised by the high-profile role of donors in economic and institutional reform. Their significant presence is to a high degree ideologically and institutionally internalised within the state, and supervision is
exercised on a basis of trust and with implicit references to a “common sense” and mutual interests.

These regimes are thus said to be differentiated from conditionality relations by the employment of promotion and rewards rather than coercive measures in order to exercise reform, and a blurring of distinction between external and internal interests where instances of the former have turned into a permanent feature of the institutional landscape. That is, donors and creditors were early on taken on board the NRM’s broad based coalition, and while not in a strict sense part of the state, they have in important respects been internalised into the state formation process (Harrison 2004: 87-88). At the same time, the Ugandan state has been reorganised and externally incorporated into what has been termed an emerging “transnational state” made up of networks of “supranational economic and political forums”, such as the World Bank, the IMF and the UN system (Robinson 2004: 88). External actors, and not only donors but also NGOs and private capital, are allied with various domestic political forces located within and outside the state. I therefore incorporate these actors into the state-society relations as integral parts of competing political alliances, particularly prominent in the creation of “technocratic governance”.

**State-civil society relations**

The preceding sections support a perspective that emphasises the mutual formation of state and civil society and a manifold of state-civil society relations: an institutional landscape of structurally differentiated constellations competing for access to the state (Migdal et al 1995). The main argument with regard to the research problem is that the scope for and capacity of groups to support or indeed block the democratisation of the state is best explained by relations of domination. What may be hypothesised about the politics of state-civil society relations
in the context of economic liberalisation and state reform? What strategies do state managers use in order to promote accumulation and legitimation? Do they seek to repress or to incorporate civil society groups? Do civil society groups strive for greater autonomy or incorporation? Do they reproduce or challenge received political identities? What is the scope for participation, accountability and influence? Are channels of influence structured as “transmitters of temporary particularistic favours [or] channels to mobilise citizens into influencing policy formation” (Huber, Rueschemeyer, Stephens 1997: 334)? In contemporary Africa, different strands of civil society are developing. These are shaped by related processes of change in the political economy but are based in and represent dissimilar constituencies, for very different purposes. Ideal-typically, many NGOs are oriented towards service provision, while social movements articulate and mobilise constituencies in relation to socio-economic transformation; combinations occur. In theoretical terms this may be related to the distinctions between “deepening” and “politicising” civil society (Gibbon 1996: 38), or between forms of civil society that pluralise social life, those that expand popular participation and those that strengthen the interests of subordinate groups (Huber et al: 1997: 328).

Mkandawire has discussed African state-civil society relations in the adjustment context by distinguishing between merchant and rentier states on the one hand and strong and weak civil societies on the other (Mkandawire 1995: 24-29). The utility of his argument for the purposes of this study stems from his attempt to systematically link “structural imperatives of accumulation and the conscious and purposive actions of social agents – individuals, interest groups or classes which set the boundaries of the political legitimacy of state measures” (Mkandawire 1995: 23), or in other words, to situate the scope for action of both dominating and subordinate political forces limited by the structural constraints
within which they operate. The fiscal basis of the state shapes the modes of interaction between different social groups and the state, in that, for instance, rentier states that depend on high degrees of external (including enclave based) revenue are less compelled to engage with domestic interest groups, and particularly in cases of weak civil societies. The overall strength and internal composition of civil society is in turn associated with different levels of political clout in relation to the state in terms of being able to consistently politicise social grievances. This generalised argument needs to be thought of as implying the kind of internal differentiation stressed above so as to allow for various tendencies, cohesion or fragmentation among ruling and subordinate classes and relations of domination and political conflicts within civil societies.

Some analysts have claimed that the emergence of NGOs and community organisations is associated with increasing popular participation and empowerment and links informalisation with new forms of democratic popular political cultures (Bratton 1989; Chazan 1992; Hydén 1995). Others argue that self-help groups and NGOs are typically incorporated into existing power structures and therefore have little political emancipatory value except at an individual level. From such a position, state contraction and the corresponding pluralisation of service provisioning has largely produced a fragmented and individualised civil society containing organised groups with limited incentives or capacity to move beyond their own concerns and with doubtful propensity to advance democratic demands (Kanyinga 1995; Kiondo 1995). NGOs in particular have been said to be limited by the project oriented nature of their concerns and their institutional and financial dependence on donors and the state (Fowler 1991). Such fragmentation is said to stem both from the inclination of NGOs to represent discrete constituencies and from the tendency to enforce distinct and limited agendas.
The argument is that the context of economic liberalisation and coping strategies reinforces the structural differentiation of state-civil society relations in terms of political orientation and the capacity to influence. Therefore, the civil societies that emerge in such contexts could be expected to reproduce rather than to challenge received identities, ideologies and power relations.

**Regimes and political space**

The contours of state-society relations are shaped through broad processes of state formation, such as the promotion of capitalist development and nation building and the political communities these processes encourage or repress. But, as suggested by Beckman and Jega (1995), more precise linkages also arise around specific instances, as when state agencies intervene strategically among social forces to mediate and regulate by creating institutions for representation and control in different arenas of conflict. These social forces in turn have different capacity to respond and to shape state institutions and the channels for interest representation and mechanisms for decision making, which link state and society and shape the social base and political content of state institutions. The latter cannot of course be reduced to instruments of factional interests, but they are in important respects moulded by social forces through the way the state is drawn into or chooses to enter into conflicts in different arenas. The state may come up against assertive civil society groups that require accommodation and concession, just as it may face a relatively weak and politically insignificant civil society that can easily be co-opted, demobilised, neglected or if necessary repressed. The extent to which interest groups are allowed to, capable of, and inclined to organising around specific and wider interests is highly crucial for the preconditions to engage the state and the constituencies it represents, opening it up to various sections of the population, and even transforming
it in democratic directions. This is why the regulation of power relations and conflicting interests in different arenas in society is relevant for the ways in which social forces create organisational autonomy and capacity, bargaining power and access to the institutions of the state.

The argument so far suggests that there is a key linkage between specific issues and more general democratic rights through conflict regulation and the constitution of the state at different levels. One aspect of this linkage is the right of association in its formal and substantial senses. The latter involves a real capacity to become involved in decision making processes and to open up political space for interest representation. Engberg-Pedersen and Webster (2002: 7-12) discuss different dimensions of political space in terms of institutional channels for interest representation, the scope for practice and parameters for discourse.

When analysing political space, it is important to recall the complexity of the concept and the practices it refers to. On the one hand, it is an analytical construct, and on the other, it reflects the different perspectives of various actors. Simply put, a change in for instance legislation over accessing medication, land rights or the right to organise may lead to some social forces succeeding in advancing their positions and opening up space for their own projects – which might close down the space for others. This means that there are competing notions and practices of political space in any social order. Not all of these are democratic or egalitarian. Nevertheless, they point to existing forms for making claims and shaping public authority. Beckman and Jega suggest a range of democratically relevant aspects, from defending the right to organise to articulating wider democratic demands (1995: 171-172). What explains the capacity for civil society organisations to open up political space in any of these senses? Some factors are seemingly evident: the social and
material base of the groups in question; their organisational experience and capacity in terms of membership and finances; internal structures of decision making; their bargaining power in their fields of operation; the legal and political framework in place, including the presence or absence of institutionalised forms for demand making and interest representation; their options for striking alliances; and the strategies used by contending social forces and the state. Most of these factors constitute or reflect power relations.

In order to capture the theoretical complexities of mutual determination and the empirical intricacy of messy institutional landscapes in more precise terms, the concept of regimes will be used. This concept refers to the set of institutions, rules and practices, shaped by relations of domination, which regulate interconnected policy arenas at different levels. The empirical arenas under study are structured by formal and informal institutions within the nexus of a variety of regimes such as labour, public sector, welfare and health regimes. Gough (2004) has sought to modify Esping-Andersen’s work on welfare regimes for application to research on social policy in developing countries. Under the generic rubric of welfare regimes Gough develops distinctions between welfare state, informal security and insecurity regimes so as to enable the theoretical incorporation of conspicuous features such as informal modes of production, reproduction and forms of provision and, consequently, informal demand making structures (Gough 2004: 26-33). What is more significant than the conceptual distinctions themselves, however, in exploring the many and divergent Ugandan health regimes and how they relate to state-society relations more broadly, is the analytical proposition that stresses how health and welfare regulation must be conceived of and analysed in terms of a series of overlapping institutional regimes. By including both rules and practices, the regime concept opens up to capture precisely the
broader features of state-society relations that underpin formal institutional change.

**State formation in Uganda: Governance and militarism**

Uganda is often considered the prime African successful case of contemporary state reconstruction. After many years of turmoil, civil war and institutional decay, the NRM government set out, from the mid-1980s, to rehabilitate the state through strategies of economic liberalisation in order to construct its fiscal base, and political inclusion of contending forces in a “no-party” government system. The new government suspended all political party activities with the stated aim of putting an end to elite manipulation of ethno-regional and religious sentiments, codified as “sectarianism”, something that NRM identified as the root cause of Uganda’s problems. The argument was generalised into a doctrine of politics that ruled out multiparty politics in developing societies characterised by vertical communal cleavages. NRM itself cast its role as the driving force behind a “fundamental change” and justified its existence as a political entity in terms of being an all-encompassing “movement” as opposed to a party (Mamdani 1994).³

Several means were employed for reshaping institutions of interest representation. At the national level, a broad-based government was formed, including members of antagonistic groups and factions. Locally, institutional channels for linking the rural population to the state were established – a five-tiered system from village to district of so-called Resistance Councils (RCs), later renamed Local Councils (LCs). From the point of

³ The NRM referred to itself as per the 1995 Uganda Constitution as the “Movement” and to the “no-party” system as the Movement Political System, sealed in law with the 1997 Movement Act. With the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 2005, it reassumed the name NRM. Therefore, both “NRM” and “Movement” are used in the text, depending on the issue under discussion.
view of those who stress the successful reconstruction of the Ugandan state, strategies of accommodation within political structures for representation have overtaken sectarian and extra-constitutional means of competing for and exercising political power (Wunsch and Ottemoeller 2004). This logic of political stabilisation is said to be underpinned by economic growth and the professionalisation of the armed forces.

Among the government’s acclaimed accomplishments are the establishment of peace and security in large parts of the country, protection of a basic level of civil liberties and laying the foundations for macro-economic stability and rapid and enduring growth, which was, until recently, claimed to have reduced significantly the level of poverty (Collier and Reinikka 2001). Uganda’s Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) is frequently held up by IFIs as a prototype for poverty reduction strategies (PRS), with regard both to its participatory process that included civil society organisations and its coherent strategy in achieving its aims (Piron and Norton 2004). Furthermore, Uganda’s achievements in countering the HIV/AIDS epidemic are widely recognised (for overviews, see Allen 2006; Allen and Heald 2004; Parkhurst 2005). Much of this has been attributed to the enhanced capacity of state institutions in general and the political leadership of President Yoweri Museveni, who was hailed during the 1990s as one of the “New Breed” of African leaders (Oloka-Onyango 2004). State capacity has rested upon and reinforced a “peace-and-growth” dividend. In short, Uganda has long been portrayed as a reconstruction model to learn from in economic adjustment, “good governance” and “post-conflict” senses – save for the lingering conflict in northern Uganda.

While this account of the “Ugandan miracle” has been the dominant one within “the international community”, it has not gone unchallenged. The recent shift towards a more hesitant embrace of the NRM government by donors and creditors
was preceded from the early 1990s by both critical academic reconsiderations of the contradictions of the Ugandan state (Mamdani 1994; Oloka-Onyango 1991) and accusations from various sections in the Ugandan society of increasing intolerance, nepotism and corruption. Economic analysts have pointed to problems of regional fragmentation, growing aid dependence and over-reliance on coffee as foreign currency earner (Dijkstra and Kees van Donge 2001: 842-845; Ellis and Bahiigwa 2003: 998). A series of armed rebellions have raged in all parts of the country ever since the mid-1980s, the most longstanding one being the conflict in the north between the government and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). Political opposition has been dealt with in an increasingly harsh manner; the 2001 Presidential election, where the armed forces were instrumental in coercing opposition candidates and sympathisers, was the most violent in Uganda’s history (Ajulu 2001).

Uganda has, directly and by proxy, played a crucial role in breeding and sustaining the conflict in DR Congo (Human Rights Watch 2001 b, 2005; International Crisis Group 2000; International Court of Justice 2005; United Nations 2002). This picture of state-society relations in Uganda as deeply marked by structural continuity of violence and authoritarianism thus contrasts dramatically with the dominant one of institutional change and the stability, growth, poverty reduction and popular participation that this transformation has brought about. This is the context of another term in the title – “militarism”. Its meaning is used broadly, as “the pervasiveness in society of symbols, values and discourses validating military power and preparation for war” (Luckham 1994: 24), and evidently closely related to militarisation, referring to:

- a multidimensional process through which a number of elements – such as military coups and regimes, authoritarian government, the dominance of patriarchy, powerful military and repressive state apparatuses, war and armed conflict,
rising military spending and arms imports, and external military intervention – become dynamically linked, both to each other and more widely to capital accumulation and projects for national and international hegemony (Luckham 1994: 24).

What do these apparently contradictory developments tell about the logic of state formation? After a year in power the NRM abandoned its initial socialist-nationalist programme and, in a context of near state bankruptcy, struck an agreement with the IFIs over financial support in exchange for economic liberalisation. Following a phase of internal struggles within the government over which long-term directions that should follow upon the “tactical concessions” of the IMF agreement, the government embarked on liberalisation reforms in the early 1990s. A fairly typical package of economic adjustment was complemented by institutional reforms, including civil service restructuring and decentralisation, intended to provide a stabilising political framework so as to ensure “good governance”. Economic liberalisation has been one central dimension of state formation.

Another has been the considerable degree of external involvement. Ever since the IMF agreement in 1987, it has been evident that state reconstruction and capitalist development has been profoundly donor-driven in terms of resources and its broader policy framework. Economic policy making is distinctly and faithfully applied within the parameters set by international neo-liberal development orthodoxy, rendering Uganda an IFI showcase status during the 1990s (Harrison 2004: 39). Donors and creditors have for years contributed a vast percentage of the state budget. International NGOs are prominent in the development arena. It would be one-sided, of course, to portray institutional and policy changes as entirely externally imposed. The decentralisation programme, for instance, had some of its roots in the Resistance Councils that were created during the
guerrilla war in the early 1980s, and even the most typical of economic reforms, such as devaluation, take on their specific form and content mediated by Ugandan social relations. Nevertheless, these and other forms of external influence are conspicuous and significant and their causes, content and impact on for example state revenue and political support beg for analysis. This book discusses the consequences of the heavy presence of foreign actors and resources, be it donors or agents of international capital or a combination of the two, for state-society relations. It pays particular attention to the prospects for democratising the state.

Contrary to the case in many other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, economic liberalisation in Uganda was associated with state reconstruction rather than with state withdrawal. Needless to say, the real extent to which the state has been rebuilt varies dramatically between regions and between levels and types of state institutions. Nonetheless, economic liberalisation became associated with rapid growth rates and a wider process of political stabilisation and contrasted favourably to past encounters with state intervention and its connotation of elite manipulation, corruption and inefficiency. Furthermore, the crisis that preceded adjustment was so severe that any stabilisation was considered an advance, and according to some observers this experience contributed to the prevention of effective protests against reforms (Brett 1996: 342; Kjær 2001: 154-161) and shaped state-society relations in important ways, as shall be explored later in this study.

Potential resistance to reforms was also weakened as part of the erosion of collective organisation more broadly. During the years of dictatorship and civil war, civil society practically disappeared. The period after 1986 has seen its gradual resurgence and recomposition. Previously predominant forms of collective organisation, such as trade unions and co-operatives, were weakened while local and foreign NGOs and community based
organisations (CBOs) mushroomed (Dicklich 1998; Bazaara and Nyago 1999). How does this recomposition of both state and society affect power relations in society and state-society relations? In what ways does the state seek to relate to different civil society groups? To what extent are these inclined and capable of expanding political space? What kinds of regulatory regimes emerge?

Rather than seeking to confirm or reject clear-cut models, the aim of this study is to bring out the complexity of the social basis of political rule in Uganda from the theoretical perspective outlined in this chapter.

Some notes on methodology

Design
Some issues of design have already been discussed above. In approaching the research problem and the theoretical argument analytically, I seek to analyse state-civil society relations through the concept of regimes. This is then applied to the health sector and a range of state-civil society relations thereof. Attention is paid to power relations between state and civil society organisations as well as within both state and civil society. The argument proposes that it is power relations between different political forces that determine the scope for the democratisation of the state, since political institutions are embedded within and are given shape and content by the wider political economy. The argument further posits that both power relations and political institutions are shaped by historical trajectories. These propositions give explanatory emphasis to structural factors shaped by historical sequence; it is taken for granted that structural factors are reshaped by institutions and actors. In order to go beyond the manifest level of power relations, the cases studied will be situated within an argument of structural change of the Ugandan political economy.
In more ways than one, Uganda is, to borrow a phrase, “extreme but not exceptional” (Mamdani 1987). Its recent history is impaired by dramatic swings that effectively highlight tendencies general to Sub-Saharan Africa – state crisis, donor intervention and some degree of political liberalisation amidst persistent authoritarianism. The Ugandan state has undergone radical reconstruction since the years of turmoil and civil war and stands out as a prime case of privatisation, deregulation, and decentralisation. The fact that the NRM government has implemented far-reaching economic liberalisation and public sector reform makes the health sector in Uganda an advantageous case for investigating state-society relations in the context of the contemporary development model.

In Chapter 2, the study begins to analyse how contemporary state-society relations are shaped by historical trajectories. This chapter situates the development of different health regimes in the context of state-society relations at large. The narrative relies on a rich body of literature and brings together this material through the empirical focus on the health sector with the theoretical argument as the organising principle. This continues in Chapter 3, which covers the first years of the present government in power, and is based on similar material.

In order to approach the theoretical problem in greater empirical detail, the study examines a cross-section of interest groups in the health sector in Uganda and their relationship to the state: Uganda Medical Workers Union (UMWU); World Vision, an international Christian NGO; and Buganda Cultural and Development Foundation (BUCADEF), the development organisation of the revived Buganda kingdom. The study analyses state-civil society relations at both national and local levels. At both levels, the study moves from interrogating the organisations and their respective relations to the state one by
one to an of the overall characteristics of the sector. The specific trajectories of these groups have consequences for the kind of political space that is created in relation to them. They embody different conceptions of how to shape social development and structure state-society relations and are vehicles for highly divergent social and political projects.

The present conjuncture, it is argued, is characterised by fragmentation of both state and civil society. The cross-section design depicts the empirical tendency towards a pluralisation of development actors and their relations to different state organs, as well as of forms of regulation in the sector at large. The diverging experiences of the groups under study also offer an illustration to the theoretical argument that state and civil society are mutually constituted through the ways different social forces seek access to the state based on their shifting capacity and orientation and the way the state chooses to structure its relations to these social forces. To capture the wider significance of such diverse organisations, they need to be placed within the contexts that have enabled them. In this case the structuring of state-labour relations, the socio-economic context of the rise of NGOs, and relations between the central government and the Buganda kingdom, respectively. These contexts – further elaborated in chapters 4 and 5 – have separate legacies, and have generated different models for interest representation and conflict regulation.

Chapter 4 relies on primary sources such as newspapers and official documents, secondary literature and interviews. The latter were conducted, repeatedly over time, with representatives of the groups under study but also with Ministry of Health staff and members and representatives of other civil society organisations. In order to obtain an improved understanding of the broader tendencies of Ugandan politics, interviews and informal talks were continuously held with observers of the
political scene. I spent altogether seven months between 1999 and 2005 doing fieldwork in Kampala and Masaka, with roughly four months in total in Masaka. A first preliminary visit was made to Kampala in December 1999, followed by a first session of fieldwork during two months in late 2000. Fieldwork was again carried out for two months during February and March 2003, for one month in February 2004 and for another few weeks in February 2005. This drawn out process means that politics did not only change dramatically, particularly on the national scene, but also that I have been able to witness a sequence and get a broader perspective on these changes.

At the level of local politics, the topic of Chapter 5, one dimension of the investigation offers an overview of the district development arena, with a focus on some selected actors. Another dimension offers a slice of the same reality as seen from the community angle, through sub-county and district, which integrates the development arena into a broader picture of local politics. The bulk of the data for this chapter was gathered from semi-structured interviews and group discussions and also from visits to and observations of relations at health centres. With regard to the very local study, I make no claims to serious ethnographic work. I have paid only brief, if numerous, visits to Bulando village. There is rather little of primary documentation at the sub-county and village levels, but I have gone through what was available. I conducted interviews with representatives of civil society organisations, and not only of the three organisations studied, but also with politicians and civil servants at different levels and ordinary citizens.

At the village level, discussions were held in Luganda by my colleague Haruna Bukenya and he then translated them into English. Group discussions were held separately with different categories: men, women and youth, in order to as far as possible enable conditions for frank, open, and fruitful discussions for all.
On other occasions, and typically when meeting representatives of civil society organisations and of the central and local state, interviews were conducted directly in English. Both interviews and group discussions were conducted repeatedly with the same interviewees and groups over the years. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and two hours, and normally around one hour. Needless to say, there are a great many methodological problems associated with doing research based on interviews in a social context rather different from one’s own and occasionally through interpretation. Complex issues of reliability present themselves through translations, memories of those interviewed, their intentions vis-à-vis me and the impact of my presence in the locality – it was often assumed that I represented an NGO, with all that would imply. I sought to counter such difficulties as far as possible by, for instance, conducting repeated interviews, cross-checking information with different respondents and discussing the meaning of particular statements and overall contexts. I shall return to some specific methodological considerations emerging from fieldwork in Chapter 5.

Even more than with national politics, my emerging understanding of the complexities of local politics in Masaka has depended on numerous visits, repeated interviews, constant informal discussions with a wide selection of observers of the local political scene, and on ongoing reflections on all these exercises. That is, many interviews and discussions have been used to build up knowledge of the wider context rather than targeting the specific object of inquiry. For reasons of integrity and sometimes security, not all of the observers mentioned above can be named. The incessant movements I experienced during fieldwork back and forth between theoretical reflection “that embodies a wide range of previous observations and analysis” (Rueschemeyer 2003: 332) and empirical evidence which led to continuous revisions of both, call it “analytical induction” (Rueschemeyer
et al. 1992: 36-38) or something else, presents perhaps no great theoretical revelation since it is what all researchers are engaged in, but I wish to stress this point since it has been a profound learning experience in this case.

Finally, some words of caution are warranted. This is a study of a very much ongoing process, something that makes it complicated to assess, because of the messy and rapidly changing reality and because of the limited time perspective. In many ways, doing this research has been like aiming at a rapidly moving target from a moving platform. It also goes without saying that the reach of the findings are in one sense limited to the immediate objects of study – to use a technical expression. It is also difficult to know whether the cases are representative in a statistical sense. It is however possible to discuss their theoretical representativity by relating the cases to other empirical studies and to theoretical overviews of Uganda’s politics, something that is done throughout this work.
Formation of State and Society 1900-1986: The Roots of Destabilisation and Authoritarianism

In order to understand contemporary strategies for regulating health provision, it is necessary to trace their historical roots. This chapter outlines central features of the historical development of state-society relations in Uganda, interwoven with health and welfare regimes. In exploring the political regulation of welfare and health regimes, the focal point will be on structures for interest representation and conflict regulation created by different forms of state intervention in relation to demands from groups in society, seeking to enforce control.

What were the demands from different sections of society on the colonial and post-colonial states? What strategies did state managers develop for meeting those demands and challenges of
accumulation, legitimation and control? What has characterised the frameworks of interest representation and conflict regulation of various health regimes? How have the ways in which these frameworks evolved shaped conditions for contemporary institutional reforms?

This chapter seeks to place the theoretical issues discussed in the first chapter more firmly in a historical context. It offers the necessary background to the study of contemporary state-society relations and welfare regimes in the following chapters. The relies on a rich body of literature on the political and social history of Uganda. The structure of the chapter is chronological, starting with accounts of the pre-colonial and colonial periods before analysing post-independence politics.

**Pre-colonial and early colonial politics**

The area that in 1894 was to turn into the British Protectorate Uganda encompassed a great diversity of social orders, with different political systems, cultures and ethnic groups. The dominant form of political order in the south consisted of kingdoms with long histories of rather centralised systems of rule, including Bunyoro, Ankole, Tooro and Buganda.

The northern parts were characterised by less hierarchical societies and more decentralised political structures, including those of the Acholi, the Langi and the Iteso. During the 17th and 18th centuries Bunyoro was the most powerful kingdom, only to be superseded by Buganda during the 19th century in the competition for regional supremacy. Trade links with Zanzibar and the introduction of firearms was one source of Buganda’s expansion.

Another form of external influence came from Catholic and Protestant missionaries, whose presence and fierce competition from the 1870s introduced religious sectarianism to Buganda court politics (Jørgensen 1981: 38-39), a persistent legacy that
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was to remain a dominant feature of Ugandan politics well after independence.

British colonial policy set out from the agreement of protection struck with the Buganda kingdom in 1900, which was to fundamentally shape Uganda’s socio-economic and political structure. In exchange for protection against neighbouring kingdoms and granted a special status among the conquered territories, Buganda agreed to assist Britain in colonising the remaining parts of Uganda through military conquest and the system of indirect rule. This conquest met with stiff resistance in most parts of the protectorate, but all in all, colonial rule was established by 1920.

Indirect rule involved the appointment of Baganda chiefs in the conquered areas as administrators in the colonial system. The 1900 Agreement also restructured social relations within Buganda, where feudal lords were converted into landlords by a reshuffling of land ownership (Mamdani 1976: 40-44; Uzoigwe 1982: 66-73). This was not however an entirely externally imposed transformation. From the late 1880s Baganda chiefs had gradually manoeuvred to commercialise land tenure, and in 1888 they deposed the Kabaka (Jørgensen 1981: 47).

Mamdani argues, though, that the agreement and the subordination to imperial interests transformed the character of this class from potentially productive mercantilists to a rentier class (1976: 42). The rise of Baganda chiefs, manifested in their alliance with the British, resulted in a “political dyarchy of the colonial state and collaborative chiefs” (Jørgensen 1981: 77). These chiefs struggled for greater autonomy – successfully, initially, as they played an indispensable role for the colonial state in transforming it from a purely coercive apparatus upholding law and order to encompassing more complex functions such as expanding production and infrastructure.
The colonial state gradually moved to block the political and economic aspirations and growing power of the chiefs. This political struggle was resolved during the 1920s, when the colonial state in several steps dismantled the position of the landlords. Politically, these were replaced by appointed chiefs. Economically, the state intervened to undercut their legal basis for accumulation (Jørgensen 1981: 82-87).

This period also witnessed the replacement of Baganda chiefs by local counterparts in other regions, mainly as a result of the need to ensure a degree of local acceptance for chiefs (Bazaara 1997: 34). This shift sealed the process of ethnicisation of the local state within an overall racialised political order. This racial hierarchy consisted not only of British colonialists and African subjects but also of a middle stratum of Asians – the popular term for immigrants from the Indian sub-continent. The effect of their presence was to block as opposed to mediate social mobility. Most Asians had come to East Africa as either forced imported labourers or as commercial workers.

The colonial state made further use of their presence. It allotted a section of them the function as an intermediate bourgeoisie in order to promote capitalist development, while at the same time obstructing African aspirations. The economic privileges granted to a racially alien minority by the colonial state would eventually politicise social tensions along racial lines (Mamdani 1976: Chapter 3).

The main function of Uganda in the wider colonial context was to supply Britain with cotton and from the 1930s also coffee. These crops were grown mainly in the south, where a wealthy class of African landlords and large-scale farmers gradually emerged (Lwanga-Lunyiigo 1989: 28-31). The landlords were also administrators or “chiefs” and used their dual capacities to order and control the cultivation of cotton by peasants-turned-tenants; during the first decades of colonial rule, capitalist relations of
production coexisted with semi-feudal ones, including tribute in kind or labour. In the northern areas, cash crops were grown only on a modest scale. These parts of Uganda essentially served as a “labour reservoir for the cash crop economy of the south” (Mamdani 1976: 52), and also for the police and the armed forces. Importantly, Uganda was incorporated into the world economy on the basis of smallholder peasant production and not as a plantation or a settler economy. This reinforced the need for decentralised supervision and indirect rule. Peasant production competed with plantations until the early 1920s, when Britain, after pressure from metropolitan capital and seeking to avoid proletarianisation and political unrest (Bazaara 1997: 49-50) decided to favour the former model.

An alliance between peasants and clan leaders waged political protests against landlords and prevailing agrarian relations. This protest from below was reinforced from within the colonial state, codified in the 1928 busulu (ground rent) and envujjo (commodity rent) law, which guaranteed security of tenure to peasants. According to some observers, these legal reforms undercut the economic power of the landlords, and transformed them “from semi-autonomous political entrepreneurs into appointed servants of the colonial state” (Jørgensen 1981: 86). Others argue however, that although landlords were weakened, they still managed to block agrarian reform and, through alliances with traders, were able to preserve a great deal of their economic and political power throughout the colonial period (Bazaara 1997: 69, 79-80).

The uneven inclusion of regions into the protectorate and the world economy shaped social relations in colonial Uganda in a critical way. In order to address emerging structural contradictions between demands for a peasant based growing economy and perceived social disruption on the one hand and political control and stability on the other, the colonial state pursued a strategy to promote migrant labour as a stable yet
dependent labour force. It did so by initially discouraging the production of cash crops in peripheral regions, designed to be labour reservoirs.

From the late 1920s, however, cash crops were grown on a larger scale also in the north (Jørgensen 1981: 98-106). The creation of a regionally divided economy was evidently a complex process, as the colonial administration itself acted within limitations. Within the constraints following from its place within the British Empire, and in turn the world economy, the colonial administration became enmeshed in domestic social and political struggles, and increasingly so the more complex its tasks. In order to balance its functions and exercise control, the state had to root itself deeper in society, craft political alliances among domestic social groupings and respond to conflicting demands from for instance peasants, chiefs, and different factions of metropolitan capital.

The geographic and social division of labour, including regionally distinct and uneven patterns of recruitment of labour force, and of trade, education and access to the political centre had important political consequences as it delayed the emergence of nationalist movements and shaped their class based and regional composition. Low levels of urbanisation and industrialisation weakened formalised and urban-based forms of political organisation including trade unions and professional associations and their scope for alliances.

Politics during the first decades of colonial rule was confined to the dominant classes, mainly in Buganda, and revolved around the control of land (Mamdani 1976: 171). Political demands advanced from outside these narrow strata were rejected. Legislative Councils were introduced in 1921, with reserved representation for the British and Asians. Nevertheless, economic expansion gave rise to social change, which gradually matured into new expressions of political conflicts. Social movements and interest groups of many kinds emerged from the 1920s, and political
opposition to the Buganda government, and ultimately to the colonial state, which grew in strength. Parameters for popular politics, which co-existed with and challenged the aristocracy, were broadened through alliances between peasants, workers and traders; “the politics of the court were giving way to the politics of the marketplace” (Mamdani 1976: 173). However, not until the 1940s would different sources of discontent merge into a stronger form of politicisation that reached out beyond the ruling classes or the urban intelligentsia.

**Health and welfare under early colonialism**

Pre-colonial health care in Africa was provided in a number of ways, and within each social formation, there were institutional frameworks for regulating public health. These welfare systems were closely connected to forms of political authority, and many forms of healing survived the colonial conquest (Feierman 1985: 118-120). In Uganda, traditional medicine – a sweeping category that included birth attendants, healers, herbalists and psychotherapists – took on great relevance as formal systems collapsed in the early 1980s, and continues to co-exist with the modern and formal sector to this day. Nevertheless, colonialism fundamentally transformed the systems for regulating social needs. Generally speaking, social services in colonial territories were given low priority during the first decades of the 20th century.

Initially, health services were introduced primarily to protect the workforce of various colonial agencies such as soldiers or, in some colonies, settlers. Doctors, just like other colonial employees, were expected to contribute to the upholding of racial dividing lines and supremacist ideologies (Feierman 1985: 120). The Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC) introduced a western type health care in Uganda in 1878 in order to cater for its staff. IBEAC was taken over by the British Colonial office in 1894.
During the colonial era, Christian missions were the main providers of health care and education to Africans, and the Colonial office made use of their presence for purposes of administrative control. A relatively well-developed system of church-run health centres and hospitals was created in Uganda (Iliffe 1998: 41). Despite a dense network, social services were delivered to Africans only on a modest scale, and were concentrated in Buganda. Only about 100,000 African outpatients were handled annually (Jørgensen 1981: 62). Apart from its inbuilt racial segregation, colonial education and medicine had an urban and elitist bias, and the strong reliance on religious institutions as providers further stratified access along lines of class, region, ethnicity and religious affiliation (Mamdani 1976: 161-162).

Colonial rule sought, as Berman and Lonsdale (1992) have argued, to balance challenges posed by accumulation and control. In the field of service provision, colonial powers tried to minimise their obligations and expenses. To the extent that they did provide services, the scope and content of these were mainly predicated upon instrumentalist calculations, concerned with the necessary conditions for the reproduction of the labour force. There were fears within the colonial state that a weakened and stagnating or even declining population would undercut the economic basis of colonialism itself. Summers (1991) analyses in detail how British concerns over population decrease during the first decades of the century prompted a set of ideological and institutional interventions with respect to reproductive health in general and the reproductive behaviour of Baganda women in particular. While the colonial administration mainly responded medically from the perspective of a perceived public health and economic crisis, missionaries addressed the issue as a moral crisis, and these modes of intervention became interlinked (Summers 1991: 796, 798).
This example illustrates how, as the economy expanded and set off more complex social structures, colonial authorities were pushed to respond to new challenges and how these responses in the process transformed the structures of the state. In order to meet demands for accumulation and administration, new strata of more educated and healthy Africans were needed. In Uganda, the expansion of the peasant economy in the 1920s necessitated an expansion of Africans into the state as administrators in the civil service. This in turn required the growth of an education system, financed by the state and run by the missions, which offered the colonial state a possibility of meeting challenges of accumulation and legitimation (Mamdani 1976: 161).

After a decade of conflict between the colonial state and missions over the direction of education policies, the state conceded to the missions’ pressure for a more academic oriented education model that created an educated bourgeoisie with elitist outlook (Jørgensen 1981: 164-165). From the 1920s, the expenditure pattern of the colonial state had shifted, and expenses on social services had in quantitative terms overtaken those on the coercive arms of government. Health expenditures rose slowly. A main factor that brought attention to the poor status of health services was the condition of the migrant labour force. From the 1920s, the coffee plantations in Buganda confronted a shortage of labour.

Colonial labour policy oscillated in its strategies between strict imposition of recruitment and a more open policy toward labour migration, from within and outside Uganda. Migrants were mainly recruited from the West Nile region in northwestern Uganda, and from Rwanda and Burundi. Again, the colonial state faced conflicting demands with regard to accumulation based on an inflow of labour migration and control of it. The difficulties in regulating migration flows led to concerns about public health risks. Groups of migrants were seen as unhealthy and certain
ethnicities were stigmatised (Lyons 1996). In order to counter marginalisation, these groups developed different strategies such as go-slow and absenteeism, which increased the colonial authorities’ awareness of health problems (Opolot 2002: 87-89). Hospitals and health centres were set up along migration routes (Jørgensen 1981: 166).

The dilemmas, from the colonialists’ point of view, created by a vulnerable work force were recognised already in the 1930s in the wake of the worldwide economic depression. It would, however, take until the post-war years to initiate more ambitious reforms (Packard 1997: 95). Throughout the British and French empires, indigenous populations had begun protesting against poor living conditions and occasionally connected social demands to political ones. The British government sought to respond to these challenges with the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts of 1939 and 1945 (Cooper 1996: 67); the Ugandan offshoot was the Worthington Plan for industrialisation of 1947 (Mamdani 1976: 253). According to Cowen and Shenton (1996: 296-298), the development doctrine of late colonialism codified in these Acts was an expanded reinvention of development that encompassed a welfarist dimension, with comprehensive state intervention into agrarian production, social services and infrastructure.

These policies were accompanied by limited political reforms. With these reforms, the colonial state sought to improve agricultural productivity through the making of an African bourgeoisie and in the process attempted to craft good relations with it in the context of militant nationalism. This would, it was estimated, pre-empt political demands among these groups and forge ties with them so as to provide the colonial state with support and meet the mounting challenges of control (Berman and Lonsdale 1992: 149; Young 1994: 169).
Late colonialism: Protest and reform

In 1945, a wave of strikes and uprisings comprised of both peasants and workers took place, mainly in Buganda. The protests were primarily targeted at institutions regulating land ownership and wages, but also turned against colonial rule as such. Grievances surfaced again in 1949, when widespread riots shook the ruling coalition consisting of the colonial state, the Buganda government and non-indigenous capitalists. The uprising revolved around demands for political representation and access to trade.

The colonial state offered concessions, but in the process blunted the radical edge of the protests. This is not to say that protests failed. By joining hands in the 1945 and 1949 uprisings and by linking socio-economic to political demands, co-operatives, trade unions and other social movements had pushed the colonial state to make concessions regarding both policy content and legal recognition.

Electoral participation and African representation in the Legislative Councils was expanded from 1949; access to trade was improved. The strength of the demands also forced the colonial state to employ more sophisticated means in controlling discontent. According to Mamdani, at the same time as co-operatives, trade unions and ethnic and religious organisations were legalised, they also became subject to government control through an array of regulatory mechanisms such as registration and supervision. Most aspects, from membership and leadership to finances and overall scope of operation, were regulated by the government (Mamdani 1994). Thus, this move towards legalisation of organised interests also involved their relative depoliticisation (Mamdani 1990a: 61; Mudoola 1993: 17-18).

State control of popular movements was made possible in a context of the political rise of a new middle-class that principally challenged the traditional oligarchy. The coalitions that had
upheld the uprisings consisted of a wide range of forces, all with rather shifting motives for their participation. The colonial state related in different ways to the various strands inherent in the emerging nationalist movement and cultivated close relations to nascent elites so as to pre-empt more radical demands from other groups. One central dimension of this strategy, as mentioned above, was to encourage co-operatives as a vehicle to incorporate Africans into crop processing and marketing. Another was the creation of Uganda Development Corporation (UDC) to promote state-regulated industrialisation with a degree of African participation (Jørgensen 1981: 188).

Political fragmentation was not only the result of socio-economic divisions, but also the outcome of the institutional forms of the local state. Mamdani (1996) has argued that the fundamental consequence of indirect rule was the institutionalisation of a “bifurcated state”, with dichotomous types of state structures and modes of power.

Urban areas were governed by civil law, with racial exclusion from civil society; rural areas by customary law, and marked by authoritarian inclusion into closed-off worlds of ethnic tradition. On this view, civil society only developed in the urban areas of colonial Africa. As suggested above, the colonial state introduced local chiefs in order to soften resistance. “The customary” was reified, compartmentalised and made absolute by intertwined processes: authoritarian aspects of tradition were selectively derived and deemed fit for rule; each “tribe” was declared a homogeneous cultural (and by implication administrative) unit; customary law was invested in the singular authority of the chief. This is what Mamdani calls “the fused power” of “decentralised despotism” (Mamdani 1996: 23).

Evidently, chiefs, in their day-to-day exercise of power, were embedded in local society and needed to balance the imposition of colonial control against social acceptance. An essential part of
their effective authority depended on their capacity to mobilise a local following, mediated along lines of religion and ethnicity (Bazaara 1997: 37). According to Mamdani, post-war reforms of local government, including partial introduction of electoral politics as in the case of the 1949 Legislative Councils in Uganda, did not significantly alter the fact that political power in rural Africa was based on coercion (Mamdani 1996).

Political parties emerged in large numbers in the 1950s. Just like most previous expressions of political discontent, much party-political organisation was fragmented along lines of region, religion and class. Uneven regional capitalist development resulted in very different political demands. The first party with a national base was Uganda National Congress (UNC), set up in 1952. Initially, UNC had its base outside Buganda, but with the colonial government’s expulsion of the Kabaka in 1953, the party made inroads in the region, riding on a wave of anti-colonial sentiments.

The return of the Kabaka in 1955 resulted in a rapid evaporation of UNC support in Buganda. However, its leadership found other avenues for its interests, primarily by taking control of the Lukiiko (the Buganda legislative assembly). In response to the perceived use of the Lukiiko as a vehicle for Protestant privileges, the Democratic Party (DP) was formed, with its base among Baganda Catholic professionals, chiefs and landlords.

The most influential party would turn out to be the mainly northern and Protestant based Uganda People’s Congress (UPC), led by Milton Obote. Although all the main parties had political bases among the peasantry, popular influence on their leadership within or from outside parties was limited. Yet, the political interests of economic elites were mediated by their need to ensure popular consent.

Parties operated in a context of uneven economic development, politically expressed in terms of ethno-regional cleavages, and were for that reason largely reluctant to or incapable of
transcending their ethnic or religious affiliations. Most of them can be described as confederations of local strongmen and their respective following (Mamdani 1976: 210-223).

In many areas, ethnic fronts were created by alliances between landlords and tenants for the purpose of blocking “outsiders” from accessing land, something that reinforced political regionalisation (Bazaara 1997: 69-73).

The one factor that more than any other complicated the national question on the eve of independence was the strong current of Baganda nationalism, itself fraught with strong internal tensions. Musisi (1999) analyses how the relationship between colonial and missionary intervention and changing local social relations stratified Buganda society and the local state along lines of religion, gender, class and ethnicity.

During the last few years of colonial rule, the Buganda aristocracy, landlords, traders and farmers, all from different perspectives, embraced the idea of self-rule, whereas urban based professionals and, evidently, non-Baganda migrant labourers and tenants preferred a unitary or federal solution for Buganda within Uganda. As already mentioned, a standoff between the colonial administration and the Kabaka over the future status of Buganda forced the latter into exile. His return two years later was part of an agreement that greatly expanded Buganda’s autonomy within Uganda and which fuelled secessionist demands (Kasfir 1976: 121-122).

As independence approached, leading monarchists declared a ban on political forces in Buganda. Democratic Party (DP) did not heed the call, and participated in and won the 1961 elections that were boycotted by the Lukiiko. Finding itself isolated, the traditionalist elite at Mengo formed a political party, Kabaka Yekka (KY – “The King Alone”), with a populist base, and struck an alliance with UPC in order to pre-empt any political influence on DP’s part. The unholy alliance between an ethnic monarchist
movement and a “northern” trader based republican party shaped the outcome of the 1961 and 1962 constitutional negotiations. UPC supported KY’s demands for a federal solution for Buganda and agreed to make the Kabaka of Buganda, Edward Mutesa, the president with ceremonial functions. In exchange, KY promised to block DP in Buganda and to back the formation of a UPC government.

Health and welfare under late colonialism
The political regulation of structural contradictions and demands from different social forces for welfare and recognition restructured and expanded the colonial state, in Uganda and elsewhere, in terms of bureaucratic and rudimentary welfare institutions. Demands for expanding welfare services were made on the state by different categories, such as the emerging middle and working classes and professionals.

The expansion of service provision was, however, modest and just like colonial state formation more broadly uneven and geographically concentrated to regions of capitalist expansion. The response to these demands must be seen in the light of the changing conditions for colonialism. Internationally, the balance of power had after World War II tilted against the older colonial powers, who sought to preserve domination and expand accumulation through a combination of coercion, social policy concessions and limited representation in response to the rapid emergence of radical nationalist movements.

What were the contours of the civil society that was shaped as a consequence of the colonial health regime? Religious institutions constituted an important section of civil society, and missions were initially closely connected to the colonial state. However, religious affiliation had from the inception of Christianity in Uganda in the 19th century carried significant political weight. Within the growing nationalist movement, religious divisions took on a political dynamic.
The important role of the churches in the provision of health and education as well as for social influence more broadly stratified the emergent political elite along religious lines and, from the 1950s onward, offered political clout to the political parties associated with the major denominations (Jørgensen 1981: 193-205; Mamdani 1976: 216-220; Mudoola 1993: 21-26). Alongside religious institutions, local governments were, particularly after the local government reform in 1949, given an important role in co-ordinating and providing primary services as part and parcel of the system of indirect rule, discussed in Chapter 3. Appointed chiefs were given the authority to impose norms of behaviour and exercise administration in most fields of society, including health and sanitation. Communal labour was made compulsory.

The colonial state also, but modestly, expanded its disbursements. Uganda had become the hub of medical research and education in East Africa. Already in the early 20th century, British specialists on tropical medicine were sent to Uganda to do research on sleeping sickness, and the evolving bureaucratic structures that were set off by their presence incorporated medical missionaries (White 1995: 1385). Makerere Medical School in Kampala gained a reputation as the regional outstanding centre for medical training and research, and although Ugandan doctors, predominantly Baganda, were rather few, they were still greater in number than African doctors in neighbouring countries (Iliffe 1998: 136).

Striving for recognition, these doctors had set up professional associations from the 1930s (Iliffe 1998: 92-94). The main one was Makerere Medical Graduates Association, which pushed for improved pay and working conditions, regularisation of status and the right to private practice. It developed a certain degree of political skill and clout and managed to enforce most of its demands (Iliffe 1998: 94, 101-102). With time, the agendas of the
professional associations broadened beyond purely professional concerns. After World War II, they became influenced by and, through a few individuals, entered the rapidly growing radical nationalist movement (Iliffe 1998: 113-117).

The 1945 strike extended to workers in government hospitals (Iliffe 1998: 89-91); this was the first time that medical workers became involved in a broader political struggle. Collectively, doctors pushed for the Africanisation of the health sector; Africanisation was generally the main target for many groups. Individually, doctors became prominent in local and national politics – and more so than in neighbouring countries, due to the social composition of the political class. In Uganda the role of mass parties was marginal, and politicians were mainly recruited from the elite strata (Iliffe 1998: 113).

According to Iliffe, the doctors’ relationship to the colonial state was deeply ambivalent – a familiar theme with regard to educated strata at around independence. On the one hand, the state protected the doctors as privileged elite; on the other, it blocked their further aspirations (Iliffe 1998: 91). This suggests that doctors were a rather insulated segment, divorced from most other social groups.

The ethos of professional elitism was partly reflected in their political outlook. Their point of entry into politics took place through party politics, whereas their professional association remained timid and primarily concerned with preserved status and Africanisation of the health sector. Unionism was on the whole an alien concept to doctors. This needs to be connected to colonial reforms that aimed at the dismantling of the radical wings of the nationalist movement and inclusion of the political elite into representative organs. These reforms stifled most sections of civil society. Others were effectively incorporated into state structures (Mamdani 1994: 522).
Professional bodies were set up for the purpose of regulating the sector. The Medical Practitioners and Dentists Board was a colonial creation, mainly concerned with issues of registration and disciplining of practitioners. The Uganda Medical Association (UMA), a professional interest group that was Africanised and changed its name from British Medical Association at independence, was on the whole not very efficient (Iliffe 1998: 124). However, the policy direction in the medical field was dominated by doctors in and out of politics and given a curative bias.

Professional relations were hierarchical, with status-based contempt for categories such as nurses and medical assistants (Iliffe 1998: 129). On the eve of independence, the Ugandan health regime was characterised by a medical model in terms of its policy content and incorporation by the state of professional interest groups in terms of the political regulation of the sector.

To summarise, late colonial reforms changed the colonial state and Ugandan society in a number of ways. They expanded the role of state intervention in the economy, they opened up for slightly more ambitious welfare reforms and they created institutions for limited political participation. However, these institutional changes took place within the guided continuity of the broader political economy framework.

Reforms were designed to promote a controlled transition to political independence. By cultivating close relations to the emerging middle-class and containing more radical social movements by supervision and control, the colonial state ensured that this transition would not involve economic or social transformation. This strategy decisively structured state-civil relations after independence.

A fragile coalition among the political elite inherited the colonial state with all its contradictions, as well as the underlying instability that colonial rule had produced in terms of economic
underdevelopment, deep social cleavages, controversy over the national question and fragmented elite driven politics. As Bangura (1992: 58) argues with regard to Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, in view of the wide range of social forces that made political demands on the colonial state:

democratisation provided an institutional framework for reconciling the conflicting interests thrown up by the authoritarian colonial economy. It checked the absolutism of colonial rule by opening up space for popular participation in government and the rise of independent organisations. But the authoritarian character of the colonial economy prevented the growth of liberal democracy.

This contradictory relationship between formal political institutions and underlying social relations would in many countries resurface time and again after independence.

**State and society after independence**

In Uganda conflicts resurfaced almost immediately. Power struggles during late colonialism were articulated with a constitutional hybrid, which in a broader sense reflected the colonial trajectory of indirect rule and regional uneven development. As a way of accommodating the political elite in Buganda, the kingdom was given federal status.

Due to the weaker bargaining power of other regions the result was that the other southern kingdoms were given semi-federal status, and the northern parts were incorporated directly under the central government. Considerable autonomy was conceded to the Buganda *Lukiiko*. This body, effectively controlled by the Mengo elite, had powers of taxation, supplemented by federal grants, and managed Buganda’s separate public administration, public services, court system and police force (Jørgensen 1981: 217; Mamdani 1976: 242). This leads to the overall conclusion that the constitution rested on a fragile coalition in which neither party trusted the other nor expected the coalition to last;
factional infighting among the bourgeoisie was articulated along ethno-regional lines in the struggle over state power.

The translation of economic competition into constitutionally guaranteed ethnicised political institutions, rooted in popular sentiments, raised the stakes and complicated matters enormously. Inherited colonial regional and social imbalances were thus reproduced as endemic political factionalism and instability, mediated by ethnic and religious modes of mobilisation and expressed as tensions over central-local relations, regional inequalities and racial segregation.

The government hence faced the challenges of reproducing and strengthening control of the state vis-à-vis a wide range of disparate social forces. That it had to do so within the given limits of a dependent economy, controlling an institutionally weak and territorially uneven state apparatus and relying on a fragile political base, severely restricted its policy choices. Therefore, the government initially avoided dramatic policy shifts and opted for a continuation of the development model of late colonialism.

What did that model consist in? The government continued to promote peasant based export production of cotton and coffee, regulated by centralised channels for processing and marketing, such as state controlled cooperatives and marketing boards. Export earnings were redirected into state promoted industries by way of partnerships between the state and international or Asian capital, expansion of infrastructure and public service and state administration. Industrialisation was modest but continuously growing in the post-war period. Asian capital was channelled from the agricultural export sector to manufacturing by various means of state intervention. Transnational capital entered into mining. There was also an expansion of Baganda entrepreneurs.
The growing economy and popular demands resulted in rising wages and an expanding domestic market (Loxley 1989: 68; Mamdani 1990b: 454). Hence, it conformed to a fairly typical post-colonial state-regulated development model built on export earnings, foreign direct investments and foreign aid. State regulation of export production of cash, crops provided the resource base for import substitution industrialisation, infrastructure and social services as well as a growing private sector where international capital was invited to join partnership models under the auspices of Uganda Development Corporation. Foreign aid made possible expansion and redistribution of infrastructure and social services.

This economic model created considerable growth during the 1960s (5.8 per cent on average) but eventually proved to be unsustainable even in economic terms, as it remained dependent on world market prices for export commodities and as import substitution did not deepen or broaden industrialisation or enabled a qualitative change in agricultural production (Brett 1996: 313).

This was obviously not a strictly “economic” outcome but a profoundly political process, following from struggles over the control of the rural surplus (Bazaara 1997: 81). Hence, economic growth initially enabled the government to respond to popular demands for the fruits of independence, including the need to address regional and racial imbalances in what was a segregated economy. Strong popular demands were made for Africanisation. The government promoted rapid numerical Africanisation of the civil service and within parastatals and gradually opted for a more interventionist role in the economy.

Economic growth and expansion of social services and Africanisation built up the size and capacity of the state and bolstered political stability to a degree. But this expansion postponed rather than resolved conflicts, since the ways in
which different social forces were rooted in the state at the same time undermined its capacity.

The UPC-KY coalition rested on an informal mutual non-interventionist agreement: the forces behind KY were to support the UPC government and would in exchange be guaranteed political monopoly and control over land in Buganda. The Baganda elite based their political clout on control over land and labour, and this mode of accumulation was safeguarded by the constitutional status of Buganda. However, built-in tensions between the central government and Baganda landlords over the control of Buganda’s status and surplus were only temporarily contained.

UPC also faced demands in other directions from different constituencies, and hence, the weakness of central state institutions deepened rather than contained factional politics. Already from 1963, UPC started to make inroads into local councils in Buganda (Jørgensen 1981: 219).

At the level of national politics, the deteriorating alliance broke down over the issue of “the lost counties”, two counties that had been seized from Bunyoro and allocated to Buganda by the British. Their contested regional status was decided in a referendum in October 1964, in which an overwhelming majority voted for returning to Bunyoro. The campaigns triggered a series of violent clashes, which heightened ethnic mobilisation at both elite and popular levels. Power relations in society had thus structured political alliances in ways that seriously destabilised the state.

With KY and DP marginalised after MPs from the two parties crossed the floor to UPC, political factions and conflicting demands were incorporated into an already fragmented ruling party. The radical wing of UPC was outmanoeuvred in 1964, and in early 1966 the conservative faction, with a base in Buganda including former KY politicians, challenged the government and
the party centre over corruption among high-ranking politicians and army officers, with links to rebels in the Congo. Obote struck back, arrested his opponents and suspended the constitution. In its place he introduced a unitary interim constitution, which abrogated federal powers – a blow directed at Buganda.

Following the kingdom’s refusal to accept the new constitution, the army attacked the Kabaka’s palace in May 1966, forced him into exile and declared a state of emergency in Buganda that would last until the coup in 1971. The following year, a new republican constitution abolished all traditional rulers and kingdoms (Jørgensen 1981: 227-231). The long standing economic and political confrontation between UPC and the Buganda elite was concluded with the elimination of the Buganda kingdom. The central government had resolved this political conflict with Buganda using military means.

Establishing political control by coercion came at a high cost, however. Not only had the government alienated Buganda as a whole, it also faced hostility among outmanoeuvred factions in UPC. During the following years the government sought to preserve control and reconstruct its political base through strategies of political and economic centralisation of power (Jørgensen 1981: 231-237; Mamdani 1976: 260-266). This has to be seen as crisis management to address a downward spiral of waning support, economic stagnation and political repression and militarisation. In the context of crisis the government tried to buy time.

One dimension of centralisation concerned territorial and administrative state structures. Arenas for local politics were fundamentally restructured with the 1966 and 1967 constitutions. The unit of local government was now the district, stripped of most of its powers in an attempt by the government to penetrate local political arenas.

Another way in which the government sought to establish control was by state intervention in the economy. After
having secured political control, the government carved out a more ambitious role for the state. A basic contradiction from the government’s point of view during the first years after independence had been that its political support base had aspirations contrary to the groups that contributed its fiscal revenue. In moving towards state involvement by introducing currency control and an export-import licensing system by strengthening existing and setting up new parastatals, the government attempted to weaken its economic dependence on Baganda and Asian merchant capital in order to gain some political autonomy.

The government had thus blocked the aspiring Baganda bourgeoisie both politically and economically. Instead, it promoted a state based African bourgeoisie through which it could retain and reward its core political base. The government also allied with Asian and foreign capital through joint ventures (Brett 1978: 275; Loxley 1989: 69).

While signs of economic weakness were present from the mid-1960s and had intensified political struggles, the late 1960s witnessed a looming crisis of accumulation. The government had built its strategy upon assumptions of increasing levels of foreign investment and foreign aid. Instead, it faced capital outflows due to falling world market prices and worsening terms of trade. In combination with stagnating productivity and expanding military expenditures, this eventually resulted in balance of payment deficits and inflation (Brett 1978: 276).

To reinvent its legitimacy and broaden its base, the government in 1968 launched a programme of economic nationalisation, built on “an appeal to republican, nationalist and populist sentiments” (Nabuguzi 1995: 194). The programme failed to take off. While not all parastatals were outright failures, some, and notably the National Trading Corporation, essentially became vehicles for corruption and patronage due to the government’s reliance on support from the cadre controlling them (Brett 1978: 275).
Economic stagnation generated social unrest. The government increasingly had to rely on the rapidly growing military and on repressive modes of regulation in general. The militarisation of Ugandan politics hence occurred in the context of the incapacity of political rulers to enforce control through institutions and policies.

It is significant to note that militarisation needs to be understood as the extreme expression of authoritarian regulation of social conflicts in a wider sense. Such authoritarianism was rife during the late 1960s. The UPC government attempted to establish control over all social forces. State-civil society relations had not fundamentally changed with independence. On the contrary, it has been argued that the incorporation of autonomous social forces into the state nationalist project that was underway in the period preceding independence was consolidated afterwards. On this view, the Obote I government’s interventions during the late 1960s reinforced colonial legislation and control mechanisms to undercut signs of autonomy. The parameters for autonomous public organisation or debate were effectively narrowed through the establishment of state-party controlled trade unions, women’s organisations, religious institutions, and co-operative movements. The period leading up to the 1966 constitutional crisis had also to significant degrees been shaped by ethno-regional politicisation. Such expressions were thereafter stifled (Mamdani 1993: 542-543; Tidemand 1994: 47-51).

Economic stagnation and social unrest had by 1969 merged into a full-blown political crisis. In December an assassination attempt was made on President Obote, following which all other political parties were banned. The government now had its sole power base among select groups in a factionalised military and among security outfits.

Ethnicity was used as a tool to secure control over the internally fragmented military (Hansen 1977). Attempts to
extend its nationalist policies so as to control the fluid situation proved futile, as these policies did not halt economic decay and political unrest. In January 1971 the government was overthrown in a military coup led by General Amin (Jørgensen 1981: 252-256). What has been suggested above about the main features of state formation under the Obote I government needs to be re-emphasised. The fragile nature of the government’s political base revealed the inherent instability of the political economy. A legitimation crisis led to rapidly shifting alliances among a shrinking base and to destabilisation. Factionalist infighting among the political elite disrupted overall conditions for capitalist accumulation and cohesive state formation. The government’s inability to accommodate conflicting interests into a territorially and institutionally weak state undercut the prospects for a long-term reproduction of state power.

Health and welfare from independence to the mid-1970s: Centralisation

At independence, demands were enormous. Uganda is normally described as having had one of the most well developed health care systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, with an impressive infrastructure of health care facilities and educated staff. However, as O’Manique (2004: 116-117) cautions, qualitative health care provision was largely curative and hospital based, and most people endured under conditions marred by poor sanitation and endemic diseases. During the first decade after independence, state-run health infrastructure, along with other social services, expanded rapidly, underpinned by a growing economy backed by coffee exports. Generally, governments of newly independent societies sought to balance the expansion of teaching hospitals and primary health care. The Ugandan health care system was initially based on a nationalised continuity of the colonial model, with emphasis on curative care in modern hospitals, at the expense of preventive and community based health care,
although the expansion of facilities eventually created a rather dense network of rural primary health units (Nabuguzi 1995: 195-196; Okuonzi and Macrae 1995: 125). Ugandans enjoyed free and relatively accessible health care, and health indicators improved. Iliffe claims that the curative emphasis of the system can be explained with reference to a combination of a professional based policy regime, a well-established health infrastructure and strong local governments that sought to respond to demands for local hospitals (Iliffe 1998: 131). The sustainability of this welfare system was eventually undercut by the more deep-seated legacy of colonial rule, the structuring of social relations and political institutions (Nabuguzi 1995: 192).

How was the state structured in this field? Policy making under the Obote I government was shaped within conflicting logics. The dominant budget logic on the one hand, as recommended by the World Bank and followed until 1964, emphasised fiscal conservatism, and real expenditure on health fell by approximately 10 per cent from 1959 to 1964 (Iliffe 1998: 137). The domestic political logic on the other hand stressed expansion, as popular expectations on the fruits of independence created great political demands for services. In 1964 the government turned around and responded to these demands in order to consolidate its political support. In the context of a decentralised structure of government and local government control over primary health care and political challenges to the government from the opposition in most corners of the country, the central government built regional hospitals. Although this expansion was underpinned by a growing economy, it created underlying constraints on resources (Iliffe 1998: 139).

A defining feature of state formation in the early post-colonial years was the tense relationship between central and local governments. The political prestige and legitimacy associated with service delivery, or more broadly the development space according to Kanyinga (1995: 71) was significant, and struggles
over it were fought out along different dimensions. Between 1962 and 1966, there was considerable leeway for local governments to shape policy. The central government was comparatively weak and needed to balance competing regionalised demands within a semi-federal constitutional order. The southern kingdoms had been given the power to levy taxes and make budgets. In addition, the concentration of missions to the southern parts of the country reinforced regional imbalances created during colonialism.

During the first years after independence, provision of public health care and social services was instrumental in creating local political power bases for individual politicians as well as for UPC as a party, in the face of the challenges in local political arenas that remained until the mid-1960s. UPC gradually took power over most local government assemblies outside Buganda (Jørgensen 1981: 222). In line with a general tendency towards a state led economy, planning and provision was centralised. Political relations between the central state and local government and society, and the relative importance of cultural and religious institutions at the latter level, were dramatically transformed during this period.

Traditional authorities and their welfare systems were dismantled by the creation of a republican unitary state in 1966-67. Federal regions were replaced by centrally controlled district authorities, through which the central government sought to impose tighter political control (Nabuguzi 1995: 196). The overthrow of the Obote government in 1971 did not immediately result in the collapse of state functions. On the contrary, social service expenditure continued to expand during the first years under the Amin regime, even though the quality of this expansion was gradually undercut by lack of maintenance and growing insecurity generally.

With regard to the formation of civil society in the health sector, the discussion needs to be situated in the wider context
of state-civil society relations as they had unfolded through capitalist expansion and state intervention during the last decade of colonial rule. In Uganda, the combination of the pronounced reliance on indirect rule and an unevenly developing capitalism had set off a fragmented and relatively weak civil society in which religious and traditionalist ethnic forces tended to outweigh class-based ones. This was also a consequence of late colonial reforms, under which territorial and moderate elements of civil society and political parties actively disconnected its local as well as radical sections (Mamdani 1990a; 1994). Ethnic-monarchist organisations that straddled local government and civil society became very relevant, given local autonomy particularly in Buganda.

In the process of increased state control of economic life and restrictions imposed on civil society activity generally, the significance of mission hospitals was reduced. While missions and traditional authorities had been important providers of social services prior to independence and in the years following upon it, centralisation of political power in the mid-1960s reduced their role markedly. The tug-of-war between the state and religious institutions that followed did not completely marginalise the latter, who continued to offer services. However, they did so at a decidedly more modest level. In the education sector, the state had been even more successful in curbing the resistance of religious institutions when dismantling their education system in favour of a national secularised one (Nabuguzi 1995: 196).

The formation of civil society in relation to the making of the welfare system of the post-colonial state was not confined to modern and urban interest groups. In rural and lower income urban areas, parallel health systems co-existed without much effective institutional and legal integration. Apart from the public health system with its structures of health units down to the sub-county level, and the Anglican and Catholic hospitals, health units, private practitioners serviced rural and peri-urban areas.
The private service providers were profit-driven, and in remote areas they could offer quicker and more accessible services. On the other hand, the quality of service was poorer, and practitioners occasionally lacked formal qualifications. In most cases, private provision was beyond the realm of state supervision and was only regulated by market relations. In addition to these systems, traditional or community-based medicine had survived the introduction of modern medicine, and these practitioners, being equally available, functioned as the major providers in the rural areas.

In local arenas, which in substantial ways were deliberately disconnected from national politics, an array of groups for self-help emerged, based on kin, ethnicity, gender and class. The regulation of access to and quality of these systems, which overlapped with modern medicine as many providers started to offer a combination of indigenous and chemical medication, was based on both market and cultural imperatives. Overall, these systems were not coordinated, and overlapped only in informal ways (Mugaju 1999: 1-5).

The character of the health care system underwent changes in the 1960s. One source of change pertained to the relation between doctors and the state. Would health workers seek to create autonomy in relation to the independent state or steer close to it in order to make use of its close ties to the government? In Uganda, doctors were a privileged group, and a number of individual doctors were active and influential in politics. Doctors had established control over the direction of policy content, and enjoyed a close alliance with the state. This alliance involved guarantees of relative privileges in terms of income and status in return for political loyalty, in line with general state corporatist tendencies (Iliffe 1998: 132). The doctors were thus part of the state-dependent intelligentsia. However, this alliance would come under strain as a consequence of the shrinking power base of the government. Political control over all social
groups tightened rapidly from the mid-1960s. Economic decline did not halt the expansion of health infrastructure, but it did undercut the ability of the state to sustain the quality of services, including payment and other working conditions. Also, and in combination with overall social change, the relative status of doctors declined, and it became more difficult for those who so wished to uphold distinctions between different types of medical care. Nurses at Mulago went on strike in 1963, partly in protest against hierarchical work place relations in the sector (Iliffe 1998: 129).

Another change came from within medicine itself and consisted of the increased importance of chemotherapy, as drugs were made available to most sections of the population. The availability of drugs became “the central point of public criticism of medical systems” (Iliffe 98: 134). It also changed the balance between different practitioners towards “needle men”, a category that included everyone from retired herbalists to untrained practitioners. The availability of drugs was connected to the decay of the state.

The weakened state eventually lost much of its supervisory capacity to enforce regulations, a process which undercut that part of the status distinction between formal and informal health systems which rested on availability of modern medication. Self-medication became all the more attractive because of “simplicity, convenience and privacy when compared with spiritual remedies” (Iliffe 1998: 135). What were the implications of this? Modern medicine was faced with rivals in competition for patients. On the other hand, it also offered previously unmatched opportunities for treatment.

A third type of change concerned transformations in the medical profession. At one level, medicine was no longer the only status-profession open to Africans. At another, doctors became the target for criticism when the quality of the health system
declined. The profession itself became more internally divided along lines of status and political orientation. All of these factors interacted in transforming the underlying conditions for the health system (Iliffe 1998: 135).

To sum up the main features of the health policy regime during the first decade after independence, it was marked by expansion of social services as a response to the enormous expectations that political independence would also mean overcoming poverty, ignorance, and disease. This welfare state expansion was built on coffee exports. The Ugandan health system itself was to a great extent urban based, curative and professionalised in its orientation. In terms of political regulation, it was characterised by state incorporation of interest groups. Overall, Uganda followed a fairly typical pattern of state corporatism. From the perspective of the state, service delivery was, apart from the contribution that improved health and education of the population would make to development, an important means for creating political legitimation and power bases for nation building.

Until the abolition of the federal constitution in 1966, Ugandan political structures were decentralised, with local and federal governments and religious institutions providing primary social services. One dimension of this decentralisation centred on competition for political support among and within localities. Civil society in the health sector was composed of, on the one hand, Uganda Medical Association (UMA), and, on the other, providers linked to religious institutions and kingdoms. Strong regional and traditionalist, rather than modernist, power bases constituted the main political challenge to the central government. UMA had at an early stage been incorporated into state structures, partly a consequence of its limitations within elitist professionalism. Religious institutions were tolerated, but their activities were restricted. From the mid-1960s, there was a strong shift towards the centralisation of economic resources
and political control. The government changed strategy from inclusion to repression in its attempts to regulate social forces. The health regime was characterised economically by growth and distribution; politically by a centralised state, narrowed scope for civil society and authoritarian forms of regulation and socially by the transformation of health care underneath the surface of hierarchical relations. The quantitative expansion of services continued during the first years of the Amin government but was gradually undercut by overall economic stagnation.

**State and society 1971-1986**

The Idi Amin coup in 1971 was initially received with euphoria by the many sections of society who had been hostile to Obote’s government. Among the groups were traders who had opposed state intervention and, of strategic importance, most people in Buganda and in particular the bourgeoisie who hoped for improved economic opportunities. The coup had been carried out with the help from Israel and other foreign powers, notably Britain, quickly welcomed it (Furley 1989: 276-277).

The Amin government disbanded civilian political organisations and institutions. Lacking a firm social base, the government sought to consolidate its rule by embracing domestic and international constituencies through first right-wing and then nationalist populist measures (Jørgensen 1981: 270-273). One immediate source of political instability was the military itself. During the last few years of the Obote government, ethnic factionalism in the military was rampant. This pattern continued under the Amin government. Both control of the military and grievances and mutinies within it were mediated by ethnic and religious sectarianism. Many Acholi and Langi soldiers and civilians were massacred within the first six months after the coup. During the following years, other ethnic groups suffered the same fate (Jørgensen 1981: 303-306).
To extend support beyond select groups in the military, Amin conceded to demands for the “Africanisation” of the economy. Such demands came primarily from African traders, previously excluded and now ready to take on their Asian counterparts. In the context of a fragile political base, the government’s response was the Economic War declaration – the expulsion in November 1972 of around 50,000 resident Asians without Ugandan citizenship. Their property, around 5,500 companies, was expropriated and redistributed through a Custodian Board to Amin loyalists in the military, in the bureaucracy and among the business community.

This proved to be fateful and restructured the Ugandan political economy in a lasting way. Relatively centralised economic structures initially provided the state with resources and institutional channels to control social forces. The weak economic bases of the bourgeois factions that gained access to economic opportunities made these groupings politically fragmented and dependent on the state (Mamdani 1976: 307-310). But the logic of the Economic War soon resulted in destabilisation. It “gave rise, in hot-house fashion, to a rapacious state-created, state-protected stratum of big proprietors, popularly known as the *mafutamingi*” (Mamdani 1990b: 434).

The massive redistribution of wealth was erratic. While the state handed out resources to consolidate loyalty and control, widespread individual looting and mismanagement by beneficiaries undermined the state itself (Jørgensen 1981: 292-294; Mamdani 1976: 309-312). The long-term effects of this instant form of primitive accumulation through the state turned out to be recurrent redistributions of a stagnating economy, which sustained the short-term speculative nature of the economy. The structural contradictions were expressed as informalisation and militarisation of the state, economy and society. The dramatic

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*Mafuta mingi* is a Kiswahili term, meaning abundant cooking fat or dripping fat, figuratively speaking “dripping with wealth.”
restructuring that were the consequences of the Economic War took place in the context of domestic fiscal crisis, worsened by the stagnation of the world economy after the 1973 oil crisis.

The Amin government had, as described above, inherited the economic and political contradictions that had paved the way for the downfall of the Obote I government. These were now deepened. Its fragile political base and its reliance on the uncertain loyalty of the armed forces resulted in emphasis on short-term control. Real and perceived internal and external security threats generated dramatic increases in expenditure on coercive state institutions. This placed additional strains on the economy. Plunder undercut state institutions and the formal economy. Big proprietors evaded taxation due to political protection (Mamdani 1990b: 435).

To compensate for revenue decline, burdensome taxation and forced extractions of production were placed on the peasantry. Those who were able to made use of informal channels for export (Bazaara 1997: 129, 135). The consequence of this reshuffling of class structures by means of primitive accumulation was a fusion of state power, military might, economic wealth and ethnic affiliation in shifting and unstable patterns. While such tendencies had become visible during the later years of Obote’s government, they took on unprecedented significance during Amin’s rule (Saul 1976). In structural terms the economy was caught in a downward spiral of declining productivity, fiscal and balance of payment crises and rampant inflation, reinforced by political disarray and institutional collapse.

The later years of the Amin regime were characterised by the politics of survival at all levels. From the mid-1970s Uganda suffered from an acute economic crisis. The informal magendo economy had in effect become the real economy. Informal markets and smuggling evolved around the land, foreign exchange, import and export, coffee and public services. Patronage and plunder reinforced economic stagnation and further undercut state
institutions. Insecurity was endemic. Violence and institutional decay led to the collapse of formal administration and the economy. With the erosion of both an economic and a social base, the state was reduced to an instrument for economic looting by its coercive apparatus (Mamdani 1984). Perpetuating decay only further undercut state capacity and reinforced violence and sectarianism.

As state power was exercised through erratic violence by both the army and other security organs, including the notorious State Research Bureau, political opposition took on a militarised form (Brett 1995: 140). Due to the brutal nature of repression, resistance was either based in exile, subterranean or occasional as in the case of religious institutions. The government’s shrinking base in the military itself resulted in a mutiny in 1978. To divert grievances and to pre-empt a coup Amin ordered an attack on Tanzania. The Tanzanian army retaliated, and assisted by exiled Ugandan rebel forces overthrew the Amin government in April 1979.

The near collapse of the Ugandan state, in combination with the fact that the most important political groupings had been operating from exile, had left a power vacuum at the political centre. Efforts to spell out future directions under an ‘umbrella’ government under such conditions proved fruitless. Beneath the surface of national unity, political intrigue continued unabatedly. The major political forces mobilised clandestine support in the military to the effect that political “factionalism inside the dominant classes was almost mechanically reproduced inside the state apparatus” (Mamdani 1995: 11).

During the first year after the war, two brief politically weak administrations presided over the state, until the Military Commission took over power from the interim surrogate parliament in May 1980. Elections were held in December that year, with UPC, DP, Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM) and the Conservative Party (CP), a resurrected KY, contesting. After
what was widely perceived as a substantially rigged exercise, the Chairman of the Military Commission pronounced UPC to be the winner. The allegations of rigged elections were used by Yoweri Museveni’s party UPM, regrouped first as Popular Resistance Army (PRA) and later National Resistance Army (NRA), as a justification to take up arms against Obote’s new government in February 1981.

The rebellion soon escalated into a bloody guerrilla war. The government faced rebellions on several fronts. In West Nile, remnants of Idi Amin’s army had taken up arms too. Buganda based groups, with ties to DP or Mengo, started urban guerrilla warfare. The main battlefield however was the “Luwero Triangle”, the area northwest of Kampala, where the NRA was based. It sought support and protection from the civilian population there, and the Obote government responded with brutal repression. The military looted the countryside and harassed the population. Several hundreds of thousands were killed during the course of the war. Many were uprooted and resettled in what was officially termed “relief centres” – more adequately called concentration camps (Bazaara 1997: 163; Kasozi 1994: 180-185). As punishment for their perceived association with NRA, the government expelled the Banyarwanda community in 1982 (Mamdani 2001: 168). The Obote II government’s legitimacy and power base was limited from the outset and diminished further as economic stagnation set in.

The government responded to the inherited economic crisis by agreeing upon the terms of economic reform required by the IFIs in exchange for financial support. The terms of that reform programme were typical of adjustment programmes in Africa: exchange rate adaptation, devaluation, reduced state control of prices and import licenses, among other conditionalities (Loxley 1989: 73). On the surface, the reform programme appeared to have reasonably favourable macroeconomic aspects up to the second half of 1984. The government could register GDP growth
and reduced inflation rates and budget deficits. However, the programme failed to address structural imbalances, which were reinforced by for instance political manipulation of the exchange rate regime to the benefit of top politicians and civil servants (Mugyenyi 1991: 64-65).

What conclusions can we draw about the political economy of the adjustment programme? Fundamentally, the application of the programme generated political dynamics that the government could not control, similar to the cycles of stagnation, adjustment and protest common in other African countries during the 1980s. As just referred to, state based or state connected capitalists made quick and big money from trade and foreign exchange manipulations. The UPC politicians and their business associates replaced the mafutamingi strata, which had emerged during the Amin years. The fact that this group profited heavily from the liberalisation programme underlines the continuity of the Ugandan political economy after the economic war. Factions of capital with weak autonomous financial and organisational bases were dependent on access to state power for their immediate reproduction based on speculative accumulation, mainly in trade.

The losers from the economic reforms, on the other hand, were politically estranged. The transformation of a state regulated economy to a market regulated system involved privatisation measures that would remove advantages for the government’s political base within the state apparatus. The alienation of this constituency further undermined the limited support the government enjoyed.

Various groups, whose purchasing power had been reduced by adjustment measures, made demands on the weakened state, which responded by raising salaries for workers and soldiers in order to cultivate short-term support. Pressure also forced the government to recruit 20,000 civil servants between 1982 and 1985 (Nabuguzi 1994: 11). However, IFI conditionalities and budget
ceilings blocked workers in service sectors from bargaining for raised salaries (Banugire 1989: 99). These groups resorted to exit strategies within and beyond their official workplaces, something that reinforced the institutional deterioration of the official economy and strengthened structures of the magendo variant.

In rural areas, a heavy burden of adjustment was placed on the peasantry, as state services in terms of health and education as well as agricultural extension services were cut. Insecurity with regard to both land tenure and the political situation more broadly prompted peasants to withdraw their incomes from the state, whose agricultural revenue hence diminished. Instead, politicians and capitalists with political protection made use of their control over the UPC-ified local state and bought land for purposes of protecting themselves against inflation (Bazaara 1997: 164-173).

During 1984, intensification of the civil war undermined macro-economic achievements through a rapid increase in military spending. These different sources of expenditure triggered fiscal deficit and inflation. The withdrawal of IFIs in 1985 was a severe blow to the possibilities of the Obote II state to reproduce itself. To understand the wider social and political dynamics of the situation, it should be noted that the economy had shrunk by more than 20 per cent between 1970 and 1985. By 1986, inflation ran at 169 per cent and the shilling had depreciated dramatically (Brett 1996: 314-315).

By late 1984, the UPC government had been pushed to the wall. Rebellions raged on different fronts. Ethnic factionalism was rife in the military. Most segments of society had withdrawn from formal welfare institutions into informal coping strategies. A stagnant economy was overburdened by military expenditure. Just like during the last years of the Obote I government, a crisis of accumulation was transmitted into a political crisis, which culminated in a military coup. In July 1985, a military junta of mainly Acholi officers took over power. It could not
however establish control. Kampala was divided into zones, each controlled by a faction of the military or by a militia. In spite of a peace agreement in Nairobi in December, the NRA continued with its armed struggle, and captured state power on 26 January 1986.

**Health and welfare 1975-1986: State breakdown**

During the first years of Amin’s rule, the government expanded the infrastructure of hospitals and health centres. It was not until the mid-1970s, however, that economy collapsed as a result of Amin’s “economic war”, the main features of which have already been discussed above. Economic activity moved from official structures to informal networks. The decline of the health sector was an integral part of this wider deterioration of state institutions. Main features of this decline included informalisation and *de facto* privatisation, related to widespread corruption and mismanagement in the public sector, along with serious demoralisation of the work force.

It is estimated that real per capita income declined by over 6 per cent annually between 1973 and 1980 and that the real expenditure per capita of the Ministry of Health fell by 85 per cent from 1972 to 1982 (Iliffe 1998: 146-147). Health indicators fell rapidly from the mid-1970s. Working conditions became untenable. The physical infrastructure collapsed. Hospitals and health centres lacked even the most basic equipment and drugs. Water and power supply was erratic.

As inflation skyrocketed, health workers’ salaries declined in real terms, and in 1984 they amounted to less than 10 per cent of their 1971 value (Nabuguzi 1995: 198); for instance, the real value of interns’ salaries fell from $244 in 1972 to $4.80 in 1987 (Iliffe 1998: 166). Medical workers were forced to resort to a combination of coping strategies. Some set up parallel private clinics; these were by official declaration shut down by the government between 1974 and 1978, but operated illicitly (Iliffe
Others sought employment in mission hospitals. Still others derived a parallel income from farming or private business. Finally, a large proportion of the educated medical and administrative staff fled the country. Among those who stayed, coping strategies resulted in absenteeism and widespread diversion of public drugs and equipment for private purposes (Iliffe 1998: 147-148; Nabuguzi 1995: 198-200; Mugaju 1999: 7-12).

After the fall of the Amin regime in 1979, a Sub-committee for the Rehabilitation of Medical Services was set up. The result of its discussions was to prioritise rehabilitation of the system and to expand primary health care. Rehabilitation first faced the challenge of drug supply. The government lacked foreign exchange to buy drugs. A big proportion of the available drugs was either stolen or got spoilt. It was also difficult to encourage staff to rejoin the sector, as they were severely underpaid (Iliffe 1998: 151). The rehabilitation of primary health care was heavily dependent on international NGOs.

This decline continued until the mid-1980s. The Obote II government’s strategy for rehabilitating the economy rested on a structural adjustment programme negotiated with the IMF in 1981. The outbreak of armed rebellion the same year however swallowed most of the state’s resources, and political conflict and social dislocation prevented economic recovery.

The formal structures of government social service provision turned into an empty shell. This took place at the same time as health needs escalated, due to civil war and population displacements as well as the outbreak of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The effects of the epidemic were further aggravated by the war and its consequences in terms of the breakdown of social structures. Large parts of the population turned to non-state institutions, such as traditional medicine, which was cheap and accessible; private services from professional providers for the
well off and quacks for everyone else; and self-treatment. Faith healing emerged as a new feature from the late 1970s (Mugaju 1999: 13-14).

The consequence was clear and rapid stratification of access to and quality of health services, which had implications beyond the sector. Bazaara argues that the combined effects of inflation, devaluation and cuts on subsidies for social welfare led to land struggles, as tenants sought to sell off fallow land to finance fees for education or medical treatment, but they were blocked by landlords from doing so (Bazaara 1997: 179).

Systematic support from foreign NGOs came to a halt, except for emergency relief intervention. As formal structures underwent decay and declined, the backbone of the health care system now consisted of the wide spectrum of non-state actors. Mechanisms for co-ordinating and regulating social welfare were by and large fragmented and eroded and increasingly dependent on external intervention. The latter consisted in large parts of vertical programmes of, for example, immunisation. Necessary as these programmes were, they nevertheless contributed to the fragmentation of the delivery system and the erosion of regulatory capacity (Nabuguzi 1995: 200; Okuonzi and Macrae 1995: 125-126).

In the 1960s, the parallel provision systems survived on the margins of the expanding public health system, but their relevance was undercut by the expansion of free public health care. The period following the mid-1970s, on the contrary, was primarily characterised by the dissolution of effective formal regulation of health. The state disintegrated, civil society withdrew, and mediating channels for regulating the relationship between them were informalised. As a consequence of the crisis of the public health system, informal modes of provision and regulatory regimes regained their significance. These systems lacked formal supervision and were characterised by market or cultural modes of control. The lack of formal regulation did
not exclude overlap between formal and informal systems. However, their interpenetration was itself unregulated and unintended. Both health workers and patients moved across systems. The structural effects of the fragmentation of health systems manifested themselves in the erosion of state capacity to supply and regulate services, exit strategies of health workers from the formal systems and stratification of access and quality. The legacy of this period still shapes the health system, as underlying structures were destabilised. The repercussions of that destabilisation, in terms of unregulated forms of provision and interpenetration between formal and informal modes of provision, would continue to affect the public health provision system as well as institutional reforms of it.

**Conclusions**

This chapter has brought out defining features of state-society relations in Uganda, critical among which is a widely recognised pattern of increasingly elite driven, fragmented, unstable and militarised politics. Subsequent governments inherited and passed on a “development problem”, in terms of a colonially distorted political economy and in turn destabilised this order further, until public institutions collapsed in the mid-1980s. With regard to health care, social groups responded to institutional decline in a diversity of ways, which resulted in a very complex constellation of provision systems and health regimes.

How are these features to be explained? Various structural constraints to democracy were connected in a specific sequence. Regionally uneven capitalist development and underdevelopment, reflected in and reinforced by indirect rule and traditionalist ideology and organisational forms, resulted in weak class based organisation, political fragmentation along ethno-regional lines and elite-driven politics, consciously disconnected from popular influence by the converging interests of the colonial power and
the emerging local political elite. The weak and fragmented ruling class lacked an independent financial base and was dependent on state power for economic accumulation; this led to intense struggles over the control of fragile state institutions, which further weakened them. In the process, alternative social bases of political power were subjected to close state control. Inherent tensions between fiscal and social bases of state power resulted in contradictory and eventually self-defeating policies by state rulers.

In order to trace the roots of post-colonial state formation, it is worthwhile to return to and expand on the of state-society relations offered by Mamdani on the composition of the nationalist movement, its internal contradictions and the variety of forms of state interventions and state-society relations this set off (1976: 148-49). Democratic forces in society were weak and internally disconnected. In rural areas, extra-economic forms of compulsions gave the regulation of the peasant economy an authoritarian bent. While the fused power of the local state often was less than absolute, it was still a significant factor in shaping the social basis of authoritarian politics. I will return to the specific histories of different strands of civil society in chapters 4 and 5.

In its 10-point programme, the NRM stated its intent to overcome precisely those features of Ugandan society discussed here: fragmented, or “sectarian”, elitist and militarised politics in a dependent economy – a political order that reproduced authoritarian social relations at the level of the state. The following chapter discusses political and economic reforms during the first years of the NRM in power.
The disintegration of state institutions discussed in the previous chapter had disastrous consequences for service provision and the health status of Ugandans. As political structures were rebuilt from the mid-1980s, welfare systems were also slowly rehabilitated, but under conditions rather different from those which had sustained them in the immediate post-independence period. The collapse of the economy left scarce resources for state reconstruction, especially in the context of the economic liberalisation programme. The years of turmoil had further generated institutional fragmentation.

Most sections of the population had been forced to develop repertoires of coping strategies in a context of a plurality of health systems, ranging from public health to formal and
informal private clinics, self-medication and traditional medicine. Informal modes of provision took on permanent existence alongside formal ones. This legacy of institutional pluralisation and complexity continues to have effects on the character of the state and civil society in this field, on strategies to reform and regulate the Ugandan health system and on the resulting patterns of access, equity and quality of health care.

This chapter analyses health sector developments from 1986 to the early 1990s in relation to the historical transformation of state and civil society. These changes will be analysed from the theoretical perspective developed in Chapter 2. This perspective, to repeat, sets out from the notion of a regulatory regime that encompasses rules and practices and suggests that this regime is developed within a matrix of general political relations, economic and development policies and sector specific challenges. The overall argument further posits that the capacity for social forces to democratise the state hinges on relations of domination within both state and civil society and among international actors. State-civil society relations are shaped by parallel and overlapping logics. All states are forced to handle contextually specific requirements of resource extraction and political control by a combination of coercion and consent. In contemporary Uganda, state formation occurs within a liberalised and donor dependent economy, and the government has sought to accommodate and balance a liberalisation strategy for resource extraction, demands for services that create legitimation while preserving control over civil society.

In exploring the changes in the political regulation of the sector, the focal point will be on how structures of interest representation and conflict regulation have been created by the interplay between state strategies and demands from groups in society. What has characterised the framework of interest representation and conflict regulation that these relations have generated?
The argument further proposes that the formation of state and civil society in this field is shaped by a combination of the historical legacy of the sector, overall economic policies and their relation to health and social policies and overall state-civil society relations. There is an interplay between the capacity of the state and its social base. In Uganda towards the late 1980s, structures for health care were dilapidated, and the government had just embarked upon a strategy for state reconstruction from a vulnerable political position, within weak state institutions and with very limited resources. This would naturally shape the contours of the demands that different political forces would make on priorities for the rehabilitation of health care and for social services in general.

**State-society relations 1986-1992**

State institutions and formal mechanisms for regulating state-society relations had almost collapsed in 1986. How did NRM seek to relate to the political expressions of different social forces during its first years in power? How did these forces attempt to root themselves in the state? This section addresses these issues by reconstructing the main features of state formation in order to provide the broader context within which health sector developments took place. As many observers (e.g. Kasfir 2000: 63; Khadiagala 1995; Mamdani 1996: 216) point out, NRM had a very narrow political base upon taking power.

The main challenge that the new government faced was to establish control in the face of threats to fundamental statehood – that is, to secure a minimum of political and economic stabilisation in terms of security and resource extraction within a very volatile political context. The measures taken included the defeat of insurgency groups; the incorporation of rebel leaders and politicians of old parties; the setting up of structures for local governments in order to establish an effective presence in rural
Uganda; and reviving the economy. The following sections will discuss these aspects of state formation in that order. The main argument is that while each of these strategies was relatively successful in the sense of lending the state some degree of legitimation and revenue, it was a very uneven process, whereby unresolved contradictions of the past that affected for example the role of the military in politics were reproduced in slightly new ways. The rather different trajectories that characterised the different arms of the state led to an incoherent composition of the state, where some institutions dominated in certain regions (such as the coercive organs in the north) while being rather insignificant in others (the central and western regions).

**Security and military control**
To restate a truism, an absolutely central preoccupation for any state is to establish sovereign control over the territory it claims to govern and to assure the compliance of the population within that territory. Rather than to protect its citizens, the Ugandan state had turned into the very source of violence against them. In this respect, the challenges the NRM faced after taking over power were to restore effective law and order and to fend off threats by armed rebellions. Ever since 1986, the NRM government has faced armed uprisings, each of which, in the words of Kayunga, “represents a different and rather contradictory phase in Uganda’s political history” (2000: 118). With the victory of the NRA, military power had suddenly shifted to the south.

This structural shift created a military and political vacuum and ultimately a profound social crisis in northern Uganda, as well as fertile ground for armed resistance against the new government. Between the Okello-Lutwa coup of July 1985 and NRM takeover in January 1986, Kampala was divided into zones, each to varying degrees controlled by different armies or paramilitary units.
Between Militarism and Technocratic Governance

After January 1986, these groups either fled or surrendered. The NRA followed the former government army north, and within a few months it managed to capture the northern parts of the country without encountering any great resistance. Sections of the former government army, however, had withdrawn to bases in south Sudan to regroup, and in August 1986 the Uganda People’s Democratic Army (UPDA) launched an attack on NRA barracks in northern Uganda (Kayunga 2000: 112).

Initially, UPDA enjoyed popular backing in Gulu and Kitgum, its main area of operation, in spite of not being rooted among the population. Most observers explain this relative support by referring to extensive human rights violations carried out by the NRA (Finnström 2003: 104-105; Kayunga 2000: 112). As the NRA proceeded to the north, it included elements of other rebel groups in order to expand its forces. Among these groups was the Federalist Democratic Movement of Uganda (FEDEMU), a Baganda rebel force that had fought the Obote II government but entered an agreement with the Okello government following the coup. After the fall of Okello, FEDEMU was incorporated into NRA’s 35 Battalion. Although human rights abuses were widespread, the FEDEMU elements, stationed in Kitgum, have been singled out to have been particularly brutal. Plunder, torture and rape became the common means for humiliating the local population. In August 1986, as retaliation for the UPDA attack, they massacred some 40 civilians in Namokora, Kitgum, home of Tito Okello (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999: 15; Lamwaka 2002). This generated resentment against the NRA from the local population and triggered a vicious circle of deep mistrust with strong ethnic overtones. The NRA, finding itself in a hostile terrain without the presence of its political leadership, resorted to coercive means, which made the local population more receptive to UPDA and its version of events: that the new government was determined to wreak havoc on the Acholi in revenge for the Luwero war (Asowa-Okwe 1997: 99). These narratives were
embedded in broader discourses emphasising “north-south” or “Bantu-Nilotic” divisions, themselves reinforced by colonial and post-colonial structural underdevelopment – c.f. the discussion by Finnström (2003: Chapter 3).

Its relative support notwithstanding, the UPDA soon exhausted its military capacity. In June 1988, a peace agreement was signed, after which the bulk of the UPDA forces were incorporated into the NRA. A new force stepped into the vacuum, the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) of Alice Auma Lakwena, formed in 1986. Whereas UPDA had been a conventional military organisation with the aim of recapturing state power, the peasant based HSM and its armed wing Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF) embodied a combination of armed and spiritual resistance (Finnström 2003: 110), and its message of purification and redemption found resonance in crisis stricken Acholi.

The HSM rapidly mobilised support and, joined by some UPDA soldiers, HSMF marched towards Kampala. These forces were finally defeated near Iganga (eastern Uganda) in November 1987. Alice Lakwena’s father, Severino Lukoya, made an attempt to re activate the Holy Spirit Movement. This proved to be a short interlude, and by 1989 the remnants of HSMF, along with a faction of UPDA, had been incorporated into what later was to be known as Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), under the command of Joseph Kony.

The war between the LRA and the government raged until 2006 and was characterised by exceptional brutality against the civilian population in Acholi. While this cruelty was mainly on the part of LRA, it is important to point out that the UPDF has been implicated in abuse of the civilian population as well (Amnesty International 1999; Human Rights Watch 2005b). The conflict has ebbed and flowed and shifted character over the years.

After the peace agreement in 1988 with the UPDA, the NRA initiated major operations against the remaining rebels. The
counter-insurgency campaign set out from a scorched-earth strategy. The rebels were to be denied access to food and other resources. Civilians were evacuated into camps, food stocks destroyed and domestic animals were killed (Human Rights Watch 2004a: 4; Lamwaka 2000).

This strategy was repeated in 1991, after the government had launched “Operation North” aimed at putting an end to the insurgency. Acholi and Lango were sealed off for four months. While it weakened the LRA, Operation North soon became notorious for its brutal methods and further alienated the civilian population from the NRA. Civilians and local political leaders accused of being rebel collaborators were arrested and tortured (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999: 23; Refugee Law Project 2004: 6). At the same time, most civilians in the region denounced the LRA’s brutality as they found themselves caught between the two warring parties.

Popular resentment against the military was also a consequence of the latter’s failure to protect communities. Cattle raiders from Karamoja took advantage of the general instability in the region, and in between 1987 and 1988 they looted cattle from Acholi, Lango and Teso regions on an unprecedented scale. In all these regions, this bred widespread bitterness against the government army, which was broadly considered to be guilty of complicity, both by turning a blind eye to Karamojong raids and by active cattle thefts (Finnström 2003: 105).

Cattle rustling was also the major reason for the series of rebellions in Teso from 1987, the major one being the one spearheaded by the Uganda People’s Army (UPA), another faction of the former government army and containing elements of the former Special Branch of the police.5 The Karamojong raids were preceded by a government decision to disarm local militias, something which created bitterness in Teso as it was seen as a deliberate strategy to leave them vulnerable to rustling.

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5 The other rebel movements were Force Obote Back Again (FOBA) and the Ninth October Movement (NOM)
The region was a UPC stronghold, and subsequently became subject to a heavy handed counter-insurgency, which in turn was exploited by UPC activists (Kayunga 2000: 112). The Teso insurgencies ended in 1992 by a combination of military defeats and political negotiations whereby sections of the rebel groups were incorporated into the army and government.

Other regions in the north also experienced rebellions. In West Nile, the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF), a legacy of the national army under Amin, joined the new government, but splinter groups carried on armed resistance well into the 1990s.\(^6\) Lango region was also the site for insurgencies in the late 1980s.

What were the implications for state formation? It is argued here that the common denominator is that issues of security have fundamentally shaped the way the state is rooted in local society. The important starting point for such a discussion is that the war in Uganda did not end in 1986 – it shifted battlegrounds. While there is some truth to the statements in conventional overviews of Ugandan politics that the NRM government brought security and peace to large parts of the country (Mutibwa 1992), this transformation has coexisted with the dark undercurrent of continuous violence. And from a northern regional perspective, this violence has not just been the undercurrent of politics but its very core.

The dramatically shifting regional experiences should not come as a great surprise; at a basic level, they point to the difficulties involved in overcoming politically derived underdevelopment and the relations of domination this has given rise to. State-society relations, the composition, capacity and legitimacy of the state and the political content of formal political institutions can in most societies be expected to vary considerably between regions, due to the balance of power within society and the capacity of different social forces to reproduce themselves in the state.

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\(^6\) For instance West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) and UNRF II.
Regional imbalances have been taken to an extreme degree in Uganda; security has by and large been established in, from the government’s perspective, politically significant regions. Security has been one of the most important assets for government legitimacy in the south, central, and western regions and a resource frequently utilised in election campaigns. Following war or insurgencies, the NRM government has also been able to replace old political loyalties with new structures in different regions, whether by design or default.

The post-colonial Ugandan state is rooted in trajectories of violent and authoritarian regulation of social relations, and while in some regions it has succeeded in containing violence by incorporating insurgents into political structures, in other regions political differences have been militarised by rebels and the state alike.

**Political inclusion**

At the level of national politics, the NRM addressed the challenges to authority that stemmed from its own weakness in the context of contending political forces by including leaders of older political parties and rebel movements (on the condition that these put down their arms). Some were given cabinet posts whereas others were integrated into the army and their commanders were given higher military ranks.

This accommodation was in the process presented as “broad based” politics for purposes of peace and national unity, a deliberate antidote to political sectarianism (Kasfir 2000:65). Notable among incorporated rebel groups were, after their surrender in 1988, leaders and rank-and-file of Uganda People’s Democratic Movement (UPDM), and remnants of the old government army. The most important political group that entered into an alliance against UPC, their common enemy, was DP; sections of DP had gone to the bush to fight the Obote II government in 1981 under the banner of Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM).
DP was rather discredited after having joined the Okello military government and was grateful for the opportunity to rehabilitate its reputation through an alliance. The NRM-DP alliance rested on a gentlemen’s agreement that the ban on party politics was to be lifted after a transition period. This consensus was disrupted in 1988, when the NRM proposed that the reintroduction of party politics should be postponed and only after having been subject to a referendum (Kasfir 1991:254). Thus, the NRM was, out of strategic necessity, buying loyalty and time.

The ideological rationale for a broad-based government became compromised, as pragmatic considerations of inclusion undercut the long-term political direction that this institutional arrangement was set to promote. While the inclusion of leaders and soldiers of rebel armies created stability at the level of elite politics, this type of pacts often failed (as in the north and most evidently in Acholi) to address underlying structural problems of underdevelopment and political exclusion.

Having come to power by force and with a narrow social and regional base, the NRM faced the challenge of extending control and securing legitimacy as a civilian government with at least some degree of democratic credentials. It developed one key resource for those purposes in its framework for popular democracy, the proposed alternative to the “sectarian” multi-party politics of the past.

The content of such a popular alternative to politics has not remained fixed or precise apart from its resistance to parties, and Kasfir (1999; 2000) has traced the shifting meaning and use attached to the concepts of “no-party” or “Movement” democracy. Initially, the transition to more democratic rule centred on Resistance Councils (RCs), a five-tier system of elected committees first set up during the guerrilla war in NRA controlled areas. RCs (later LCs) are subject to a vast body of

During the course of the war, RCs had been functional in providing popular support for the armed struggle and in securing the NRA protection and resources such as food and water, intelligence and recruitment from local communities in the areas – most importantly the Luwero triangle – where the war took place. In addition to this, RCs were useful vehicles for the mobilisation and politicisation of communities by the NRA. The uneven and turbulent making of RCs essentially reflected the conjunctures of the war. Intermittently, in NRA controlled territory during periods of security, they were openly extended into organs for self-organisation and dispute settlement among these communities (Ddungu 1994: 376-377; Kasfir 2005; Tidemand 1995 b: 228).

The popularity of these structures during the war led the NRM to energetically extend the RC system (five-tiered – village to district) to the entire country. The institutionalisation of RCs is generally considered as having been the NRM’s most important democratic reform during its first years in power. The system dismantled the structures of the colonial and post-colonial local state, where judicial, legislative and executive power was concentrated in the institution of the chief, and replaced this mode of authority with elected committees.

The committees furthermore granted representation to “social minorities” such as women and youth (Kasfir 1991: 252-254; Mamdani 1996: 209, 215). From the NRM point of view, the extension of the RC system was a considerable strategic achievement, as it expanded NRM’s influence and democratic credibility throughout the territory, albeit unevenly, and indirectly incorporated administrative functions of local society into the structures of the central state. The democratic gains of the system were presented in contrast to colonial and post-colonial
systems of non-accountable forms of power in general and to “bourgeois sectarian elite politics” of DP and UPC in particular. Needless to say, the legitimacy of the system was regionally uneven. The population in most parts of eastern and northern Uganda viewed the new government with suspicion – some as a military regime with a southwestern base. Furthermore, within a few months armed uprisings emerged in these regions which made the effective introduction of civilian political forms more complicated (Kasfir 1991: 260).

Whereas, predictably, participatory democracy worked best at the village level, indirect elections from that level to councils and committees higher up in the system deliberately disconnected local participation from broader representation. The government rejected a proposition by the 1987 Commission of Inquiry into the Local Government System for direct elections at all levels with the claim that this would reinforce sectarianism (Kasfir 1999: 207). This should be seen as a government strategy to retain control by reforming the institutional forms of local politics while at the same time ensuring that contending political forces at the national level could not forge links with rural areas.

The latter possibility was real. As a new political force, the NRM was unsure of its political support. By 1988, DP candidates had done well in various RC elections. According to Kasfir (1991: 255), they held a majority of seats in two thirds of the district councils and most probably enjoyed solid support at lower levels too. Real political power was, however, and particularly up to the 1989 elections, concentrated in the National Resistance Council (NRC) – the parliament – or more precisely its Central Committee dominated by the inner circle of NRM leaders.

The introduction of RCs was initially done without legal anchoring. The unclear legal status of RCs in the context of their co-existence with old administrative structures created uncertainty regarding their mandate and function. It was not
until May 1987 that legislation concerning the RC system was formulated. This legislation spelt out that RCs were placed under the minister of local government who was given power to dissolve individual councils. This suggested the limits to which RCs could influence the central state.

Another measure of control was the introduction of District Administrators (DAs) – presidential appointees, who were given power to intervene in council affairs (Tidemand 1995b: 228-29). Along with legal regulations came administrative functions, such as tax collection and road building. Kasfir claims that these duties over the following years, in combination with biting poverty and the fact that lower level committee work was supposed to be voluntary, made RCs less popular. The balance shifted from deliberation to administration (2000: 67).

To what extent did the RC system during the early years of its existence result in the transformation of the local state? Assessments have stressed the different strands inherent in the system. The debate in the late 1980s over the relative importance of democratic, bureaucratic or sectarian (that is, pro-NRM) features of the system pointed to the constraints to local participation when disconnected from direct representation (Mamdani 1988).

The contradictions between these tendencies came to the surface through numerous conflicts between RCs and DAs and through the legislation that imposed limits on the mandate on RCs. Mamdani (1996: 209, 215) claims that the democratisation of the institutional forms of village politics was accompanied by social conservatism, which tended to reproduce social inequalities inside reformed political institutions. To precipitate the conclusions of this study, political monopoly would eventually undercut the relative democratic gains as well.

Until 1989 only local government elections had been held under the new government. With in a short notice, local and
national elections were called in February that year. Ugandans would, through the RC system, elect a parliament, the National Resistance Council (NRC), which would in the process be extended from 38 to 279 members. The political landscape at the time was fluid and, from the government’s point of view, very uncertain. The NRM had allocated itself (and had been granted, in a gentlemen’s agreement with DP and other minor parties to the coalition) a four-year transition period, which would come to an end in early 1990.

With only one year to go, the NRM had been fighting two civil wars; the economy was only on the verge to becoming stabilised; and DP, the temporary NRM ally in the broad based government, was the stronger political force on the ground. At the same time, NRM legitimacy had to a large extent rest on promises to restore democracy as part of the “fundamental change” it claimed to install. Hence, it needed to build political bases in local and national political arenas with preserved or enhanced democratic legitimacy (Kasfir 1991: 254). How could the NRM test its strength without risking its hold onto power?

For the 1989 elections, it addressed this dilemma by shaping the rules of the elections to its advantage. It assured itself of substantial presence in the NRC by granting the 38 appointed MPs extended terms without elections, and it gave the military and the president powers to appoint 30 more. In addition, it instituted the National Executive Committee (NEC) within parliament and ensured that Museveni would remain president regardless of the parliamentary majority. There was also a ban on discussing issues, as opposed to the merits of individual candidates.

The government sought to justify this move as a means to prevent sectarianism. It is also far from clear that the NRM would have been able to compete successfully with the old parties in competitive representative politics. Again, NRM’s claims
to democratic legitimacy were based on a doctrine of popular democracy, as opposed to the exclusive and divisive politics of the past. Furthermore, while local elections were direct, elections to the NRC were indirect hence, conducted through electoral colleges. This made it very clear that the NRM would accept the influence of RCs at the local level only, or in the words of Ottemoeller, “much of the populist energy that had been directed into the RC system in hope of reaching or influencing the state was, by 1989, either absorbed into the NRM ruling hierarchy, or directed into the growing body of NRM critics” (1996: 51).

Local structures for representation were thus disconnected from the direct influence on national politics and were instead enmeshed in local struggles over influence with organs of the central state. While opposition groups contested the restrictions, even more damaging to the legitimacy of the NRM was the fact that the NRC soon after the elections extended the provisional NRM government and ban on parties by another five years. This mistrust was to shape the politics of constitution making in the early to mid-1990s.

State-civil society relations
How were state-civil society relations affected by the change of government? Most sections of civil society, already restricted in their operations from the late 1960s, were severely weakened during the years of turmoil, partly as a result of state repression, partly following from the informalisation of both the state and of economic structures. In spite of strict state supervision, some social movements, including trade unions (Barya 1991: 36-38) had protested against both declining living conditions and political autocracy during the Obote II years, but typically in a sporadic fashion in the face of repression. Nor had civil society organisations played an active or instrumental part in the change of government. The legacy of repression and informalisation
shaped the contours of the emerging relations between NRM and
civil society. What were the main features of these relations?

The relative relaxation of state control laid the foundations
for a quantitative revival of civil society groups. Another source
of this was the weakened capacity of the state to fulfil its tasks.
During the years of crisis, NGOs and CBOs entered into this
vacuum in rural and poor urban areas, creating networks that
turned into more permanent organisations in a stabilised political
context. At the same time, economic hardship and internal
wrangling had seriously weakened the previous backbone of
civil society, cooperatives and trade unions. Informalisation had
critically undercut the preconditions for collective organisation
and representation because of individualised coping strategies
by members of these organisations and the subsequent
fragmentation of associational life. This trend continued to limit
their strength up to the early 1990s. Economic liberalisation
undercut the viability of cooperatives, and trade unions suffered
from stagnation and retrenchment. Strikes and protests during
the late 1980s were largely temporary outbursts that failed to
impact on this overall trend (Kjær 2001: 155). Ironically, at a time
when the legislative framework had become more benevolent for
autonomous organisation, unions were too weakened to be able
to take advantage of this opportunity. The overall effect was a
recomposition of civil society, and in extension of state-civil
society relations, towards the predominance of NGOs. Sections
of the middle class responded to retrenchment and insufficient
earnings by entering or creating NGOs, among other things.\(^7\)

This shift was underpinned and reinforced by a third aspect
of the structural transformation of civil society, on its way since
the early 1980s, namely its “donorisation”. This was expressed
in terms of both an influx of international NGOs and of

\(^7\) Technically speaking, trade unions are of course non-governmental
organisations. However, I keep to an established distinction in both popular
and academic Ugandan discourse that singles out NGOs from for example
unions and religious institutions.
deepened donor dependence among Ugandan ones (Hearn 1999). Such dependence obviously increased the probabilities of the disconnection of NGOs from the constituencies they claimed to represent, weakening their roots in society and muting their political voice. This connects to a fourth dimension of state-civil society relations during this period and beyond: the gradual “apoliticisation” of most civil society groups – that is, their tendency to adapt to calls for loyalty by strategies of keeping a distance from controversial issues.⁸

This had a number of causes. In addition to recomposition and donor dependence, it needs to be recognised that the NRM enjoyed the support of many interest groups that had developed by and large in tandem with the state. This occurred in a number of ways. Some groups developed cordial relations to the state relatively voluntarily, others were co-opted, and still others were set up by members of the political elite for purposes of business, or in order to channel political support and block more autonomous and critical counterparts. In order to impose control over NGOs, the state instituted legal and administrative instruments through the 1989 NGO Registration Act. The Act opened up for the creation of a National Board of NGOs, which along with other departments was supposed to enforce the regulation of NGO activities (Barya 2000b: 18-22). However, the relatively weak state refrained from exercising direct repression or excessive control of civil society (which it lacked capacity to implement anyway) – that recognised the limits of its own freedom of movement in the context of the overall monopolisation of political space.

On an everyday level, the immediate expression of inclusion was the fact that RCs had become the main channel for interest representation. Obviously, social forces continued to influence

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⁸ I owe the observation that this tendency is better captured by the term apoliticisation to denote an active choice under constraints rather than depoliticisation as demobilisation from above to Joe Oloka-Onyango.
the state, but not only or even mainly in a collective organised form. Various informal structures remained important. Ruling class politics was articulated as competing state based networks, whereas its middle and working class equivalents were concerned with coping rather than accumulation activities. Similar struggles were played out in RCs, where local configurations of party-political affiliation and social power continued to exercise informal influence.

**Economic reforms**

The economy was in deep crisis. Rebuilding the political infrastructure would require the simultaneous reconstruction of a stabilised and growing economic base. How did the NRM deal with the informalisation of economic life? How did it seek to rebuild the state and root itself in society through the economy? Out of ideological conviction, and conscious of popular disillusionment with the adjustment experience of the Obote II government, the NRM initially embraced a socialist-nationalist economic programme.

The main components of this programme involved a Produce Marketing Board (PMB) monopoly on export of crops and PMB organised barter trade for essential import goods, as international creditors viewed the new socialist-leaning government in Uganda with suspicion; this feeling was reciprocated by the NRM. The government fixed the exchange rate well below the parallel market rate. The results were devastating, and structural problems magnified: the inflation rate was 147 per cent during the second half of 1986, the budget deficit grew and GDP declined by 2 per cent. Faced with threats of economic collapse in a context of military insurgencies, the government sought accommodation with the IFIs (Mugyenyi 1991: 70).

The Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) was launched in May 1987. In an exchange for a Structural Adjustment Facility...
loan from the IMF, the government committed itself to stabilise the economy through budgetary and monetary policies such as devaluation and fiscal reforms for increased levels of revenue, privatisation and liberalisation of trade and foreign exchange regulations – measures that were aimed at bringing under control balance-of-payment and budget deficits and inflation, and at stimulating growth. In return, it was given considerable financial rewards. On average, Uganda received $500 million annually between 1987 and 1992 through the IMF, the World Bank and bilateral donors (Mwenda and Tangri 2005: 452).

The main components of the ERP centred on stabilisation, and the programme did not address issues of adjustment through institutional reform. During its first five years the reform programme promoted rapid growth, albeit from a very low level, but did not attend to poverty or inequality. As Brett (1996: 342) wrote, “a social security crisis continues to exist in Uganda with a substantial proportion of the population living in extreme poverty”.

Poverty and inequality were not mainly the result of adjustment but had much deeper roots. Nevertheless, and of particular importance for this study, the preoccupation with security and macro-economic stability and rapid growth, together with the lack of concern with institutional reform or equity measures, meant that the social sectors were left to be shaped by institutionalised informalisation and fragmentation. Public health care, although receiving slightly more resources than before, remained under-funded and poorly regulated. As regards other dimensions of economic recovery, industrial development was modest during the first years of the ERP and blocked by structural problems in terms of low levels of education, infrastructural constraints and weak institutional capacity. Also, inflation and budget deficits were not controlled as prescribed by policy. This followed partly from exogenous
shocks, and partly from contradictory implementation (Brett 1996: 318-325).

The process of implementation was mediated by political struggles on different levels. In one sense, it was an ongoing negotiation process between the structuralist position of the Uganda government and the monetarist view of the IMF – for details, see Mugyenyi (1991: 69-76). It is argued here that such struggles within the state grew in importance with NRM’s increasing control over contending political forces. The turnaround of economic policy direction followed upon, but did not mark the end to, the tug-of-war between the two on issues of devaluation, exchange rates and privatisation. Ideologically, the shift to liberalisation was a bitter pill for the NRM to swallow, and hence, justified as a tactical retreat in order to achieve a strategic aim. In a very difficult situation it nevertheless found it necessary to give up a great deal of control over economic policy making in exchange for resources and recognition, in order to guarantee a revenue basis for stabilisation and recovery, and for its own political survival, as well. While obviously being the weaker party, the Uganda government was able to create some scope for influence. As Brett points out, it was “a complex and ambiguous process of negotiation in which compliance could only be achieved where the former [IFIs] were able to offer real incentives and create effective links with local political and administrative actors” (1996: 340).

However, this overall shift and its contradictory implementation cannot be understood merely with reference to contestation between the NRM and the IMF. It more fundamentally reflected struggles for control between contending political forces in Ugandan society and within the Ugandan state. The new government confronted hostility within the bureaucracy, as many of the cadre of the latter had DP or, to a lesser extent, UPC inclinations. While the overall policy direction of economic
reform was designed to promote capitalist development through liberalisation, contestation between factions of the bourgeoisie over this process and its outcome was fierce. The extension to a broad based government after 1986 reproduced contradictory perspectives on economic policy within the bureaucracy as well as within the NRM itself.

The NRM included groupings with different ideological inclinations, such as Lule’s Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) with ties to Baganda landlords. According to Loxley (1989: 82), the latter supported continued state intervention, for purposes of safeguarding extra-economic control over agricultural production. Powerful sections within and outside the state had vested interests in the preservation of an economic model that enabled them to use their political position for economic purposes. Others with a different social base sought to achieve a similar goal through liberalisation. This struggle between adherents of state control and proponents of liberalisation resulted in a haphazard implementation of the ERP during its first five years and, according to observers (Loxley 1989: 80-82; Mugyenyi 1991: 62), in the paralysis of decision making in the context of weak institutions.

Still, the basic thrust of reforms was towards liberalisation, undercutting the position of the salaried middle-class and workers. Retrenchment from parastatals, withdrawn subsidies of social services and rising living expenses generated protests and strikes among urban groups during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The struggles centred on the consequences of reforms, mainly in terms of wages, but they also included demands for improved working conditions. Wildcat strikes erupted in most parastatals. Students and university lecturers went on strike in 1989, protesting against withdrawn subsidies and the introduction of user charges.
Nurses and interns went on strike in Jinja in 1989 and in Mulago in 1990. Market traders protested against rising fees. In both urban and rural areas there were tax riots (Iliffe 1998: 166; Nabuguzi 1994: 16). Even so, the political impact of the strikes and protests was modest. The trade union movement was internally fragmented and its capacity for collective action had been severely weakened by informalisation and liberalisation. The state could afford to ignore its demands or to offer workers benefits in lay-off package deals.

There were also other reasons for the relatively limited influence of the protests, which can be helpfully outlined with comparative reference to Ghana (see Hutchful 1996: 154-155). There, just as in Uganda, the economic crisis had evolved over many years and preceded the adjustment programme. This created a consensus around the need for some kind of reforms, which to a greater degree than in most other African countries came to be associated with economic and institutional recovery rather than decay. This recovery was propped up by large inflows of foreign aid and some level of protection of social services. Also, in both Ghana and Uganda the longstanding crisis had entrenched overlapping formal and informal survival strategies for both urban and rural constituencies. Such exit rather than voice options both offered some protection against shocks in the formal economy and fragmented the scope for consistent collective action.

In a similar vein, Nabuguzi argues (1994:15-16) that liberalisation involved a recomposition of the political base of the government. The reduced role of the state in the economy offered fewer direct possibilities for accumulation through the state. The middle and working classes that lost their employment had to find new ways of coping. The government sought to reduce its political dependence on these urban constituencies and actively attempted to bypass them by rooting its institutions and policies among rural groups. Meanwhile, the pro-liberalisation
forces within the NRM crafted an alliance with a section of the bourgeoisie that had been excluded from influence during the Obote II years and who found an opening in the liberalised economy. The same process also created business opportunities for the NRM’s own followers.

The consequences of the reform programme, including its impact on state-society relations, were uncertain and fragile during its first five years. The overall direction of the liberalisation programme spelt out a reduced role for the state in the economy. At the same time, the Ugandan state had been dramatically weakened over the previous decade and a half. The shrinking of the state would have to be preceded by its reconstruction, and the struggles over the direction of this reconstruction resulted in uneven implementation. However uncertain the process was, it nevertheless contained the seeds for future developments. The growing dependence on foreign aid in the reconstruction process anchored the state’s resource base among transnational institutions. Hence, the gradual transformation of the Ugandan economic policy regime towards a model of aid-driven liberalised capitalist development would eventually also involve the reconstruction of the state as regulatory instance, which then made it possible for state rulers to reconfigure political alliances and solidify political bases among the peasantry and upcoming sections of capital. Nabuguzi (1994: 18) proposes that what was at stake was:

less the withdrawal of the state from certain economic activities, which de facto had taken place, but the rehabilitation of the state apparatus [...] Structural Adjustment for Uganda was therefore a relegitimating exercise intended to reroot the state and reconsolidate its institutions.

This section has described the diverse ways in which the NRM government sought to strengthen its position and to root the state in society and how different social forces tried to root themselves in the state, from 1986 up to the early 1990s. The
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The priority of security and macro-economic stabilisation made social policy a marginal concern. The character of the health regime, the subject of the next section, needs to be understood in the context of these priorities and as shaped by the lingering legacy of informalisation and fragmentation of the health care system itself.

State reconstruction in the health sector: 1986-1992

Following the takeover of state power by the NRM in 1986, state institutions were slowly reconstructed. What strategies did the government pursue to rebuild health infrastructure in terms of policy content and political regulation of interest representation? What was the degree of purpose and coherence of these strategies? How did different sections of civil society respond to this? Did the reconstruction of the state involve its democratisation, or was this process shaped by lingering authoritarianism? This section explores the defining features of social policymaking and the evolving health regime during the first years of NRM rule. It starts with an overview of the physical and institutional legacies of state decay and then addresses different attempts to reconstruct the health system in that context as well as responses to those reconstruction strategies.

Legacies of decay

Physical and institutional infrastructure deteriorated in mutually reinforcing ways during the 1970s and 1980s. While the construction of physical structures for health provision actually continued during this period, institutional capacity to manage and provide services eroded (Dodge 1987). There was no foreign exchange with which to purchase drugs. Large budget deficits halted salary payments, the real value of which was being eroded by inflation anyway. In 1986, health sector salaries ranged from $2 to $12 per month (Iliffe 1998: 151). Other figures also indicate the level of deterioration that lingered on after some
relative stabilisation. In the 1986/87 fiscal year, public spending on health amounted to 0.1 per cent of GDP, equivalent to 4 per cent of public expenditure (Macrae et al 1996: 1097). During the period of decay, the health status of Ugandans worsened due to poverty and civil war, which contributed to the spread of tuberculosis, measles and HIV/AIDS (Macrae et al 1996: 1097).

Hospitals and health units were in a desperate state. Five hospitals had been demolished in the 1979 war. In Mulago Hospital, Kampala, the main hospital in Uganda, a small number of operating theatres were restored during the early 1980s. There was however no consistently functioning water supply, electricity or sewerage system (Iliffe 1998: 151). In rural areas, conditions were even worse, as insecurity made these areas difficult to access. Overcrowded and understaffed units lacked even basic equipment and consumables such as beds, bandages and drugs (Mugaju 1999: 5); this was still the situation some years after 1986, according to the findings of the Health Policy Review Commission appointed in 1987 (Iliffe 1998: 154).

Resources allocated to health care and the use to which they were put was conditioned by the informalisation of Uganda’s political economy in general. Medical staff had to rely on parallel coping strategies to make ends meet. This in turn worsened conditions in health units as staff demanded informal fees from patients or stole drugs in order to sell them in their private practices. People with access to large-scale distribution made vast amounts of money out of illegal procurement of medication. The government lacked the capacity to intervene and enforce regulations (Iliffe 1998: 153; Mugaju 1999: 11). At the national level, infrastructural decay both promoted and was reproduced by the narrow scope and limited incentives for planning and policy making, as well as by low qualitative and quantitative levels of medical training (Iliffe 1998: 152). Civil servants were paid very poor wages, and units set up for purposes of policy formulation lacked even basic utilities such as pens
and paper (Macrae et al 1996: 1097). Institutional and physical deterioration were connected in a vicious circle that resulted in the near collapse of the public health system. Following below is a detailed examination of the nature of these connections and the different provision systems that had emerged as a response to state collapse.

It is important to recall that the emergence of a fragmented and informalised health system did not only reflect the wider pattern of an informalised political economy linked to uneven capitalist development. It was also in some respects a long-standing feature of health service delivery. While the collapse of the regulatory capacity of the state was more distinctly linked to violent destabilisation and civil war, institutional pluralism was a central feature of social service provision during colonialism, as demonstrated above. What state decay brought about was “incremental privatisation” (Birungi et al 2001: 80) of the public health system, with “licensed or unlicensed private clinics, drug shops, home providers and increased self-medication” (Birungi et al 2001: 80).

Provision systems had their own distinct trajectories, and the state exercised different forms and degree of regulation vis-à-vis each of them. These systems were and are not separate entities but interlinked in different and mainly informally regulated ways. That is, while unlicensed practices were unregulated by statutory frameworks, they were structured by informal modes of regulation based on market or social principles. This also means that the historical legacy of regional differentiation of service coverage, in favour of the central region, was eventually accompanied by social stratification of access to quality health services within regions.

It became very difficult to disentangle formal from informal aspects of the health delivery system. State services were to a considerable degree informally privatised through under-the-table payments for supposedly free services and reliance on
private practitioners; formally employed by the government. On the other hand, private services were in crucial ways regulated by the state, although with difficulty; the interpenetration between private and public, and between formal and informal aspects of both sectors in terms of funds, staff and drugs was extensive (Nabuguzi 1995: 205). The public sector was informalised, with high degrees of straddling between public and private services in terms of “free circulation of staff, drugs and medical knowledge between them” (Birungi et al 2001: 82).

In spite of this institutional complexity and interconnectedness, it is useful to outline commonly made distinctions between different forms of provision. This will also help to clarify the nature of their interlinkage. The main distinction is drawn – by both analysts and policy makers and hence taking on an institutional existence – between public and private sectors. The latter is normally sub-divided into private-not-for-profit, which refers to NGOs and missions, and private-for-profit. With reference to not-for-profit providers, missions have historically had an important role in service provision, whereas the phenomenon of other foreign NGOs is more recent. The private-for-profit category is further divided into formal and informal providers. In short, formal providers are licensed and registered, while informal providers are not but operate anyway, and “are appreciated and legitimised by communities” (Birungi et al 2001: 82). This category includes private clinics and drug shops, home providers and traditional healers. There are also a great number of community based organisations (CBOs), some of which are registered as NGOs. A study conducted in the 1990s found that 79 per cent of the curative care in Uganda is provided by various private actors (Hutchinson 1999: 10). All of these providers and the provision networks they set off are to varying degrees incorporated into political projects to secure legitimacy and authority.
Religious institutions have historically constituted the main type of private-not-for-profit health provision. The first religious health unit in Uganda, Mengo Hospital, was set up in 1897. During the first decades of the twentieth century both Catholic and Protestant churches created networks of health centres and hospitals, which constituted the backbone of the colonial health care system. In the 1950s, the Catholic and Anglican churches established medical bureaux which were given the responsibility to access and distribute resources from the colonial government and from donors abroad, and to coordinate the functions of their growing networks.

The colonial state had slowly started to expand welfare services during the 1950s. As an institutional guarantee, and due to financial limitations, the religious bodies felt the need to create a working relationship with the state. The colonial and then the independent state agreed to support church based health care and education with grants through ad hoc arrangements. The government offered subsidies to support a certain number of staff. This arrangement, however, was constantly subject to potential deactivation (interviews, Executive Secretary UCMB, 7 February 2005; Head of Administration, UPMB, 9 February 2005).

As demonstrated above, state-church relations around education became tense after independence, with the state seeking to rein in faith-based education and eventually nationalising the sector. While mission health units continued to operate, state subsidies diminished during the 1960s and 1970s. During the Amin government, most providers experienced difficulties due to general unrest. One exception was Islamic institutions, which flourished as encouraged by Amin and sponsored by aid from the Arab world (Nabuguzi 1995: 200). As the quality of public health care declined during the 1970s, more people turned to religious providers. In order to counter the dwindling state subsidies in a context of increased demand for services, religious providers had
to rely on a combination of external donations and user fees. They also set up the Joint Medical Stores in 1979 (Reinikka and Svensson 2003: 8). Thanks to continued external support and user fees, health provision of churches and missions managed to retain some degree of quality during the late 1970s and the first half of the 1980s. Following the decay of the public sector, religious providers remained a central pillar of health service delivery throughout the 1980s. Their financial resources were however deeply affected by the 1987 devaluation.

Although missions can technically be described as non-governmental organisations, they occupy a special place among health providing NGOs by way of the historical continuity and geographic extension of their service networks. Nevertheless, other forms of NGOs, both national and foreign, also offer services. Single- or multi-purpose welfare arrangements have long been a main source of provision in areas poorly covered by state infrastructure.

Following the decay of state institutions from the 1970s onward, they took on greater importance. During this period, general insecurity made it very difficult for formal Kampala based organisations to operate. Most forms of health provision mushroomed as responses to state contraction and reflected more or less regular and continuous forms of coping or accumulation strategies of providers and patients. In this context, their emergence did not mean the manifestation of a discrete and independent sub-sector. Staff moved between public, private and NGO based clinics or laboratories in ways that further undercut already weak statutory regulatory capacity. Most service providers in Uganda are local entities, CBOs, more or less formalised groups, often not registered, and not systematically studied. Nabuguzi (1995: 200) proposes that there are indications that community initiatives could have taken over malfunctioning or abandoned state health facilities but emphasises that this cannot be verified.
The combination of weak state structures and humanitarian emergencies in the wake of civil unrest opened the door for international relief organisations and programmes. This was during a period when donors started to shape the Ugandan political economy more broadly through macro-economic stabilisation programmes. NGOs such as AMREF and Save the Children entered as key actors in the Ugandan health system from the early 1980s. Such organisations had been around since the 1950s, but their extensive and systematic presence occurred during this latter period. International NGOs, typically operating on project basis, was one expression of the internationalisation of the health care system (Okuonzi and Macrae 1995: 125).

Another was the intervention by UNICEF programmes on vaccinations, in response to the famine in Karamoja, northeastern Uganda, in the early 1980s. While these programmes were badly needed in themselves, their combined systemic legacy was one of fragmentation and international dependence of the health care system. In spite of the fact that vertical programmes and disconnected projects were intended to sustain an integrated policy for primary health care as spelt out in the Obote II government’s Revised Recovery Programme, neither of which were systematically incorporated into economic policy making (Okuonzi and Macrae 1995: 126). This was largely because defence and security expenses dwarfed other sectors and because the destabilised political situation further eroded coordination capacity of long-term strategies.

As indicated above, informal modes of health provision filled the vacuum left by state contraction. Due to inadequate salaries, medical workers in the public sector retreated to coping strategies, such as the setting up of formal or informal private practices or drug shops run by themselves or by proxy staff. They used their position in the public health system by charging informal fees or diverting drugs (Van der Heijden and Jitta 1993). Others sought employment with NGOs or left the country. Doctors had run
licensed private practices since the 1940s, the majority of which were run by Asians (Iliffe 1998: 83-84; 121).

Around independence, following the expansion of medical services, all categories of medical workers established practices (not all of which were licensed) in both urban and rural areas. According to Mugaju (1999: 2), many medical workers exploited their employment in the public or NGO sectors to divert resources to their part-time private practices. Such units were flexible to instant service demands and often constituted the only option. However, many of these providers lacked both formal and real competence, and the state had no capacity to supervise their operation in remote areas.

In the late 1960s, Obote’s government made moves towards nationalising health services the way it had done with education (Iliffe 1998: 140). As long as the public health system functioned relatively well, informal private care was a fairly marginal phenomenon. But as government services deteriorated and falling wages were paid infrequently if at all, both patients and medical workers turned to private health care for survival strategies. The informal private-for-profit sector exploded beyond control, as acknowledged by the 1987 Health Policy Review Commission (Whyte 1991: 130).

The informal interpenetration between public, NGO and private provision in terms of staff, medication and resources mirrored the overall informalisation of the Ugandan economy. This in turn set the stage for further withdrawal of patients by way of self-medication with often illegally sold drugs or syringes. According to Whyte (1991: 141-143), the essential meaning of self-medication was the introduction of pharmaceutics into a tradition of family care, alongside or replacing herbal medicine.

The blurring of distinctions between formal and informal modes of health provision was clearly visible in the field of drugs. Drugs found their way into the informal market through
smuggling, or theft from government health facilities, and could be found in private clinics, markets, on the street or in villages. In the 1980s, the Medical Council tried to enforce existing legislation but lacked the power to do so, since it was believed that medical workers would then leave the country (Iliffe 1997: 153). In a case study from eastern Uganda in the late 1980s, Whyte (1991) argues that there was no shortage of drugs as such – they were available from different sources such as the Central Government Medical Stores, the Joint Medical Stores of the Christian Medical Bureau, from multilateral or bilateral donor programmes, or entered the country as contraband (1991: 131-132). They were however dispersed at different stages of the commercial chain due to breakdown of the supervisory capacity.

Traditional medicine, which also flourished (Obbo 1996) was, on the other hand, met with greater understanding, and the government made sporadic attempts to incorporate this diverse field of provision into the national health system. There was no rivalry as such between practitioners of traditional and regulated modern medicine; more so between traditional practitioners and extralegal skilled or untrained medical workers who set up clinics in rural areas, especially since both categories combined traditional and modern methods of treatment and targeted similar constituencies. Traditional healers had formed an association, Uganda n’Eddagala Lyayo, in the early 1980s, but it appears to have suffered from infighting and inefficiency (Iliffe 1998: 164-165).

The above examples have sought to illustrate how state capacity eroded and how different sections of Ugandan society and external forces responded to this gradually evolving informal privatisation. It is important to note, first, that these different responses had separate historical roots and operated on different levels and scales, and, second, that although they were connected,
they were so by default rather than by design. Some reflections on this will be offered here as a basis for the next section.

The contours of different civil society groups and the demands they make are best understood with reference to their history and the context they operate in. The common denominator for the different health providers discussed above (and for most expressions of civil society in Uganda at the time) is that they emerged as coping strategies that sought to escape from the militarised and, in terms of welfare, incapacitated state, rather than as interest groups seeking to impose their demands on it. Most civil society organisations were also severely weakened during the years of turmoil. Or in other words, the main tendency of state-civil society relations from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s was the weakening of both state and civil society and the disengagement by the latter from the former, as opposed to the expansion of both under capitalist growth. This shall be understood not as distinct shift but as a tendency with undercurrents.

Linkages remained between the state, providers and citizens, and these linkages were instrumental in shaping the reconfiguration of institutions for welfare provision. These institutions consisted of a plurality of health regimes, which combined formal and informal modes of regulation in rather fluid ways. Medical workers’ income from private practices subsidised and sustained their public sector work, albeit at low-intensive levels. Hence, conditions for public health care were transformed by parallel health regimes that had been created by coping strategies. These features impacted on the capacity of civil society groups to engage the state even after relative security was established in the central and southern parts of the country after 1986. It also had implications for the inclination and capacity of the state to regulate them, and for the different means chosen for doing so.
As the above description has made it clear, lack of resources undercut regulatory capacity. Systematic policy formulation and implementation were replaced by ad hoc declarations that were only erratically enforced. Deepening informalisation of public health resulted in straddling between formal and informal modes of provision within a policy vacuum. The rather different character of various forms of non-state provision presented shifting challenges for regulation. Not only did fragmentation and institutionalised informalisation undercut the regulatory capacity of the state, it also complicated the possibilities for collective action and bargaining for civil society organisations. Unsurprisingly, these patterns remained pervasive for some time after 1986.

**Strategies and responses in the late 1980s**

What strategies were chosen by the NRM to respond to the crisis of the health system? During the first half of the 1980s, health policy had been aimed at institutional rehabilitation, supplemented by the introduction of primary health care (PHC) in line with the WHO guidelines as spelt out at the 1978 Alma Ata meeting. These two strands of policy were the outcome of a compromise between priorities as envisaged by politicians and technocrats during the interregnum regimes of 1979-80 (Iliffe 1998: 151). PHC was declared the foundation for the national health strategy in the early 1980s; however, lack of resources and institutional decay in the context of the civil war meant that none of these priorities could be met during the first half of the 1980s, in spite of the available foreign aid. Importantly, the policy shift towards PHC, albeit merely rhetorical, opened the doors for donor funded vertical programmes, something that continued to shape formal health provision structures well into the 1990s.
In 1987, a Health Policy Review Commission was appointed. The commission came up with the proposal of returning to the standards of the 1960s by drastically increasing public expenditure and reintroducing user fees, among other things. Rehabilitation would be supplemented by expansion of primary health care, hence retaining the policy direction of earlier governments. The rehabilitation plan would come at an estimated cost of $203 million. Given the lack of resources, most observers, including UNICEF, had recommended that the government needed to choose between these aims (Macrae et al 1998: 1098). As a result of weak coordinating capacity in the Ministry of Health and the low priority given to the sector, it was not until 1991 that the recommendations of the commission were turned into policy (Okuonzi and Macrae 1995: 126).

Meanwhile, health services continued to be provided, although in a policy vacuum. The programme for restored primary health care was slowly and unevenly implemented. To a large extent it consisted of vertical national programmes, which did not necessarily support the reconstruction of a rehabilitated infrastructure for community health care. Multilateral and bilateral donors responded to requests from the new government and reactivated existing programmes or set up new ones.

In view of the weak capacity of the state, most donors sought to bypass it with vertical programmes or projects and in the process created still more parallel structures. Some of the main programmes, such as the – twice revived since the early 1970s – UNEPI (Uganda National Expanded Programme on Immunisation) and the Essential Drugs Management Programme, and the newly established World Bank First Health Project, were set up as distinct bodies and projects managed by separate units within the Ministry of Health (de Torrenté and Mwesigye 1999: 11-12). Much as the services that these programmes provided were desperately needed, the combined systemic effects of the relative dominance of vertical programmes, carrying only weak links to
formal statutory structures, were to reinforce fragmentation and donor dependence. That is, while rehabilitation aims were met to some degree, these programmes “did not provide the basis for a functioning health system” (Macrae et al 1996: 1100).

The fact that the government opted for policies which could be predicted to promote institutional rehabilitation as opposed to create foundations for primary health care is explained by Macrae et al with reference to the political capital invested in symbolic normalisation and visible restoration (Macrae et al 1996: 1100). In addition, the government was dependent on all external resources that were offered, especially the low priority given to social sector rehabilitation. On their part, donors were keen to assist with resources to meet vast needs, without attaching conditionalities for their use.

When the recommendations from the Health Policy Review Commission finally turned into the National Health Plan in 1991, the plan was rejected by key donors, and in particular the World Bank, for exceeding available resources. In its place, the government, under the influence of donors, presented a more austere three-year health plan in 1992. While the 1991 National Health Plan elaborated ambitious objectives for expanding and reorganising services over the following decade, the revised version consisted of a minimal package that centred on consolidating rather than expanding services, and on reorienting the system towards PHC (Okuonzi and Macrae 1995: 126-127). World Bank supervision in revising the plan was, according to Okuonzi and Macrae (1995: 127), the starting point for the Bank’s leading role in shaping Uganda’s health policy. It may be suggested that the government took the opportunity to abandon a state interventionist programme, especially since donors seemed prepared to fund the health sector.

A central feature of state reform, which affected the health sector, was the thoroughgoing civil service reform, initiated in 1990. The aim was to rationalise the sector so as to improve
performance. Totally, the civil service was reduced from 320,000 in 1992 to 160,000 in 1995 (Robinson 2006: 16). Central line ministries were to be reduced to “a core of planners, policy makers, advisors and inspectors” (Okuonzi and Lubanga 1995: 9). Retrenchment went hand in hand with a rise in salaries. Nevertheless, low remuneration remained a major problem (Okuonzi and Lubanga 1995: 9). No exact figures exist with regard to health, but there is no reason to believe that the changes were less than dramatic. Investigations had revealed that more than 2,000 ghost workers were on the payrolls of the Ministry of Health (Iliffe 1998: 159).

In spite of the intentions of the reforms, working conditions of medical workers remained poor. The Uganda Medical Association approached the President in the late 1980s with a list of complaints about low pay – the real value of an intern’s salary in 1987 equalled $ 4.80 a month (Iliffe: 1998: 166) – and lack of housing, transport facilities and working conditions broadly. Nurses and interns went on strike in Jinja in 1989 and in Mulago in 1990. The government’s response was lukewarm, probably because the bargaining position of medical workers was very weak, reinforced by their tendency to use the exit responses to problems. Such exit strategies included the setting up of legal or extra-legal practices, demanding under-the-table payments from patients or going into exile. Hence, the state could rely on creeping privatisation as a strategy to channel the frustration of medical workers.

The very limited resource base thus blocked the rehabilitation of state institutions. The state relied on assistance from international NGOs, bilateral donors and the UN system for resources. Even though, as Brett (1996: 336) shows, health and education expenditures increased in both absolute and proportional terms after 1989, this was insufficient for reversing developments. In recognition of increased inequality, the World Bank in 1990 initiated the Programme to Alleviate Poverty and
the Social Costs of Adjustments (PAPSCA), without either much resources or impact.

Health workers’ low salaries led to informal charges. With the stated aim to curb this tendency, or perhaps more correctly adapting policy to reality, the National Task Force for Health Financing recommended the introduction of user charges. In 1990, a Bill was tabled in Parliament, but the proposal was met with stiff resistance, not least from the President, and was thrown out. Nevertheless, a legal loophole enabled district authorities to raise user charges if they found it necessary to do so, meaning that national formal policy and local practices again diverged.

Domestic political forces did not decide the issue, however. In 1992, the World Bank resolved the standoff by attaching user charges as conditionality for the release of a new loan (Okuonzi and Macrae 1996: 128).

To conclude this section, the main determinants of state-society relations in health during this period were the legacies of informalisation and fragmentation of rather different health regimes as a consequence of civil war and state decay. Or more precisely: as a result of immediate challenges to state authority in the context of structural constraints imposed by lack of resources as well as physical and institutional capacity, the government made security and economic stabilisation its priorities. The state lacked sufficient resources and capacity to enforce regulations or to set up new institutional frameworks or policies. Most expressions of civil society, or of public demands more broadly, were politically weak. To an extent, informal structures functioned as social safety nets. Loyalty or exit options where far more common than voice strategies (Hirschman 1970). Given these constraints, the health sector was shaped by its specific institutional legacy of fragmented health provision systems.

Locally, RCs were given responsibility for some aspects of local service delivery, such as the building of health units. They were on the whole not, however, incorporated into donor
programmes (Macrae et al 1996: 1100). The trajectory of informal privatisation shaped both state and civil society and reinforced the disconnection between them. Domestic civil society groups had typically emerged as responses to state collapse, as opposed to being expressions of political struggles, something which of course shaped the parameters of their response. Furthermore, there were vast unregulated fields of informal welfare regimes. This shaped both liberalisation and control efforts: economic liberalisation was used as a strategy to adapt to the very structures of informal privatisation that continued to undercut control efforts.

Formal privatisation attempted to address some consequences of informal privatisation, but this was by its very nature complicated by the interpenetration of formal and informal modes of provisioning. The state aspired to reclaim control over these providers by balancing its aims of extended privatisation of services and preserved political control. This also sought to ensure support among the population through the political legitimacy that is invested in capacity to directly or indirectly meet demands for services. The reshaping of state-civil society relations generated new sources for the creation of state legitimacy. In order to rein in groups in civil society, legal and administrative means of supervision were employed, such as the 1989 NGO Registration Act and the introduction of a National Board of NGOs.

With regard to welfare provision, however, the NGOs and CBOs that had proliferated in the new context of relatively relaxed control were not disturbed as long as they remained politically loyal to the new government. Effective government control over (especially foreign) non-governmental actors, and even more so, over informal health systems, was uneven. It proved very difficult for the state to regulate the many forms of informal exit strategies, something which reinforced the fragmented landscape of fluid and very often informal
welfare regimes. This underlines the shortcomings in terms of institutional incoherence and resulting problems of efficiency, quality, access and sustainability of services.

**Conclusions: State formation until the early 1990s**

One immediate observation that follows from this account concerns the uneven and unstable nature of this political project. Given the depth and complexity of the crisis, this is hardly surprising. The NRM came to power with a very limited political base and inherited a state with only rudimentary institutional structures and a minimal resource base. Internationally the new government was received with suspicion. It was thus equipped with rather limited means to sustain legitimacy and control.

The uneven process of consolidation stemmed from the very different challenges to the state in different regions and the uneven inclination and capacity by the state to meet these. This followed both from the balance of power among social forces seeking accommodation, recognition or protection in the new political order and from the institutional incoherence of the state. Hence, the question to which extent the new government managed to root the state in society needs to be disaggregated with regard to differences among state organs and is linked to the question of how competing social forces managed to root themselves in the different apparatuses of the state. Another aspect of the uncertainty that marked this period was that many institutions and arrangements, including the informal agreement on what was stated to be a temporary ban on party-political activities, were proclaimed to be transitory, awaiting the writing of the new constitution.

For the purpose of consolidating its hold on power, the NRM had to broaden its political base by incorporating other sections of the political elite. The negotiations and concessions necessarily involved reproduction of political conflicts inside the state. In
the case of economic reform. This resulted in rapid pendulum swings, which in a broader perspective were reflective of a lack of direction, due to a deadlock between contradictory interests.

The chief means by which NRM countered the political ambitions of competing elites was to stifle them at the national level by placing a ban on party-political activities and to by-pass them in rural areas by building political institutions at the local level. During these early years, RCs were the real innovation with regard to the form and content of the state, but RCs too were characterised by instability. Their effective democratic content was circumvented by restrictions on political freedoms, and defined by the local balance of forces entering into them.

In order to balance strategies for accumulation and legitimation, the government undertook different measures. However, instruments such as military coercion and political concessions were occasionally difficult to reconcile and contributed to deepened institutional incoherence and regional cleavages. While it is correct to say that this period saw the state regain some of its relevance and a degree of purpose and coherence to its activities in the south and the west, and that improved security and political incorporation were the main assets in this process, coercion, exclusion and the lack of security was the main experience and the defining feature of state-society relations in the north.

The conclusion that state formation is a contradictory process with undercurrents and unintended consequences may seem self-evident. Nevertheless, it is fundamental to understand that state formation in Uganda since 1986 has been characterised by regional and institutional disconnections at different levels, which appear to reproduce rather than to overcome the historical trajectory of underdevelopment and regional conflicts. Many issues remained in the balance in the early 1990s. The next chapter discusses the relative stabilisation of these fragile processes and the consolidation of state power that characterised the mid- and late 1990s Uganda.
State and Civil Society since the Early 1990s: Consolidating the “Governance State”

Recently, the Ugandan showcase model of transformation under the NRM government (as presented by e.g. Brett (1998); Nsibambi (1998b); Collier and Reinikka (2001); Villadsen and Lubanga (1996)) has been challenged by a more critical interpretation of current Ugandan politics. According to the latter perspective, the incumbent government initially brought about successful change, but its performance then declined, and contemporary politics has relapsed into being no less patronage ridden than under earlier governments (Barkan 2005; Robinson 2006; Tripp 2004).

While the critical literature identifies certain problematic aspects of Uganda’s politics, and by and large offers a valid description of recent changes, it fails to explain the sources of
these changes. For instance, it too neatly demarcates subsequent phases of “success” and “decline” and links these phases primarily to the will of political leaders (and more precisely President Museveni) to reform and the lack of such will, respectively.

In order to explain the sources of change, I propose that while dramatic manifestations of political authoritarianism are more recent, its causes can be traced to the political economy of the earlier years of the NRM in power and to the way dominant political coalitions shaped the state. Continuity and change with regard to state-society relations have coexisted all along, and they continue to be highly unevenly articulated with regions and state institutions. Economic liberalisation has indeed transformed Uganda’s political economy, but in ways mediated by the specific Ugandan context and not necessarily as described in the “success story” literature. It is therefore important to analyse the interplay between continuity and change and between democratisation and authoritarianism, as manifested in the state.

The underlying argument of the proposition offered above is straightforward. As has been argued throughout this book, all capitalist states are formed within some given constraints of inherited contradictions of capitalist development and by the competing political forces and the demands these contradictions generate. In their attempts to accommodate and balance requirements of resource extraction and political control, ruling groups combine coercion and consent.

Clean breaks with the past or “fundamental changes”, as has been suggested with reference to the case of post-1986 Uganda, are rare indeed. The partial changes that do occur are rooted in and limited by historical trajectories. In order to bring out strands of continuity and change with regard to authoritarian and democratic politics, this chapter the contradictions underlying the reconstruction of the Ugandan state from the early 1990s.
Such contradictory features have been manifest also in the health sector. While Uganda has been hailed internationally as a role model in fighting HIV/AIDS, most other basic health indicators, such as high maternal and infant mortality rates, point in other directions and suggest that the health system suffers from enormous challenges and shortcomings, many of which have deep roots.

The present day problems within the health sector range from factors at the macro level, including unclear and shifting policies and bureaucratic management, to more context-bound effects, such as inconsistent implementation, and the shortage of medication, equipment and staff. General problems in health centres and hospitals include absenteeism, moonlighting and brain drain, both to abroad and to other sectors (Brett 1996; de Torrenté and Mwesigye 1999; Iliffe 1998).

In this chapter, I examine the character of welfare and health regimes as these have evolved since the early 1990s. This is undertaken in tandem with a critical of the overall development of the state, and I discuss the role of health and welfare in rendering stability and creating legitimacy to the Ugandan state. The first two sections offer an overview of the general changes in state-civil society relations and public sector and health sector reforms, respectively, including the role of donors in shaping the state. Following on, the third and fourth sections interrogate the case studies of two health regimes, in terms of state-civil society relations in the health sector through the examples of the medical workers union and NGO oriented incorporation into “participatory” poverty reduction policy processes.

I conclude that while formal openings for participation have been created, those political spaces were in the process depoliticised and detached from issues of influence and power in the case of NGOs – or not utilised because of weakened bargaining power in the case of Uganda Medical Workers Union.
(UMWU). The weakness of democratic forces at the level of civil society politics also contributes to explaining the prevalence and expansion of ruling class excesses in terms of corruption and repression, and illustrates the continuity of authoritarianism.

**Formation of state and civil society from the early 1990s**

For the purpose of interrogating the issues of how external and internal political forces have tried to shape the state, this section will explore important changes that have shaped state and civil society from the early 1990s and in what ways these changes were rooted in history. To what extent did the changes impact on the prospects for democratising the state?

The following two sections argue that the broad tendencies of state formation during this period are best captured by notions of consolidation, expansion and restructuring. I will discuss these tendencies through an overview of recent political change that runs from the politics of constitution making and the consolidation of Movement structures, over state reform and privatisation to emergent contradictions of the current development model and challenges to the NRM state.

**Constitutional politics**

Already during the bush war, the NRM asserted its intentions to write a new constitution once in power. In 1989, the Uganda Constitutional Commission (UCC) began its work but it did not submit its report and a draft constitution until late 1992 (Amaza 1998: 174-175). The most contentious stance of the report and the draft, and one that would shape political debate in Uganda over the following decade, was the recommendation by the UCC that Uganda should continue with a “movement” political system as distinct from both a one-party or a multiparty one. This recommendation had followed upon the president’s clearly stated wish to ban political parties permanently with
the argument that parties inevitably exacerbated sectarian divisions in a pre-capitalist society and hence created destructive instability (Khadiagala 1995: 40).

The movement system was conceptualised as one in which political participation would be ensured through representation based on what was called individual merit within an overall system of unity and accommodation. According to the UCC proposal, the system would operate for five years, after which the question of political system would be subject to a referendum (Oloka-Onyango 2000: 47). Unsurprisingly, this proposal encountered strong resistance from DP and UPC, who saw it as a contravention of the earlier agreement to limit the restrictions to political party activities to a transition period.

For that and other reasons, mainly the connected issues of federalism vs decentralisation, land, and the role of traditional rulers in the wake of the 1993 restoration of the Buganda kingship, the 1994 elections to the Constituent Assembly (CA) that was to debate the proposal, became intensely politicised – “[e]thnic, religious, regional and party factors combined to make the CA elections a referendum to some degree on the NRM government” (Kasfir 1995: 150).

Whereas delegates were formally elected to the CA on an individual basis, the combination of the above identities, and mainly party vs Movement affiliation, implicitly underwrote their campaigns. The contentious issues came to dominate the CA debates in ways shaped by political loyalty to either camp (Oloka-Onyango 2000: 45-53). The result of the CA debates as included in the 1995 Constitution were to reinforce the UCC proposals, which also happened to be the positions taken by the government – namely to constitutionally safeguard the movement

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9 Federalism and decentralisation are evidently logically compatible forms of devolution. The contentious issue revolved around Buganda’s specific demand for a federal status which would also involve a more pronounced political role for the kingdom.
system for a period of five years after which a referendum would take place to choose between decentralisation over federalism as a model for deconcentrating the political system.

A significant observation is that the victory for the government line on these fundamental points resulted in a political turning point: the decisive consolidation of NRM control over state power and the political arena at large, something which was further reinforced by the 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections, in which president Museveni and candidates associated with the NRM won by large margins. Donors endorsed the constitutional change and electoral victory of NRM, and thus confirmed the Movement hegemony, political parties were contained and most civil society organisations chose to adapt to the prevailing order. These major political achievements signified a high point of convergence between successful legitimation and control for the NRM government.

At the same time, consolidated control had come at the cost of cracking political coalitions. The legal establishment of the Movement system had in the process revealed the growing disjuncture between its theory and its practice – “the CA deliberations and outcome were the last nail in the coffin of ‘broad-basedness’ which was ostensibly the fundamental criterion on which the NRM had been constructed” (Oloka-Onyango 2000: 52).

Not only had the multipartyist resistance pointed to the limits to consensual accommodation, opposition to the Movement line among a number of important NRM insiders but had also revealed emergent conflicts within the NRM itself, conflicts that would result in deep splits and eventually in the formation of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party a decade later. And as the NRM was closely interwoven with state structures, such political conflicts would throughout the period of no-party politics be played out as conflicts within the state. With hindsight, sharpened political conflicts in the aftermath of the
constitution making process can be said to have foreboded the increasing use of control and coercion, at the expense of waning consent. Political consolidation also interplayed with changes in economic and institutional reforms, to which we now turn.

**Economic liberalisation and state reform**

Contrary to countries such as Kenya, where the main aim of adjustment programmes was to dismantle the role and resources of the state, Uganda, along with a few other cases such as Ghana (Hutchful 2002), experienced the simultaneous moves towards economic liberalisation and a growing scope for a reconstructed state.

This observation immediately calls for qualifications, as the Ugandan state was and remains extremely dependent on external revenue for its existence and consequently found itself operating within the fairly narrow restrictions for macro-economic policy set by the IFIs. Nevertheless, the means exercised by the latter in enforcing their aims in Uganda gradually came to centre on incentives and rewards rather than on strict conditionalities and punishment (Harrison 2004). This was mutually reinforcing: the more Uganda lived up to donors’ expectations, the greater the rewards in terms of financial and ideological support – and consequently the greater the scope for domestic political control.

What explains the scope for state reconstruction? One reason was that the Ugandan state was so run down by decades of destabilisation and informalisation that it was obvious already from the late 1980s that it needed to be rebuilt. Another reason suggested above was Uganda’s relatively successful macro-economic performance. Uganda’s strict adherence to the adjustment agenda, particularly from the early 1990s, made donors place trust in the government’s inclination and capacity for reform. This coincided with a gradual shift in emphasis in the international development orthodoxy towards a greater reliance
on a relatively downsized and reconstructed state, capable of promoting capitalist development by creating an enabling environment through enhanced institutional stability.

In the words of Brock et al (2002), “policy communities” emerged around a common ideology and shared interests among key donors, political leaders and top technocrats in core ministries. Still another way to say this is that vertical constellations of political forces straddled external-internal divides as important aspects of Uganda’s state formation were incorporated into a “transnational state” in the making (Robinson 2004). This occurred through discursive affinity, governance methods and techniques and donor-funded expatriate advisory personnel in the state (Harrison 2004: 89-90).

This mutual accommodation between donors and the Ugandan state evolved over time. As shown in Chapter 3, it was not until the early 1990s that the pro-liberalisers in the government got the upper hand in the internal NRM struggle over reform directions. From then on neo-liberal orthodoxy reigned supreme among the top cadre within the powerful Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED), a super ministry created in 1992 after the sacking of a Minister of Finance that was hostile to the collaboration with the IFIs. Another ministry that towered above the rest thanks to its allotted coordinating role during the early days of institutional reforms was the restructured Ministry of Public Service (MoPS) (Harrison 2004: 85-87). Together, the two ministries bore the operative responsibility for the restructuring of the state.

One of the first major administrative reforms to be carried out was the Civil Service Reform Programme in 1990, the aims of which were to drastically restructure the civil service. The main components of the programme, at that stage closely linked to the adjustment logic, included the downsizing of ministries and retrenchment of staff, primarily of “ghost workers”, and
included donor funded redundancy packages. Other aspects that came to the fore during later phases of the programme included personnel management and pay reform (Kjær 2001: 15).

The reform programme had the strong backing of the president and could therefore be rapidly implemented with the result that the size of the bureaucracy was reduced dramatically. During the same time, the military was downsized from 90,000 to 50,000 in a demobilisation programme (Robinson 2006: 16). Retrenchment met only limited resistance, much due to donor funded redundancy packages (Brett 1995) and the fact that most civil servants had already developed coping strategies during previous decades.

Success as measured in relation to the stated aims helped to earn the Uganda government the status of a good adjuster (Harrison 2004: 85). It was amply rewarded. From the late 1980s until 1996, foreign development aid averaged $500 million annually and $800 million after 1996. Donors and creditors have for years contributed a vast percentage of the state budget: around 50 per cent, or roughly 10 per cent of GDP, and 80 per cent of development expenditures throughout the 1990s (Tangri and Mwenda 2006: 122, notes 4 and 5). The fiscal basis of the state was radically transformed.

After having downsized the central bureaucracy, the government embarked upon a decentralisation programme, which gradually re-expanded the size and cost of public administration. Several factors shaped decentralisation reforms, including the introduction of Resistance Councils during the guerrilla war. The legislative framework for decentralisation was provided by the Local Government Statute of 1993, the 1995 Constitution and the Local Government Act of 1997, which converted RCs into LCs.
Apart from wishing to restore state capacity, another dimension of this shift was more directly political, as the NRM leaders were known not to have trusted the political inclination of inherited civil servants and were happy to replace these with more reliable cadre in the local state (Kjær 2001: 138-139), functionaries who could furthermore anchor the NRM among local communities. Both civil service and decentralisation reforms were policy arenas where donor and government interests coincided.

The inflow of development aid contributed to rapid economic growth from the early 1990s. Annual growth rates averaged 7.4 per cent between 1994 and 1998 (Harrison 2004: 75) and were combined with one-digit inflation rates. International investment added to economic expansion. Asian industrialists and business people, expelled by Amin, were asked to come back, and their confiscated properties were returned to them. A boom in coffee prices during the mid-1990s contributed to rising real income and falling poverty numbers throughout the 1990s. Together, all of this added to real improvement among a large section of the population in central and western Uganda, something that was translated into political support for the NRM.

One aspect of economic reforms that contributed to the opposite, meaning undercutting support for the NRM, was the privatisation programme, initiated in the early 1990s but not fully operating until a few years later – that is, when the NRM had already secured a higher degree of political control and insulation from opposition politics. By and large, privatisation of parastatals was manipulated by and for an emerging section of the ruling class with political connections, and it seriously tainted the reputation of the government (Tangri and Mwenda 2001; World Bank 1998). When discontent over this was linked to other grievances, latent political conflicts were set in motion.
The NRM state consolidated and challenged

The Movement system was promulgated into law with the contentious 1997 Movement Act, the details of which made it very difficult to separate the Movement from the formal structures of the state, or indeed from the informal structures of the NRM. The state-funded Movement did not only embody monopolised institutional forms for all political activity at every level, but it also incorporated various entities of the state and in society, such as the military, the police, trade unions and private sector bodies (Oloka-Onyango 2000: 56-57). To its critics, the Movement had been turned into a one-party system in all but name (Human Rights Watch 1999).

The constitution had spelt out that the issue of the choice of political systems would after five years be subject to a referendum, due to take place in 2000. This referendum was highly contested and was boycotted by most proponents for the restoration of multiparty politics, not only on the grounds that it was bound to be conducted under unfree and unfair conditions, but also that the referendum, according to the opposition, was fundamentally illegitimate in itself. The referendum, boycotted by the opposition, was held in June 2000 with a low turnout (51 per cent), with the outcome that the Movement system remained in place.

The reinforcement of the Movement corresponded to an increased control over other political forces. After many years of struggles in parliament, the likewise controversial Political Parties and Organisations Act of 2002 effectively restricted all activities normally associated with political parties. Civil society organisations were also subject to tightened control. The 1989 NGO Registration Statute has recently been replaced by the Non-Governmental Organisations Registration (Amendment) Bill, 2006, to the effect that the NGO registration board would include representatives of security organisations. These pieces
of legislation obviously strengthened the Movement system’s formal and the NRM organisation’s real political monopoly. But the fact that they were deemed necessary in the first place pointed to growing resistance and deepening, but for some time contained, cleavages emerging also within the NRM itself.

What did such resistance consist in? In brief, it revolved around related accusations of corruption, political repression and militarism. As was mentioned above, the privatisation process which had gained momentum from the mid-1990s was tainted by scams that involved individuals with their base in politics, the military or business, and all of them with close links to the very inner circles of power, including crucially the president and his family. The fact that action was rarely taken against high level corruption even when this was clearly documented bred allegations of nepotism and impunity (Tangri and Mwenda 2006).

The corrupt practices on behalf of networks within the politics, military and business nexus alluded to above were deeply entrenched in commercial activities that related to the military, including influence peddling in procurement processes, the creation of “ghost soldiers” and the plundering of gold and other natural resources in the DRC; the latter was also linked to complicity in grave human rights abuses. The interventions of UPDF in DRC was also highly contested in itself (Human Rights Watch 2001b; Nganda and Tumusiime 2005; Tangri and Mwenda 2003; United Nations 2002).

To critics, such manifestations of primitive accumulation not only confirmed that the military still played an uttermost important role in Uganda’s politics but also that accumulation of economic wealth and political power were closely linked. In this light, restrictions on political freedoms and the entrenchment of authoritarianism were seen as means of containing resistance to both corruption and militarism. Due to shrinking political space,
resistance was only sporadically voiced and did not result in any major organised opposition throughout the 1990s.

The decisive change came with the challenge by Kizza Besigye to president Museveni in the 2001 presidential elections. For the first time, Museveni was challenged by an insider who shared his most important power bases – the NRM, the military and the southwestern region – and who represented growing discontent among these bases. The strong support for Besigye caught the government by surprise and shock, and it responded with coercion.

The 2001 elections were the most violent in Uganda’s history. Opposition candidates were intimidated and beaten up by the military and (extra-)constitutional security organs; some were even killed. Besigye appealed against the election result, and the Supreme Court ruled that while the elections had not been free and fair, there had not been sufficient rigging to significantly affect the outcome. Besigye left for exile in South Africa, but violent persecution of political opponents accelerated (Human Rights Watch 2004a).

The government’s coercive response needs to be understood in a context where sufficient political loyalty could no longer be cultivated or maintained. Nevertheless, both the 2000 referendum and the 2001 elections made it clear that the Movement system had outlived its usefulness for purposes of containing political dissent. It became increasingly difficult to accommodate the political contradictions that emerged from the specific model of donor driven capitalist development resting on economic liberalisation and political repression.

In order to pre-empt a real rift within the NRM and the military, the government in March 2003 decided to open up for political pluralism in implicit exchange for a change in the constitution to the effect that presidential term limits would be abolished so as to allow Museveni to run for the presidency
again. Another aspect of the government’s change of mind was its need to reinvent its legitimacy vis-à-vis donors, who showed clear signs of running out of patience. Political liberalisation was therefore essentially a strategy for reconsolidating political control.

The period between 2003 and the 2006 presidential and parliamentary elections were marked by a rather bitterly contested and narrow political transition process to multi-party politics, marred by violence. Opposition politicians and supporters were frequently harassed. During the same time, a change occurred in the relations between Uganda and important donors, some of whom now publicly voiced their concern and occasionally froze or cut levels of development aid.

Corruption and rising levels of administrative public expenditure was one concern and human rights violations was another. Also, the northern war – unlike before – was consistently discussed as a national and regional problem by both domestic and international actors. NRM’s and Museveni’s international reputation deteriorated dramatically, but as yet, donors appeared to remain committed to Uganda. Besigye returned to Uganda in October 2005 in order to be elected party leader for FDC, only to be arrested and charged with treason and rape a few weeks later.

The February 2006 elections resembled the preceding ones in that president Museveni and the NRM emerged victorious amid accusations of rigging. Again, responding to the opposition’s appeal of the Electoral Commission’s verdict, the Supreme Court ruled that elections were not free and fair. However, although not unfair to the extent that the outcome was significantly affected. In 2011, Museveni and the NRM won again, this time by wider margins. The NRM continues to rule Uganda, but it now presides over deep structural problems, including stagnating agricultural and industrial production. It remains to be seen how
the configuration of economic and political contradictions will affect the conditions for future reproduction of state capacity and legitimation.

**State and health sector reforms from the early 1990s**
The effects of civil service reforms on the health sector were discussed in Chapter 3. The Ministry of Public Service coordinated and executed a restructuring of the Ministry of Health that involved the retrenchment of a great number of employees. The emphasis on downsizing and cost-cutting was very much an integral part of the adjustment logic of the late 1980s. In 1997, a second Public Service Reform Programme commenced with a focus on Results Oriented Management. It contained grand intentions to restructure the institutional set-up of the public sector through the introduction of “more than 100 proposed autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies”. It seems, however, that these plans never really took off (Harrison 2004: 86; Therkildsen 2006: 65).

Privatisation and decentralisation are in their programmatic variants components of the New Public Management agenda with its emphasis on management decentralisation and the introduction of market mechanisms in the public sector, such as results oriented management and outsourcing of service delivery. These technical models are underpinned by a broader reformulation of the role of the state.

The concluding recommendations of the revised 1993 National Health Plan were that the state’s role in the health sector should be redefined from provider to policy maker and supervisor of various private providers, and to the extent that the state did provide services, it ought to concentrate on preventive care (Okuonzi and Macrae 1995). As should be clear from previous chapters, however, privatisation in the health sector was neither only nor straightforwardly imposed by donor or government
policy. It was an incremental and informal process with multiple roots and manifestations.

Deliberate and designed privatisation was just as much an adaptation to the reality of longstanding informal privatisation as it was a distinct expression of certain policy preferences. Formal privatisation in the health sector thus took on many forms, from the recognition of different kinds of private providers, over outsourcing of public agencies and activities to specific reforms such as the introduction of user charges, as described in chapter 3. We shall return to the issue of private providers below.

Decentralisation of health services began in earnest in 1993 as a component of the overall decentralisation programme. Both the general institutional framework of the state and different policy sectors have been decentralised with reference to fairly typical justifications, such as bringing government closer to the people, and improving accountability and efficiency in service provision, or phrased as “improved service delivery … more efficient and effective … performance-based … responsive … [and] … transparent” by the Ministry of Public Service in 1993 as quoted in Therkildsen (2006: 56). Just as with privatisation, decentralisation reforms have multiple roots in the Ugandan political economy, with consequences that go far beyond the stated intentions of reforms, as will be discussed in chapter 5.

As political decentralisation of the RC system merged with administrative decentralisation from 1993 and did so in a broader context where political consensus started to give way to polarisation over the issues of pluralism, the identity of local governments gradually changed from an early official emphasis on popular democracy to more typical references to improved service delivery.

Administrative decentralisation transferred power over decision making, including budgets, to local governments. As the role of central government ministries was at the same time
transformed to a function of policy development and supervision as discussed above, the main responsibility for planning and executing service delivery shifted from ministries to local governments. Districts and sub-counties were in turn given responsibilities to collect and, to some extent, utilise revenue (Jeppsson 2002: 2054-2055).

Just as with many other institutional reforms carried out in Uganda during the 1990s, decentralisation soon displayed contradictions between policy and reality and was subject to change (Jeppsson and Kisubi 2001). A fundamental problem proved to be the not uncommon mismatch between authority and resources. For most districts, local revenue was very modest indeed. Following the need to supplement local resources and the ambition to counter possible inequalities between central and peripheral districts, the pendulum swung back from an experiment with fiscal decentralisation towards a greater degree of conditional grants from the central government (Francis and James 2003: 327, 334).

Yet another reform aimed at bringing the central government back and superseded the vision of far-reaching decentralisation. As the idea that development aid should be coordinated and channelled through the central government gained in strength among donors during the late 1990s, codified in the so called “Paris Agenda”, financial aid increasingly came by way of direct budget support, or “basket funding”. The thrust of this reasoning was to bypass the fragmentary effects of project support and instead via a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) strengthen central government capacities for budget control and for sector policy formulation and in extension also its political “ownership”.

SWAp was introduced in Uganda’s health sector in 1998. It soon gained momentum and strengthened the role of the Ministry of Health and the central government in general vis-à-vis both local governments and NGOs (Jeppsson 2002: 2055-
2056). This process was in turn linked to the advent of Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS), which will be addressed below.

**Health regimes: State-civil society relations in the health sector**

How did the state attempt to root itself in society with regard to health policy making? How did various interest groups seek to link up with the state? To what extent did they create access to the state and scope for shaping its capacity through policy choices and political regulation of interest representation? This section the cases of Uganda Medical Workers Union (UMWU) and NGO participation in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), in that order. The experiences are situated within the contexts of state-labour and state-NGO relations. It needs to be recalled that these examples are only two of a great many state-(civil) society relations in the health sector. Other health regimes, particularly in remote areas, are as indicated not primarily regulated by the state but by economic and cultural relations.

**State-labour relations**

In this section I address the constitutive features of state-labour relations in Uganda, historically and under the present NRM government. The trade union movement in Uganda has historically been comparatively weak. The relative lack of impact by the Ugandan labour movement has been explained with reference to limited industrialisation and a numerically small working class, internal shortcomings of labour organisations and the general features of state control over autonomous interest groups introduced by the colonial government and taken over by post-colonial legislation (Mamdani 1994).

Trade unions were subject to supervision and regulation and largely failed to resist these arrangements. Colonial legislation served the purpose of nipping any potential radical politicisation of unionism in the bud. Correspondingly, the colonial state

Another aspect that weakened the labour movement was the strong localist and traditionalist tendencies that fragmented the nationalist movement. Ethnic and religious bases of politicisation overtook other forms of social mobilisation. As we have seen, central-local struggles continued unabated after independence. Much political mobilisation outside ethnic and religious organisations tended to feed into the latter due to their perceived clout. This tendency divided trade unions along ethnic and religious lines (Mudoola 1993: 61). Divisions were further encouraged and manipulated by factions within the UPC government after independence:

   tensions within the ruling party spilled over into the trade union movement and vice versa and as a result a socio-political force which could have sustained constitutionalism became a victim of party-political considerations and factional politics (Mudoola 1993: 61).

These conflicts were further deepened by trade unions’ dependence on outside financial support and subsequent factional East-West affiliations during the cold war (Barya 1991: 41-43).

Seeking to contain workers’ militancy and the alliance between the radical Uganda Federation of Labour (UFL) and the left wing of UPC and its Youth League in the context of mounting political tensions, the government introduced a new legal framework in the mid-1960s (Barya 1991: 16-17). However splits and mergers continued. The swiftly changing national political landscape sealed the fate of autonomous trade unionism. Following the 1966 crisis and the subsequent concentration of power, parliament passed the 1970 Trade Union Bill, which restricted unionism to the Uganda Labour Congress (ULC), closely controlled by the government (Mudoola 1993: 72).
The Amin government substituted this Act with the 1976 Trade Union Decree and replaced the ULC with the National Organisation of Trade Unions (NOTU) (Barya 1991: 20-24). On paper, this was a more liberal law than the 1970 Trade Union Act, but general political repression and economic collapse made it next to impossible to make use of its openings (Barya 1991: 34-35; Mamdani 1994). The effects of Amin’s “economic war” in the early 1970s, and the expulsion of Asian industrialists dealt a blow to industrial production, the public sector and the entire national economy and, consequently also to the trade union movement. In spite of being undermined by structural changes and internal weaknesses, workers still resisted oppression and divide-and-rule interventions under the Obote II government (Barya 1991: 36-38).

The Uganda trade union movement has experienced hardships during the post-1986 period. Although labour legislation has been liberalised under the NRM government and the ban on all public sector workers to unionise has been lifted, the trade union movement suffers both from its legacy of internal divisions and a weak centre and from the impact of economic liberalisation. The 1993 Trade Union Law and the provisions on workers’ freedom of association in the 1995 Constitution have created legal space for trade union activities, but trade unions have largely been unable to make use of this space. Not only has privatisation and public sector retrenchment weakened unions’ bargaining power through eroded membership and financial basis of NOTU and its affiliated unions. Repression was added to marginalisation.

The government has come out firmly against the unions’ protests in favour of international investors. Workers’ demands are met with reluctance or outright hostility from employers. Formal rights, where these exist, are often neglected in practice by employers (Barya 2001). It may also be suggested that
decentralisation has further hampered the unions’ capacity to organise and bargain.

In line with its general strategy of incorporating interest groups, NRM in 1989 proposed to introduce workers’ representation in parliament, to be recruited from a newly created body. The creation of a new organisation was resisted successfully by NOTU, which sought to preserve its autonomy and unity. Similarly, the government in 1993 attempted to divide workers along blue-collar and white-collar lines; again, this was resisted (Barya 2001: 50).

Workers were granted parliamentary representation, elected from different trade unions within NOTU. Barya (2001: 34-40) discusses the contradictory effects of such representation. On the one hand, workers’ MPs have been able to call attention to workers’ interests and more specifically to counter, at least to some degree, the effects of privatisation and retrenchment, for instance through the Workers’ Compensations Act of 2000.

On the other hand, parliamentary representation lacks, according to Barya, an “organic link with the trade union movement, apart from their individual unions […] Thus, there are no rules as to whom they should report or account, with whom or when and how they should consult” (Barya 2001: 37). In other words, with severed or only weakly institutionalised links to the constituencies they represent, workers’ MPs have been vulnerable to political manipulation and co-optation, particularly in the sixth (1996-2001) and seventh (2001-2006) parliaments when they were torn between the principles of representing the constituency of all workers in Uganda and acting in line with the politics of “individual merit”.

**The case of Uganda Medical Workers Union**

Prior to the 1993 Trade Union Law, public servants were not allowed to organise themselves in unions. “White-collar” employees’ interests were supposed to be channelled through
professional associations. In the health sector, the professional association, the Uganda Medical Association (UMA), was assumed to function as a gatekeeper up- and downward.

While established as a professional association to cater for the interests of its members, it was also expected to regulate the field, broadly according to the wishes of the Ministry of Health. The Minister of Health, for instance, claimed in 1996 that “the medical command structure is like in the army” (New Vision, 15 July 1996). In the context of a fragmented and partly unregulated health system, UMA had little capacity to exercise such a function.

Fragmentation and informalisation of the health system into overlapping fields of provisioning, lack of resources in the public health sector and social change had over a generation drastically undermined the position of medical workers in terms of both income and status; their professional identity was confused when inherited ideals were so very far detached from reality (Iliffe 1998: 165).

Uganda Medical Workers Union was formed in 1992 by a number of doctors and nurses in Entebbe Hospital, as a response to the long-standing decline of working conditions and salaries of medical staff (interview, Apollo Nyangasi, UMWU National Chairman, 25 February 2003). It was registered with the Registrar of Trade Unions in 1994, following the legal opening for public sector unionisation (Barya 2001: 16-20). Nevertheless, public sector unionism was a new concept that initially was not received with much enthusiasm from the Ministry of Health.

After some fruitless efforts to get official recognition and to be heard, the union “saw no other way than going for industrial action” (interview, Apollo Nyangasi, 25 February 2003). Repeated strikes had taken place in different hospitals throughout the country since the late 1980s, but so far only by paramedics,
interns and nurses. Doctors, it was assumed, were above such irregular behaviour.

Strikes in 1994 had led to promises of pay rise, but when the government failed to meet its promises, UMWU called for a strike in September 1995. The strike, which lasted for two weeks and spread all over the country, was declared illegal by the minister of Health, and was finally disrupted by force after intervention by the president (New Vision, 28 September 1995). After patients had died due to the absence of care, public opinion started to turn against the striking workers. Three union leaders were arrested, and others were transferred (Monitor, 25-27 September 1995). Victimisation of activists continued, according to the union (interview, Apollo Nyangasi, 25 February 2003).

Negotiations were promised over the union’s demands for improved working conditions, higher salaries and legal recognition, but none was fully met. The main concession from the government came in form of lunch allowances. A committee drafted an agreement on future negotiations. This report was later shelved (interview, Apollo Nyangasi, 25 February 2003). A legacy of the strike and a reflection of the general government attitude towards labour rights is that the government has still not signed any recognition agreement with the union. The absence of institutional mechanisms for bargaining or for settling of disputes evidently undercuts union sustainability in a fundamental sense – “for each round of negotiations there are ad hoc committees … our asset is mainly threats of industrial action. It’s a set-back” (interview, Apollo Nyangasi, 31 January 2003). Even more seriously, there is the continuous risk that the union can be outlawed.

There have indeed been threats of further strikes, and one was carried out in 1997. The government has mostly managed to negotiate temporary solutions through promises of meeting demands, promises which have never been kept. The absence of
a negotiation machinery takes a lot of time and resources from what should be routine work, such as recruiting members. It has also prevented UMWU from engaging consistently in policy discussions around the public sector reform and reforms of labour law.

Decentralisation has further complicated the union’s work. Out of approximately 10,000 members, only about 4,000 pay their membership fees regularly. In some districts, UMWU has managed to negotiate check-off agreements with district administrations, where employers deduct union fees at source, but this depends to a high degree on the location of the district and on personal relations and leadership skills on both sides (interview, Apollo Nyangasi, 25 February 2005).

The conflict between UMWU and the government also highlights a certain degree of incoherence internal to the state, deliberately utilised or not, as demands for recognition and pay are recognised by one ministry, the Ministry of Health, but blocked by another, the Ministry of Public Service. Just as in the case of many other interest groups, this has caused UMWU to turn directly to President Museveni, something which may be useful as a one-off tactical move but which creates ties of dependence that undermines sustainable strategic achievements.

UMWU’s struggles have not only been fought with the government. It has also been deeply involved in leadership wrangles within NOTU, conflicts that eventually led to the breakaway from NOTU in 2003 by five unions, including UMWU, and to the formation of an alternative national centre, the Confederation of Free Trade Unions in Uganda (COFTU) the following year.

The Secretary General of UMWU, Sam Lyomoki is also the Workers’ MP, and aspired for the leadership of NOTU. Elections were prohibited for a long time following a government ban on trade unions holding general meetings. When elections took place
in October 2003, the circumstances were controversial which then led to the break off from NOTU. The Commissioner for Labour in the Ministry of Labour refused to recognise another trade union centre with reference to the 1976 Trade Union Decree. UMWU claimed that the decree had been overtaken by provisions in the 1995 constitution, filed a petition to the government over the matter and took the Ministry of Labour to court, a court case they won in early 2004. There have been attempts to start a splinter union, Uganda Nurses and Midwives Union, but according to UMWU Nyangasi (interview 17 February 2004), this was a failed attempt by NOTU to block COFTU from taking off.

Rivalry within NOTU and later between the two aspiring trade union centres has to a great extent paralysed the trade union movement and could easily be used by the government in divide-and-rule politics. The fact that Sam Lyomoki is an MP and harbours personal political ambitions cuts both ways for UMWU, pointing to the general problem with workers’ MPs as stressed by Barya (2001). Like all other MPs, Lyomoki found himself dragged into the succession debate after 2003, and like most others, he came out favouring the lifting of term limits. Likewise, Nyangasi in 2005 declared his ambition to stand for parliament in Tororo on an NRM ticket, but lost, something that may have undercut his position in relation to both NRM and medical workers. These examples in turn illustrate the weakness and vulnerability of most trade unions in relation to the government.

**State-NGO relations**

Some reasons for the virtual explosion of NGOs since 1986 were outlined in Chapter 3. The contours of the NGO landscape has both general and specifically Uganda dimensions, relating to the way in which coping strategies are situated within the contexts of economic liberalisation and state reform, as well as to the
strategies to accommodate sections of civil society in order to consolidate political control.

While development NGOs have been warmly welcomed by the NRM government, their operations, whenever these tend to extend their prescribed mandate, are carefully controlled. This reflects the fact that the government badly needs NGOs in the field of social development for service delivery and the indirect legitimacy they bring. Beyond this, however, the government has been rather suspicious of autonomous activities, and has employed a variety of control measures, such as registration and monitoring, co-optation, dissolution, reorganisation and, in some cases, repression and imprisonment. There was more room for manoeuvre in late 1980s and the early 1990s, when the institutional, financial and political state capacity was weaker. As stated in the NGO Registration Statute, NGOs need to register with the NGO Registration Board, and for their continued existence they need to conform to the broad NRM agenda (Dicklich 1998: 98-106).

For many years, a new NGO Bill with proposed new restrictions was debated in parliament. It was seen as a threat to any ambitions for autonomous advocacy. The building of such capacity was seen by many donors as a major political advance during later years of no-party politics (De Coninck 2004: 62-67). The Bill was finally turned into the NGO Registration Act in April 2006 to the effect that NGOs would be vetted by security organs before registration.

The government’s continued reliance on NGOs for welfare provision gave the bigger and wealthier among them a bargaining position vis-à-vis ministries or local governments. Some humanitarian agencies have recently spoken out against the military approach to the northern war. The incorporation of sections of civil society into policy making results in new institutional configurations, sometimes with unintended
consequences. There are different policy processes going on. Before turning to the overarching and emblematic process, the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), I will summarise recent attempts made in creating a coherent framework for various providers in the health sector.

**Integration of private providers**

Attempts at incorporating private providers into the health sector started in 1987 with the recommendations in that direction by the Health Policy Review Commission. The process did not gain momentum until 1996, however, when a health sector NGO panel was appointed for the purposes of establishing means of collaboration between the government and the private sector and reviewing regulations and legislation relating to this (Birungi et al. 2001: 82). Because of the plethora of health regimes and actors, the complicated relations between some of them and the illicit operations of others, integration has proven difficult to achieve.

 Debates around inclusion revolved around definitional issues, such as the meaning of “integration” or “collaboration”, or “public” and “private” (Birungi et al. 2001: 83). Apart from the fact that legitimacy is invested for different actors in the promotion of a certain set of vocabulary at the expense of another, the discussion clearly illustrated how blurred boundaries between private and public still characterise Uganda’s health system.

 A number of actors were left out or were only marginally included into this process. After health care, along with other policy areas, had been decentralised with the 1993 Decentralisation Act, responsibility for implementing policy rested with the districts. In spite of this, district leadership was only marginally consulted. Likewise, representatives of private informal providers were left out, as were representatives of health workers. Under the current institutional framework, the Ministry of Health is responsible for “formulation, co-ordination and implementation of national health policy” (Birungi et al
2001: 84) while the different arms of the district health teams are expected to ensure implementation within the public sector. The private sector by and large remains separate. Hence, several interests are not represented in the policy making process (2001: 84).

The government is supposed to regulate the sector in its entirety. Laws and regulations that concern private sector activity have been updated. Furthermore, professional bills were passed in 1996. Among them are the Uganda Nurses and Midwives Bill and the Allied Health Workers Professional Bill, which established councils that were assigned the task of regulating and supervising professionals. The latter are to be registered with their respective councils and are expected to be members of a professional association. Some of these regulations have been seen as ineffective, poorly enforced and out of touch with the real structures of private health provision (Birungi et al 2001: 84).

The National Drug Authority and its local extensions, the District Drug Inspectors, suffer from low capacity and limited resources and are largely unable to carry out their mandate. Illegal and expired drugs continue to flood the market. Most private practitioners remain unlicensed but enjoy popular acceptance as they provide services that would otherwise not be there at all. Different health regimes continue to co-exist and cut across. When it comes to health, the state largely lacks the capacity to organise and regulate sector policies.

**The Poverty Eradication Action Plan: “Governance corporatism”**  
A more accommodating attitude towards interest groups was expressed during the revision of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), where select civil society groups were included in a consultation process, in line with governance ideals of civil society participation in policy processes. The “policy spaces” (Brock et
or, with another turn of phrase, fora for “governance corporatism” with tripartite configurations of state, donors and certain NGOs, are continuously in the making in different arenas such as PEAP working groups, sector working groups and even consultative group meetings. As opposed to corporatist arrangements in a strict sense, these policy spaces are largely informal and activated and deactivated rather unpredictably.

Without institutionalised structures for bargaining and interest representation, there is little continuity and consistency in government policy making. Priorities between access, quality, equity and sustainability are implemented on a basis of ad hoc intervention. The extent to which participation can be translated into influence on even fairly uncontroversial issues is limited (Brock et al 2002: 41).

As stated above, the discourse emanating from the World Bank had shifted in focus towards the mid-1990s, partly as a response to the failure of the orthodox monetarist structural adjustment programmes and the extensive critique that they had been subjected to. In place of its image as a haven for hard-core number crunchers and cost-cutters, the World Bank now wanted to present itself as the chief agent of poverty reduction, with policies that critically involved and were to be implemented by a reconstructed state, capable of institutionalising capitalist development supported by social services, civil society participation and popular empowerment.

The World Bank’s need to reinvent itself internationally coincided with a similar imperative for the NRM to renew its foundations of external legitimacy. The government realised that in order to create leeway for consolidating its own political control and creating sufficient state capacity to build institutions and promote policies for doing so, it needed to deliver growth and social services in return (Brock et al 2002: 3). To some extent it had already done so, and it was able to draw on the substantial achievements in order to create a credible narrative of poverty
reduction. This was statistically supported by the 2001 poverty headcount, which showed that the number of Ugandans living in poverty (in accordance with the conventional, if arbitrary, definition of living on less than the equivalent of $1 per day) had decreased from 56 per cent in 1992 to 35 per cent in 2000 (Brock et al 2002: 35); although this number rose again to 42 per cent by 2003.

The government elaborated a framework for dealing with poverty reduction very much similar to the World Bank’s conception. The government had established some vaguely “pro-poor” policies, notably the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997, offering Uganda as a suitable testing ground for new policy directions. It is important to note that the production of an approved Poverty Reduction Strategy, as the World Bank version called it, was a precondition for becoming a beneficiary of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt relief programme; in 2000, Uganda became the first country to qualify (Harrison 2004: 40).

The first PEAP was launched in 1997, and it has since been the overarching framework for steering policy making. It is based on four “pillars” – creating an enabling environment for economic growth, ensuring good governance and security, promoting the ability of the poor to raise their incomes, and improving the quality of life of the poor. The programmes are to be implemented by local governments that utilise resources from the Poverty Action Fund (PAF), in turn derived from funding available through HIPC and from other sources (Francis and James 2003).

Largely through the pressures of key donors in combination with a core of actors in the government, there has been a broadening of the range of “legitimate actors” in the “policy making community”. A number of civil society actors, separate or jointly, have been invited into processes. New channels and
arenas for influence have been created, and the policy making process is more complex than before.

The change towards an extension of arenas and the creation of new mediating mechanisms was an institutional innovation with regards to state formation as well as an attempt by the government at producing a new foundation of legitimacy in relation to demands made by both donors and civil society for extended participation. At first glance, these new arenas might seem to obscure to the distinctions between state, civil society and donors through the involvement of parallel entities of “participating stakeholder” identities.

The internal hierarchy of these stakeholders, however, in relation to decision making, as opposed to participation, was never put into question. It should be noted, though, that at least according to the overall statement speaking for civil society groups, participation for the PEAP revision was more substantial and effective than for the first PEAP (Uganda NGO Forum 2003). On the other hand, another civil society voice, that of Uganda Debt Network, claimed that both poverty reduction policies and participation and influence in the PEAP process were undercut by the superior role ascribed to macro-economic stability (Chekwoti 2003).

The actual impact of PEAP on budget allocations is not apparent. According to one study (Opolot and Kibikyo 2003: 12-19), health care remained underfunded. Certainly, the health sector has received a significant increase in funding since the late 1990s from 6.4 to 9.6 per cent of the state budget (Opolot and Kibikyo 2003: 12-13). In the early 1990s, public expenditure on health was roughly $2 per person per annum. In 2000, this amount had increased to $4 (O’Manique 2004: 139). This is still much below the set targets for achieving the Millenium Goals, and reflects the bargaining power of the Ministry of Finance vis-à-vis the Ministry of Health in the struggles between the two,
where the former, backed by IMF claimed that increased funding to social sectors would destabilise exchange rates and trigger inflation.

It is very difficult to evaluate the effects of any specific set of policies, as so many other factors impact on complex outcomes. A striking feature, however, is that poverty levels actually increased since 2000 and that inter and intraregional inequalities deepened. Infant mortality levels increased from 81 to 88 deaths per 1,000 births between 1995 and 2000, with under-five mortality at 152 per 1,000 live births as compared to 147 in 1995. Maternal mortality rates, on the other hand, fell from 527 to 505 per 100,000 births between 1995 and 2000 (Opolot and Kibikyo 2003: 17-18). These are aggregated numbers, with the situation in the north being much worse than elsewhere.

**Conclusions**

From the early 1990s, Uganda’s political economy experienced a phase of political consolidation, economic growth and institutional expansion. These three interrelated dimensions had domestic roots but were all critically underwritten by the inflow of vast amounts of foreign aid. The state underwent expansion and a degree of qualitative improvement in terms of capacity. Health and social welfare was, compared to the immediately preceding period, to a greater degree incorporated into the reconstruction project.

Social sector budgets expanded, infrastructure was being rebuilt and policy making was improved and integrated into the macro-economic framework. During this period, the international governance agenda shifted emphasis from market based solutions and participation of civil society to the embeddedness of these features in “poverty reduction strategies” channelled through and promoted by the state. This was symbolically articulated in the 1997 World Development Report (World Bank 1997). The
shift in discourse and policy interplayed with the revival and reconstruction of the Ugandan state in more ways than one and was to influence the shape it took.

A growing inflow of donor resources was increasingly channelled by way of budget support, and the state exercised its poverty reduction policies through a deconcentrated state apparatus. The role of civil society in Uganda was reformulated from relatively free entities in the context of a weak state into loyal but participating partners in poverty reduction policy making (De Coninck 2004). The different meanings of this were demonstrated in the case studies.

In the case of UMWU, it has been shown how such partnership and participation was effectively blocked by the state. Along with organised labour in general, it was not allowed to voice demands that transcended civil society engagement and workers’ interests as defined by the government. The harsh way in which it was dealt with by the state underscored the disjuncture between a relatively liberal legal framework and an authoritarian practice.

Other sections of civil society, however, were welcomed and incorporated into informal structures of policy making in a way that was in agreement with the aspirations expressed in donors’ “poverty reduction policy” frameworks. A selection of groups was brought onboard national and transnational fora for decision making. Even so, one needs to distinguish between the scope that was opened up for participation on the one hand, and actual influence on the other. This distinction gradually came to preoccupy many groups, as the potential concern that participation would not translate into influence proved to be a real one. This is not to say that civil society input came to nothing; only that there were and are clear limits to the kind and extent of their engagement.

Certain issues, such as the overall direction of economic policy making, political pluralism, high level corruption or the
role of the military could clearly not be discussed even though they quite obviously impacted upon poverty reduction policies, and very few policies at all could be discussed in a challenging manner. The changing composition and orientation of the state has been a consequence of the need to respond to structural change. The move towards civil society participation was partly a means for the government to broaden its social base at a time when domestic political coalitions started to crack and partly used to pre-empt donor demands for democracy; thus, it amounted to a strategy to reconstruct legitimacy and fitted into the broader NRM project to reshape state-society relations along the lines of technocratic governance; the guided incorporation of civil society into the policy arenas of poverty reduction policy.

To summarise, donors supplied resources and legitimacy to the revived Ugandan state in exchange for its continued implementation of the agreed macro-economic framework and its sustained governance performance in relation to externally defined criteria. The shift in the fiscal base of the state carried evident political implications. Rather than negotiating power sharing as concessions for resources and loyalty with domestic constituencies only, the elite factions in control of the Ugandan state could now bypass some of the political struggles that this would inevitably have involved and instead bargain with external providers of resources and contain their domestic allies. At the same time as expenses for public administration in the local state grew, financial and in extension political autonomy of local governments was undercut.

From 33 districts in 1986 and 45 in 1995, districts have multiplied around each election, and the current number is well over 100. “Financial transfers to districts increased from 11 per cent of the budget to 34 per cent in 2003” (Mwenda and Tangri 2005: 458), and conditional grants amounted to over 80 per cent of the transfers by 2001 (Francis and James 2003: 329),
with the result that local government structures have expanded dramatically at the same time the central government financial and political control over it has increased. During the same period, the civil service was rebuilt in the central state, albeit in the new and semi-autonomous sense of creating enclaves in the state through a vast number of secretariats, autonomous bodies and commissions.

With the delivery of security and services, the government was able to consolidate its political base among the rural population in the central and southwestern regions. Externally, it was able to enjoy a widespread legitimacy among key donors, at least until recently. It was able to trade the execution of economic and institutional reforms in their prescribed variants in exchange for vast resources and the tacit acceptance of political monopoly. Resources could be channelled into the stabilisation and expansion of the state as well as the securing of political control.

Nevertheless, this phase of stable mutual accommodation proved to be short-lived. During the late 1990s, state credibility was gradually undercut among both domestic and foreign constituencies following the intervention in the DRC, rising levels of corruption and political intolerance; among donors, though, it tended to result in to ambivalence rather than in sustained critique. As the coalitions of the early and mid-1990s were disintegrating, the government sought to reconstruct alliances among ethno-regional voting blocs, interest groups and donors in different political arenas of policy making and electoral politics.

Underlying tendencies at the level of accumulation, visible in the privatisation process, tended to undermine the logic of capacity building and coherence as factional infighting among the ruling class penetrated the state. Resistance to the latter tendency was weak due both to the internal weaknesses of
democratic forces, political monopoly at the level of state power and the silent complicity of external actors.

There were several logics of state formation at work which shaped the health sector. After 1986, the sector suffered from immense dilapidation in terms of institutional decay and economic bankruptcy. In rehabilitating the sector, the government had to balance the need for the improved provision of services while at the same time exercising control over different providers and their potential constituencies in the context of economic crisis and privatisation. Social service delivery remains an important source of legitimacy for both central and local governments, even if actually provided by NGOs. Social sector improvements have also been a significant component of poverty reduction, vital, again, for regime legitimacy in the eyes of both domestic constituencies and key donors. But “poverty reduction success” is a relative and abstract phrase which is not necessarily experienced on the ground.

In the context of health, some sections of (civil) society operate within a vast informal and unregulated field – or a field regulated on the basis of the logic of the market. This means that the regulatory capacity of the state is highly uneven. There is incorporation and a politicisation of a section of civil society alongside repression of interest representation in certain health regimes and state disengagement, continuing informalisation and lack of effective regulation in others. These regimes are furthermore connected, and both fragmentation and straddling complicate representation and regulation.

The legacy of informalisation and fragmentation of economic and social relations continue to reinforce a disconnection between state and society on many levels. This makes it complicated for the state to regulate some health regimes, and difficult for civil society to engage the state. While the state has successfully incorporated selected actors in national level policy making,
whole areas of provision, especially in rural areas, have been institutionalised informally outside the formal health system but interacting with it. In both informal and formal welfare regimes, the reality may for most people more often than not be one of health units without trained staff or adequate medicine.

Even so, social forces have not to any great extent been able to make effective demands on the state for social service expenditure. On the whole, there is limited politicisation of health as an object or arena for political struggles. Civil society groups have weak capacity and propensity to make real use of their increased but conditional access to the policy process. Although the broadening of the policy arena, which may eventually change the character of the welfare arms of the state, has been premised on a higher degree of accountability, it continues to be ambiguous in democratic terms.

State-civil society relations continue to be characterised by fundamental disconnections between policy and politics and between participation and interest representation. The state has created structures for participation – but not for interest representation and debate on policy issues. While service delivery is essential for political support, security concerns as conventionally defined have remained the main priority to this day. Underlying the institutional transformation of the state is a legacy of continued authoritarianism. Contrary to the intentions of the demobilisation programme, defence expenditures have gone up dramatically, from “$88 million in 1996, over $155 million in 2003, and $196-203 million in 2004” (Mwenda and Tangri 2005: 456).

On several occasions, including in 2004, the budget for health and other social sectors was cut in favour of increased defence spending. The tension between inclusion and repression or between governance and militarism has resulted in increased fragmentation of the Ugandan state with regard
to its administrative and infrastructural capacities. This displays continuous incoherence within the state apparatus and disconnection between its organs and levels.

The changes in the health sector described in this chapter exemplify how such complex recomposition of state and civil society has unfolded. It illustrates how the regulation of political space through a combination of accommodation, marginalisation and repression has been shaped by the interplay between international intervention and the political forces on the ground. Taken together, these configurations explain the pattern of guided inclusion and parallel authoritarianism and the relatively limited scope for civil society organisations to shape the state.
Chapter 6

The Decentralised State: Regulating the Politics of Local Development

As preceding chapters have shown, one of the main ways in which the NRM has sought to establish control for itself and the state at large in society is by creating institutions for local government. Decentralisation has been a cornerstone of contemporary state reform in both its generic governance sense and specifically in the Ugandan setting.

Strong claims have been made about the transformative role of RCs and LCs in reshaping the local state in democratic and developmental directions. New openings for exercising citizenship is said to have been created (Brett 1998; Regan 1998; Wunsch and Ottemoeller 2004). This chapter examines local level implications for state-civil society relations, as these are played out in Masaka District.
The first section of the chapter addresses different theoretical and empirical dimensions of local politics in a comparative perspective. The second section outlines the historical development of local politics in Uganda, Buganda and Masaka area in particular. Following this, the third section discusses the different cases of the study, that is the different manifestations of state-civil society relations in Masaka. The fourth section then approaches the same topic from a different angle, in that it discusses local politics and its various institutions as seen from the community perspective. The chapter concludes with a discussion of contemporary local politics in Masaka and in Uganda at large.

**Local politics: Sources and content**

During the last two decades, most countries in the developing world have experienced a turn from centralised development strategies towards localised politics. A great many factors have contributed to a variety of expressions of “localisation of politics” (Harris *et al.* 2004: 2), ranging from formal decentralisation by design to informal localisation by default.

Conspicuous among these features are downsizing of the central state capacity, privatisation, decentralisation reforms and political liberalisation. As a result political forces at the local level have also been reactivated. Localisation has affected both economic relations and political institutions. The main features of the current development orthodoxy comprise neoliberal economic policies contained within decentralised political structures. State reforms were introduced in order to provide the institutional corrective to market reforms. To relate to Harrison’s discussion of the “governance state”, decentralisation has been a key element in this “project to embed neoliberalism” (Harrison 2004: 5).

Disparate sets of powers and responsibilities have been decentralised to institutions at district and sub-county levels.
This has been echoed by a discursive emphasis on community participation in local arenas, where development is supposedly more efficient and democratic. The typical official rationale for decentralisation centres on the assumption that such a policy brings government closer to the people, as the catchphrase goes, and thus enhances bureaucratic and political accountability and responsiveness – especially if combined, as is often the case, with participatory development strategies with the stated aim of empowering local communities.

Great expectations initially underpinned this most recent wave of decentralisation. The combination of a decentralised state, civil society and market forces was frequently claimed to constitute a key mechanism for giving ordinary citizens political voice and to bring about improved service delivery and increased political and administrative accountability, especially when contrasted to what was seen as failed centralised states (Harriss et al 2004: 3; Wunsch and Olowu 1995: 1-22). Just like with civil society (White 1994), enthusiasm for the emancipatory potential of local politics was voiced by neo-liberal, radical and culturalist proponents alike (Crook and Manor 1998: 1-2).

The obvious possibility that power relations may remain unaffected or might even be strengthened in local arenas was frequently concealed. In real terms, decentralisation often remained underwritten by centralised control. The mixed experience of actual practice has tempered such optimism, and most observers are now aware that not only are reforms often hampered by lack of resources and capacity that tends to result in re-centralisation, but also that decentralisation is an inherently political process:

Political variables are key, not because of variations in formal structure or broad regime types, or technical failure of implementation, but because decentralisation is essentially about the distribution of power and resources, both amongst
different levels and territorial areas of the state, and amongst different interests in their relationship to ruling elites (Crook and Sverrisson 2003: 2).

According to Mamdani (1996), as most people in rural Africa are deprived of/or lack the capacity to exercise real citizenship, decentralisation has essentially meant bringing oppression rather than accountability closer to the people. Local political arenas have in this view essentially been marked by authoritarianism as opposed to popular democracy. Another strand in the literature emphasises the pervasive structures of patron-client relations, which are predicted to be revived as local political arenas are reactivated (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 105).

Regardless of the democratic potential of the reforms, local political units have re-emerged as arenas for struggles over access to resources. This tends to expand the scope for political actors at that level, along with their connections up- and downward. Such connections are, with regard to social policy, critically related to semi-privatised development, which occasionally turns into an important source for accumulating money or influence, based on religion, ethnicity and political affiliation. All these forms of local politics are in turn shaped by the nature of central-local relations, through the ways in which central governments seek to deal with local elites and to penetrate communities for political support and by responses from different sections of local society.

The recent turn to local politics has thus different and contradictory sources, all deeply embedded in power struggles. What are the implications of decentralisation and localised politics and development for the relations between state and civil society? What is the scope for different social forces to open up political space? In order to address these issues, it is suggested here that the necessary starting point is the need to approach local politics in a historically and conceptually broader sense than the preoccupation with contemporary institutional
reforms allows for. To broaden it conceptually means including all forms of social power in local arenas. The argument advanced here follows the general framework of the study and sets out from the premise that the realisation of decentralisation and local governance reforms will be shaped by struggles among different social forces, including efforts by ruling elites to structure their relations to the former.

Decentralisation is undertaken for a variety of political purposes, which create variation in the structuring of local politics also within countries. Central authorities seek to maintain or transform local political arenas and the mechanisms that mediate between the central state, the local state and local society. These processes are likely to include pressures from or concessions to interest groups or regional or local elites that seek to establish or consolidate their own political influence (Boone 2003).

Local social forces and politicians struggle to negotiate the terms of such a transformation. Institutional reforms take root in different ways due to interventions and contestation by competing actors both central and local, who seek to create access and influence through channels of external connections and local control. Local political arenas are thus shaped in the interface between different forms of externally intervening political projects and the range of aspirations and responses that emerge locally.

For these reasons, local level politics is never distinctly “local” Just as institutional reforms are interwoven with political struggles over access to resources in terms of property, power, prestige or hegemony, local politics is fundamentally connected to wider arenas. This holds for both temporary networks linking local elites to national centres of power and for the way central governments historically have structured their relations to different regions – a most significant factor in the case of Masaka and Buganda. There are furthermore several levels within the
local, from the village to the district, where issues are negotiated. At all of these levels, civil society organisations are often centres of power in themselves through the way they seek to mobilise and represent different sections of society (cf. Kassimir 2001).

It has been argued that in the absence of the effective presence of the state in parts of rural Africa, elite sections of local society have taken on the function as public authority (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 1997). This observation needs to be qualified. State formation and public authority is not merely complicated by the absence of the state or of formal structures of regulation that create room for informal modes of rule. More crucially, formal and informal regulatory structures are closely connected, both in immediate local arenas, and in the ways in which these arenas are linked to actors and institutions at higher levels of politics. Lund (2001: 40) makes the observation that “the local” is not necessarily distinctly local in a spatial sense but functions, equally importantly, as a point of reference for different forces invoking authority. Hence, local politics is constituted both by the ways in which central governments have institutionalised their relations to different sections of local society in the form of direct intervention or mediated by middlemen and by the specific trajectories shaped by the constellation of forces that emerge among the latter.

A few assumptions can be made about civil society in local politics with reference to the above remarks. First, local interest groups or networks are likely to be deeply embedded in local society, making state-civil society relations less distinctly sector-specific than at the national level. Secondly, these groups typically seek to claim authority in different arenas simultaneously, basing their influence on overlapping forms of social distinctions, including class, gender, ethnicity, and religion. Thirdly, they can be expected to do so by combining formal and informal resources and regulatory mechanisms. The relations involved cannot be
sufficiently captured by references to “patronage”, as such claims may also relate to issues of equality or democracy.

What factors are central to explain variations in the political content of decentralisation? In a review essay on the topic, Crook and Sverrisson (2001: 2, 4) identify as critical the nature of political relations between central and local governments, “which derives principally from the character of and power bases of the ruling elite and their relationships with local elites” in combination with “the configuration of local … economic, social and political structures”. Power relations in local society underlie central-local relations, both in terms of shaping political resources and interests of local elites and the strategies developed by central governments to deal with these elites.

Similarly, Boone offers a detailed argument (2003: Chapter 2) about the relations between local political struggles, based on communal structures, relations of property and production and institutional mechanisms for reproducing social authority and the shifting scope that this offers for central government intervention. It enables her to elaborate a framework that is both general enough for encompassing common parameters (central governments seek to tax and govern society, and they are capable of doing so according to the balance of power in the local society) and sufficiently specific to capture local variations. Ideal typically, according to Boone, the outcome is either power sharing, usurpation, administrative occupation or other models of engagement that are less based on the integration of the various levels.

The argument predicts regional diversity according to central-local relations and configurations of power in the local state and society, following from cleavages, such as class, gender and ethnicity, as well as their organised expressions in civil society. These perspectives are broadly in line with the overall theoretical framework of this study: that state formation can be
explained by the relation between the balance of power in civil (and in this case local) society and within the state as mediated by various political institutional arrangements. I will return to these arguments in the final section of this chapter.

What may be hypothesised about local politics in the period of the study? Are there any specific traits that distinguish this period from earlier rounds of local politics? The period is characterised by economic, and in some cases political, liberalisation and the resurrection of civil society organisations. As demonstrated in previous chapters, Ugandan society underwent relative stabilisation from the late 1980s.

Yet, at the level of civil society macro-economic stabilisation corresponded to a stabilisation of already relatively fluid informal coping strategies, rendering the latter greater predictability without necessarily formalising them. As will be explored in the case of Masaka, the combination of a plural and fluid society and a re-established state resulted in evolving but tentative and internally incoherent formal and informal regulatory mechanisms that went hand in hand with continued overall fragmentation. At the level of national politics and civil society, this social pluralism evolved within a context of consolidation of political control and deliberate separation of social organisation from political power. What happened in the local political arena?

**Local politics in Uganda**

As has been made clear throughout the foregoing chapters, tense and unresolved relations between the central government and regional power centres, notably Buganda, have fundamentally shaped territorial and institutional dimensions of state- and nationhood. A brief rehearsal of changes in central-local relations is therefore called for in order to bring out how the many layers of local politics, as discussed in the previous section, interplay with contemporary institutional reforms.
The history of local politics in Uganda is the subject of a vast literature (see among others Burke 1964; Richards 1982; Sathyamurthy 1982; and Tidemand 1994 for an overview), as is that of Buganda (see e.g. Apter 1997; Fallers 1964; Karlström 1999; Mafeje 1977; Tidemand 1994). Two dimensions are seen as relevant in the present context, both of which underline the arguments about the multiple sources and the fundamentally political character of local institutions and the very shifting manifestations of local political arenas.

One dimension concerns Uganda’s dramatically uneven regional development, following from a combination of colonially imposed economic underdevelopment and indirect rule, reinforced by elite-controlled politics after independence. This type of leadership in turn rested on regional power bases and was prone to manipulate ethnic and regional identities that entrenched centrifugal tendencies in the central state.

The other dimension is related to the informalisation of the economy and society that expanded dramatically during the years of institutional decay, which set off a multiplicity of informal institutions, mainly local in scope. These entities have interacted in complex ways with formal institutions of local politics.

The first dimension resulted in struggles between central and regional centres of power at the level of national politics that were temporarily settled with the independence constitution and its hybrid status with regard to regional autonomy. The struggles took off again immediately after independence and resulted in the constitutional crisis of 1966. The new order that followed ushered in centralisation in terms of real control over district councils, as codified in the Local Government Act of 1967.

Frequent changes in institutional regulation of local government throughout the entire post-independence period and the great swings between centralisation and decentralisation points to the
importance paid by all state rulers to controlling local arenas. Simultaneously, the rapid decay of formal institutions from the early 1970s – the dimension of informalisation – resulted in “great discrepancy in post-independent Uganda between the formal rules and actual performance of local administration” (Tidemand 1994: 56).

The history of RCs and LCs was outlined in chapters 3 and 4. What was suggested there, and can be concluded here, is that the move towards localised politics stems from very different sources. They included official claims about the introduction of popular democracy through RCs, and later rephrased in terms of more efficient service delivery and better governance through LCs.

The move was also prompted by the unannounced interests of the government to ensure local political control through the same institutions. The process is confounded by traditionalist aspirations for ethnic communities, kingdoms or not, and by the informalisation of economic and social life generating informal networks. There is now an extensive body of valuable literature that analyses political change in the present-day Uganda from different regionally specific and historically anchored perspectives – see for West Nile, Leopold (2005); for Acholi, Finnström (2003); for Karamoja, Knighton (2003); for Teso, Jones (2005); and for the case of Jinja, Byerley (2005).

Taken together, these contributions illustrate the general theoretical perspective on the multiple sources and institutional complexity of local politics outlined above. They put into perspective the rather narrow policy-oriented strand that has characterised part of the literature and which has centred on successful decentralisation reforms (Regan 1998; Villadsen 1996). The latter writings have been a great deal more influential in shaping the orthodox narrative about contemporary Uganda, and in extension the policy that guides it.
Buganda in contemporary Uganda

The relations between the central government and Buganda have been both delicate and decisive for the politics of the country. The central government has had to contain potentially explosive politicisation of ethnic sentiments in the central region also after the kingdom was dismantled after the 1966 crisis.

The Luwero war added further animosity towards Obote and UPC among most Baganda, something that the NRM took advantage of. The loyalty that developed between the NRM and the Baganda is said to have been strengthened by promises from the NRM leadership to reinstall the kingdom after taking power. The truth of such claims remains controversial in view of the government’s continuous reluctance to concede too much autonomy to the kingdom. For discussions of this issue, see Kasfir (2005: 282-283) and Oloka-Onyango (1997: 176-177).

NRM was initially hostile to politicised ethnicity in general and “feudal kingdoms” in particular due to a set of factors, including the complicated history of political ethnicity in general, the radical leftist outlook of leading NRM politicians during the 1980s and considerations of difficult future alliances, as most of high-ranking NRM politicians and NRA officers came from western Uganda. In a move to accommodate Buganda and ensure the continued political support of the Baganda, however, NRM turned around, and in 1993 kingdoms were restored on the premise that they would restrict themselves to the purely “cultural” domain (Karlström 1999).

The distinction between culture and politics proved as difficult to uphold as the one between politics and development. This was made very clear when, in the wake of the restoration of the Buganda kingdom, a project for reinstalling the Ankole kingship was cut short by the government (Doornbos and Mwesigye 1995). As the home region of President Museveni and most other NRM leaders and senior army officers, Ankole was not expected
to develop into an alternative centre of power, particularly not one with intra-ethnic divisive potential.

When it became clear to politicians from Buganda kingdom that their autonomy remained circumscribed, their relation to the central government turned sour. The kingdom set up its own government structures and continues to push for federalism and real autonomy by way of silent negotiations and expansion of its repertoire of activities in, for instance, arenas of development work and media. The push was combined with regular public demonstrations and far-reaching demands. That Buganda would not succumb to the requirements of restricting kingship to the sphere of culture, was made clear during the discussions preceding the making of the new constitution in 1995, where a highly contested political issue concerned the unit of local government.

Decentralisation advocates came up against proponents for the restoration of federalism as the extension of ceremonial kingship. The government insisted on decentralisation – one objective of which, according to Crook (2001), was to fragment and undercut important sub-national political entities, and in particular Buganda region.

The monarchist movement contained a militant wing, but a small armed monarchist rebel group fighting for federalism that emerged in rural Buganda in the mid-1990s does not seem to have been long-lived (Karlström 1999: 113). The government remained dependent on the political support of the Baganda and has sought by various stick-and-carrot measures to contain their discontent, although with increasing difficulty.

Buganda has not been entirely domesticated as a stable government power base or a united electoral bloc. More broadly, politicised ethnicity has in spite of NRM’s stated aims refused to go away. Most other ethnic groups articulate dissatisfaction about what is perceived as the western ethnic base and bias of the
state, and the civil war in the north has dramatically deepened regional cleavages that complicate the resolution of the national question.

**Masaka in Buganda**

Masaka District is located roughly 100 km southwest of Kampala, and is part of Buganda region. According to the 2002 census, the population of Masaka Town stands at 61,300 and that of the district at 767,759. The majority of its inhabitants are Catholic Baganda, with religious (Protestant and Muslim) and ethnic (mainly Banyarwanda and Banyankore) minorities. The bulk of the population are small-holding peasants.

The district has been subdivided throughout the years, as Kooki, Ssesse and Ssembabule counties which became Rakai (1974), Kalangala (1989) and Ssembabule (1997) districts. Historically, the area has been one of the most important food producing regions in the country, coffee being the main cash crop. Following the slump of world market coffee prices and overall decline of agricultural production, however, the former bread basket of Kampala has sunk into stagnation (Bazaara 1997: Chapter 5). This is reinforced by lack of investments and employment facilities in Masaka town and other urban centres. Poverty is further deepened by the severe impact of HIV/AIDS in the region.

The history of Buddu county (the older name for the territory covering today’s Masaka) has impacted deeply upon contemporary Masaka. From 1888 to 1892, religious conflicts between Muslims, Protestants and Catholics shook Buganda. These conflicts were settled by the gun as the Protestants called upon Britain for military assistance. As consolation for defeat, the Catholics were given Buddu County by the British as a base in which to resettle and rebuild their religious community. Political and commercial ties with the rest of Buganda remained, but with Protestant hegemony established, “Catholics migrated
towards Buddu in a ‘trek’ and there emerged an exile mentality, which became a distinguishing feature of the Buddu church” (Waliggo 2002: 66).

Masaka town was created as a trading centre in the late 19th century by Asians, who just like in colonial Uganda at large came to dominate trade and the manufacturing sector. The local political economy revolved around agriculture, coffee in particular. A great number of coffee barons in Kampala of the 1950s and 60s made their wealth from large farms in the district. A domestic bourgeoisie emerged, and proximity to Kampala created conditions for the expansion of agri-business, including a prominent role for the Coffee Marketing Board and cooperative unions ever since late colonialism (Kasita 2005; Mamdani 1976: 203). Many workers on farms and in the agri-industry were migrant labourers, significantly from Rwanda, Burundi and Kigezi, who came to settle there and assumed Baganda names – Buganda is much less ethnically homogeneous than what is often thought.

Compared to its relative economic prosperity, Masaka suffered from political marginalisation. Under colonial rule, Catholics were socially and politically subordinated to Protestants in Buganda in general, and to the so-called Mengo establishment that dominated the institutions of kingship and the court in particular. The Anglican Church was systematically incorporated into the colonial project, at the expense of Catholic leaders. With independence closing in and the political temperature rising, religious rivalry translated into political struggles.

The Democratic Party was founded in 1956 with a Catholic base as a distinct response to perceived religious discrimination and a way to counter Protestant hegemony. Although DP was successful in Kigezi, Ankole and West Nile (Jørgensen 1981: 199), it was and remains seen as an essentially Catholic Baganda affair with particularly strong backing in Masaka. When Mengo
boycotted the pre-independence parliamentary elections in 1961, DP candidates won unopposed and formed the majority.

In response, the Mengo elite formed the Kabaka Yekka party and allied with UPC in order to shut out DP from power; and this bloc won the 1962 elections (see Chapter 2). Soon after independence, most DP members of parliament crossed the floor to UPC, something which turned Masaka into a political backwater. This tendency was further pronounced after 1967, with the imposition of UPC one-party rule and the dissolution of all kingdoms. According to one observer, as this coincided with the era of the coffee boom, local elites took a hands-off stand towards politics, and political leadership in the region stagnated. Obote had appointed a stratum of local leaders and civil servants, and during Amin’s rule, there was no political activity at all. This created a political gap that lasted until 1979 (interview, John Kawanga, 22 February 2004).

The overall decay of the economy under the Amin government was accompanied by falling coffee prices and smuggling of coffee. Informal *magendo* structures permeated the public sector and destroyed the private sector. Asian farmers, traders and industrialists were expelled in 1972. Rampant smuggling undercut long-term investments. The hardest blow, however, came during the 1979 war between Uganda and Tanzania, when Masaka town was almost completely destroyed. Another fundamental shock came with the HIV/AIDS epidemic from the early 1980s onwards, with Rakai and Masaka being its epicentre in Uganda.

After the ousting of Amin, DP was revived nationally and was widely seen to have been robbed of the victory in the 1980 elections. Under the new UPC government, Masaka was marginalized both politically and economically during the first half of the 1980s. Its role as a DP stronghold has been difficult to translate into direct political clout, as DP has invariably been
on the losing side in national politics. During the NRA guerrilla war, Masaka was viewed by the government as potential rebel territory. Development was blocked and economic recovery after the destruction in the 1979 war was prevented. The population experienced a great deal of political pressure and harassment from the central government until 1986. The last six months before NRM took over power, that is during the Okello Lutwa regime, Masaka was cut off from Kampala, with the NRA being in control of the area.

After 1986 RCs were set up, and people were made to renounce their political partisanship. The NRM took advantage of the power vacuum and managed to wipe out DP structures by incorporating its most important leaders, including the former speaker of parliament, Edward Ssekandi and former minister of finance, Gerald Ssendaula. Another important factor that reshaped the local political landscape was the strong support from the Catholic Church for the NRA during the guerrilla war and for NRM in post-1986 politics.

At the district level, appointed leaders remained until the 1989 elections, when some old guard DP politicians were voted into RCs. NRM domination over local politics during the late 1980s later became a more complicated game, as DP opted out of the broad-based government and the NRM’s relations with both Mengo and the Catholic Church became strained from the mid-1990s. Even though political parties were dormant under the no-party system and the geographically peripheral and less developed parts of rural Masaka in particular tend to be pro-NRM, DP still exercised some degree of informal influence at most levels of the political system. In Masaka town and other urban areas, there was widespread support for DP, and in the two most recent parliamentary elections, in 2001 and 2006, the party’s John Kawanga has been elected MP for Masaka town.

None of the NRM leaders that hail from Masaka have made it into the very innermost circle of national power politics, and
while they have enjoyed influence within their constituencies, none has been able to control local politics in a strongman fashion, as has been the case elsewhere. There is a balance between different centres of power, including MPs and the district council and its then chairman, Vincent Ssem pijja, in the running of Masaka politics. Ssem pijja has for a long time been popular and perceived as an efficient politician with a base among most communities. During the 2006 elections, however, local and national NRM politicians challenged him through the ad hoc Masaka Election Task Force, accusing him of corruption.

Just like all districts, Masaka is economically dependent on revenue from the central government. Precisely for that reason, informal connections through MPs or cabinet ministers are very important for local development. Political dependence on the centre is marked but not entirely straightforward. The district leadership may take on importance in its own right, for example in struggles between the central government and Mengo for local support, where local leadership is given the opportunity to exercise some degree of bargaining power in either direction. Central-local relations further interact with intra-local relations of domination. There are important constituencies that the district political leadership needs to accommodate, critical among which are representatives of the Buganda kingdom, the Catholic Church and landlords, not seldom in combination. Landlords and kingdom representatives were outraged by the 1998 Land Act that sought to diminish their influence, something which led to extreme tensions.

Religion and ethnicity are political factors, as everywhere, and Masaka is not as homogeneous in those terms as conventional wisdom would have it. But nor are these dimensions constant objects or arenas for political struggles the way they are in other places such as in neighbouring Ssembabule, a hotbed of politicised ethnicity. The attitude towards Buganda nationalism
is ambivalent. The contemporary revival of the kingdom seems to be met with caution by many Masaka Catholics, and many claimed to embrace the cultural dimensions of monarchism, being hesitant towards its political undercurrents.

Likewise, the Catholic Church is an influential social institution, both on a general level of spiritual guidance and as a political player in a more mundane sense (Kassimir 1998). Religious leaders, especially at lower levels such as parish priests, are prominent brokers or mobilisers of political support, making them targets for appeals and pressure from politicians. Popular gossip consequently concerns their political orientation, but most observers agreed that the importance of the established churches have declined, in marked contrast to the rising influence of evangelical churches. Local state-church relations are characterised by mutual accommodation. Local government leaders cannot afford to be seen to openly confront the church, in view of the risks this would involve in terms of lost support. Likewise, the church will not risk being seen as a vehicle of partisan dissent.

Recurrent narratives centre on Masaka’s economic stagnation and peripheral role in contemporary national politics in a way which shows some resemblance to discourses of decline in the former industrial hub of Jinja (Byerley 2005). Popular interpretation puts much of the blame for the economic decline on the central government and its perceived deliberate efforts to promote the western region – the home area of President Museveni – at the expense of Buganda. Masaka town has never quite recovered after the destruction in 1979. The collapse of cooperative unions after the civil war in the 1980s undercut the structures of the commercial economy in the district and left unemployment and poverty in its wake (Kasita 2005). Even if there are signs of recovery, they are modest.

There is a looming agricultural crisis, caused by land fragmentation and erosion, overpopulation and falling coffee
prices after a brief mid-1990s boom. This has resulted in rural poverty, reinforced by lack of investments and employment opportunities in urban areas; the local market is therefore very limited. By way of agriculture, most people are small holding peasants. Although many benefited from the coffee boom, this was temporary. In terms of business, most main investors are active or retired politicians or civil servants based in Kampala, with contacts in or having returned to Masaka either doing business in town or as big coffee farmers. Most business people in Masaka intervene in formal politics by proxy if at all. Many back political campaigns, and are rewarded afterwards.

At village level, community based organisations are promoted by district development officials, religious institutions and foreign NGOs. They include burial societies and income generating groups such as rotating savings schemes that operate on the basis of age and gender and other identities. The sustainability of these development efforts is evidently highly dependent on external funding through linkages to local government and NGOs.

The kingdom seeks to establish itself through different manifestations, for instance in the activities run by Buganda Cultural and Development Foundation (BUCADEF), its development organisation. The kingdom has set up structures of representation parallel to, and in reality overlapping with, the Local Council system. Religious institutions are prevalent. Apart from the Catholic church, a great number of evangelical churches have succeeded in establishing themselves in rural areas and attract an ever-increasing number of followers.

International NGOs are also a typical feature of local civil society. Most of these stay for a limited period only. Given the extremely weak fiscal base of local government, there is constant competition between districts for attracting them. At the time of fieldwork, World Vision was by far the biggest and most important development NGO in Masaka District. With regard to health care, Masaka displays the general institutional
complexity outlined in previous chapters. The public health care system co-exists with semi-private or private forms. Alongside the government hospital, there are two Catholic mission hospitals, long well established, which also run mobile home units. Both government and NGOs train community health workers. Self-help groups dealing with the impact of HIV/AIDS is a common feature. There are also a number of private clinics and pharmacies.

**State-civil society relations in the health sector**

The involvement and engagement of civil society organisations with local government and communities depends on their point of entry and their social base in local society. There are evidently great differences in that respect, which two of the cases studied here amply illustrate. The stagnation of Masaka region along with the dramatic transformation of political arenas has made the population politically dependent and vulnerable.

DP loyalists have gone underground following the imposition of NRM hegemony. In the context of a region in decline, with a rampant HIV/AIDS epidemic, and in the absence of viable state structures, World Vision, an evangelical Christian organisation, has established itself as a provider of social welfare with claims to spiritual empowerment. The scope for action and the legitimacy it enjoys are shaped by the vast resources at its disposal and its possible effectiveness as a development organisation, having entered into the heartland of Uganda’s Catholicism and the silent competition with the welfare arms of the Catholic church and the religious factionalism this is likely to set off.

BUCADEF embodies the developmental efforts of the Buganda kingdom to reclaim a foothold among the peasantry and to regain relevance at community level. Its presence needs to be understood in the context of changing economic, social and political conditions for ethnic monarchism. The historical
depth of monarchism and cultural mobilisation embodies a series of tensions, including the role of Masaka in Buganda, the unresolved issue of decentralisation or federalism, the fear of potential ethnic exclusion and the nature of citizenship in Uganda. I will return to World Vision and BUCADEF but, before doing so, however, I will briefly summarise the experiences of UMWU in Masaka.

**UMWU: Public sector unionism under strain**

The potential strength that the union can claim in terms of its nation wide scope and large membership base is undermined by decentralisation reforms, which impose parallel arenas for negotiations, beyond the scope of the union’s present capacity. The capacity of UMWU differs markedly between districts due to qualities and attitudes of the district leadership. Unsurprisingly, national leaders see decentralisation as a means to fragment the union’s capacity and would prefer a re-centralisation of certain policy making mechanisms. Furthermore, the union has not made any inroads in the private or NGO run hospitals and health units (interview, Apollo Nyangasi, 25 February 2003).

The Masaka Hospital branch of the union was set up in 1995, and in 2003 it had reportedly around 200 members, or between 75 to 80 per cent of the staff. There are contradictory views on the history of the union, though. When I was there in 2000, I was told that a union branch had just been established, after UMWU representatives had been in Masaka to introduce the idea, but that the union was not yet effectively operating.

The Union branch of Masaka was said by national union leaders to be weak, primarily due to ineffective leadership (interview, Apollo Nyangasi, 25 February 2003), and has failed to become included into decision making structures at the district level. While the members claimed that they have not experienced interference from the hospital administration with regard to the
holding of meetings, the leadership had failed to expand the scope of union activities.

The main achievements of the union were seen to be, here as elsewhere, salary increases and secured lunch allowances. However, the salary was still viewed as insufficient, and members continued to voice demands for housing and travel allowances. They were paid Ush12,000 (at the time roughly US$7) a month, plus housing allowances. Asked how they cope, they mentioned their *shambas*, or small plots for cultivation (group discussion with nurses, Masaka Hospital 18 October 2000).

The main problem was understaffing with resulting overworked staff. They would want insurance, including life insurance and subsidised or even free medical treatment in case something happened, such as AIDS or Ebola (an Ebola epidemic was raging in northern Uganda as we spoke). Transport costs to and from work, increased salaries and improved accommodation were other demands mentioned, as was the wish that the government would pay children’s school fees. They had not approached the hospital management with their demands directly, as their assumption was that the management would merely refer to higher levels of authority (that is the Ministry of Health) – the level they identified as causing the major problems of the sector. Although they were undecided on the issue of whether decentralisation has made any change, findings from elsewhere suggest that working conditions for health workers have if anything deteriorated under decentralisation (Kyaddondo and Whyte 2003).

Working conditions in the public sector have set off multiple coping strategies. In Masaka, quite a few of the members double as private practitioners. The union has intervened to ameliorate living conditions of its members through temporary income generating projects, such as small-scale farming and agricultural credit. So far, however, it has not succeeded to establish itself as an effective vehicle for interest representation in relation to the
structures of decision making. It has yet to prove its consistent relevance in defending the interests of members, as suggested by my discussion with the union leadership and a group of health workers (Masaka Hospital, 4 March 2003). Our discussion followed upon a major staff meeting a few weeks earlier, where UMWU’s national leadership had come to address workers, and where the local leadership was taken to task for past failures.

One issue that runs through any discussion of health workers is the accusation of low “staff morale” and allegations of widespread corrupt practices among staff. This is a legacy of the collapse of the public sector, and a key issue in the debate about the problems of health delivery for patients, staff and officials alike; although addressed from different perspectives. Although health workers themselves denied first-hand knowledge of any such practices, other sources claimed that they were very common. The union’s insistence on the connection between workers’ rights and service delivery is countered by officials at the ministry, district or hospital level, who claim that underpayment is but a partial explanation to this behaviour. The debate in this arena for conflict reveals the overall difficulty of UMWU to impress its understandings of the problems of the sector and its solutions on its counterparts.

World Vision: Community empowerment through faith

World Vision is an international evangelical Christian development and relief NGO, founded and based in the United States. According to Bornstein (2002: 6), a few years back it was operating in 95 countries, and it is one of the biggest NGOs in Uganda where it is active in many districts. Most of its rather extensive economic resources come from private donations. World Vision has operated in Uganda since 1986 and in Masaka since 1990, where its presence was originally motivated by the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS.
At the time of fieldwork, World Vision ran three Area Developing Programmes in the district and planned to expand their geographical and thematic scope. World Vision is engaged in rural development in a general sense; their activities cover most sectors and range from constructing health units, schools and boreholes, to providing agricultural credit and running programmes for sponsorship of the education of orphans. In the health sector, their main contributions include the construction of health units, making overviews of sanitation and immunisation needs as well as providing training for community health workers. These mundane activities are informed by an evangelical perspective on development that seeks to achieve transformative worldly and spiritual empowerment through participatory community activities.

World Vision is the main foreign NGO in the district, and their staff and local politicians alike are very aware of their crucial role for social service delivery in Masaka. As compared to indigenous NGOs, World Vision enjoys relative affluence. In more ways than one, World Vision functions as a link to the outside world through the contacts and material resources it introduces into the local settings where they operate.

World Vision is included in decision making fora at the district level, where as one member of the District Health Management Team put it, “their views are not binding, but persuasive” (interview, 10 February 2003). Politicians, technocrats and NGO staff emphasised that the relationship is marked by close co-operation and confirmed by written memoranda of understanding. All parties expressed a desire to expand the role of World Vision in community development. World Vision staff were keen to point out that they engage in development, not politics. This distinction is a key feature of NRM ideology and is upheld as regulatory principle for the NGO sector through threats of more restrictive legislation and self-imposed practice. Local political leaders and NGOs seek mutual accommodation, as
long as this follows the logic of relations at the level of national politics. While state supervision of NGOs is weaker at the local level, the latter have learnt to keep within the limits imposed by the strict legislation.

When asked about the line between politics and development, a World Vision staff admitted that it is indeed difficult to uphold such a distinction and that power relations significantly shape implementation of development projects, including their own. “Most politicians try to influence resource allocation” (interview, World Vision Programme Co-ordinator (WVPC), 11 March 2003).

Conflicts over access to resources are acted out on the basis of ethnicity, political orientation and above all, gender. Allegedly, it was not uncommon that loans given to women were taken by their husbands (interview, WVPC, 20 November 2000). The organisation tries to deal with political hijacking by exercising influence “by example, not by input” in order not to directly challenge the political leadership. “We don’t wish to destabilise our smooth working conditions” (interview, WVPC, 20 March 2003).

Another strategy is to make use of religious leaders for indirect mobilisation of communities against for example “corrupt practices” in general and certain individual politicians in particular (interview, WVPC, 20 March 2003). In this context, it may be added that World Vision, as a way to address the spiritual dimension of community empowerment, has a stated aim to “empower churches of all denominations” (interview, WVPC, 11 March 2003).

Where churches run programmes, World Vision adds resources. Although downplayed by World Vision representatives, such an intervention may of course add on to the competition between the Catholic, Anglican and the Pentecostal churches. Representatives of World Vision were aware of the tensions between its own ideas of harmonious community empowerment and the local power
politics that might prevent the former to occur. To avoid such difficult issues they preferred to emphasise lack of education and enlightened cultural habits, rather than structural conflicts over property and power (cf. Kelsall and Mercer 2003).

Thus, World Vision avoids being seen as a political actor in the public arena. They do, however, play an important role in the context of state formation. World Vision and similar NGOs are central in anchoring state reform and semi-privatised development. The creation of an “enabling environment” for NGOs is a key dimension of the formation of state capacity and legitimacy in the field of social welfare, as well as a boost for local politicians who predictably try to capitalise on the presence of foreign NGOs. Most NGOs develop institutional structures for community participation, which in combination with the resources they command turn them into influential entities at the local level. World Vision has set up development committees at village, parish and sub-county levels. A fundamental problem from a democratic perspective is that although most NGOs wrestle with problems of accountability, the institutional links for participation that are created between NGOs and community are subordinated to structures of bureaucratic accountability that come with external funding.

**BUCADEF: The power of the kingdom?**

Buganda Cultural and Development Foundation (BUCADEF) is in itself a rather modest NGO. BUCADEF is also, however, a component in a political project for restructuring the relations between state, nation and ethnicity. In their own words, they are the “grass root development arm of the Buganda Government” (interview, BUCADEF Chief Executive Officer, 23 November 2000). As was discussed in previous chapters, the Buganda kingdom’s demands that cultural monarchism should be expanded to include federalism and real autonomy have so far been denied, but federalism remains the object of ongoing
political struggles between Mengo and the central government. Hence, the sources of BUCADEF’s capacity to articulate concerns and mobilise support are defined not only by its relations to the local state, but also by relations between the Buganda kingdom and the central government ultimately, also to local governments in Buganda region.

BUCADEF was established in 1995 for the purpose of improving the standard of living of the people of Buganda kingdom. It is involved in a wide range of welfare provisioning and income generating projects and run a number of programmes in health, education and water sectors “using culture as a device for mobilisation and development” (interview, BUCADEF Chief Executive Officer, 23 November 2000). In the field of health they are engaged in preventive health care, such as nutrition projects, early childhood development, the protection of water sources, and in immunisation programmes on behalf of the district.

The programme for nutrition and early childhood development is a government one, or to be precise, the money comes from the World Bank through the Government of Uganda to UNACOH (Uganda National Association of Community Occupational Health), and the project is contracted out to BUCADEF for implementation. The first phase of the programme had run for five years and would expire in June 2003, but was expected to be renewed (interview BUCADEF District Co-ordinator, 17 February 2003).

Their main source of funding is the kingdom, although BUCADEF has also managed to attract resources from donors, including USAID, DFID, and the World Bank. For the kingdom, there are limits set to resource mobilisation. Under the 1995 Constitution, the kingdom is not allowed to tax the population within its territory. However, the kingdom has assets, parallel bodies for commercial activities including an investment company that owns most of the shares in several companies, including a travel agency, a newspaper and a commercial radio station.
Ordinary and not-so-ordinary Baganda in Uganda and among the Diaspora also contribute in cash or kind. The kingdom’s symbolic manifestations, most prominently the 1993 coronation and the 1999 royal wedding, offer fertile ground for donations of different scale, from modest to extravagant. Even though contributions from ordinary Baganda display an element of commitment and popular support for the kingdom, there is certainly also a degree of social pressure, which gives it the character of informal taxation (Englebert 2002: 355). Furthermore, most sub-counties within Buganda make annual donations to the kingdom “for cultural purposes” (interview, BUCADEF Chief Executive Officer, 28 February 2003). District administrations make contributions by covering travel expenses, staging workshops and functioning as brokers for consultancy work. Influential politicians of the kingdom are of course also prominent brokers in the competition for contracts.

BUCADEF operates in most of the districts of the kingdom and has activities in roughly 50 out of the 168 sub-counties in the kingdom. In Masaka, the representative expressed a strong desire to become more consistently included into frameworks for social service provision. Previously, BUCADEF, just like most organisations of the kingdom was met with great suspicion from central and local governments and seen as a way to undermine NRM structures and hegemony. On the whole, however, they claim that they no longer encounter mistrust from government officials but are regarded as a legitimate actor. They seek and get recognition and accommodation; in fact, they “don’t want to be independent, since then if something happened, the government couldn’t help us. The government is always there” (interview, BUCADEF District Co-ordinator, 17 February 2003).

Just like World Vision, BUCADEF stress their non-political nature, in accordance with the overall terms of agreement between NRM and the Buganda kingdom. However, the presupposed distinction between “politics” and “development”
does not mean that political considerations are absent, only that they are not talked about in public. BUCADEF’s discourse on development is embedded within a wider narrative that centres on monarchist conceptions of Buganda’s rightful but neglected place and the need to revive a selection of traditions in order to create development in the region. Present-day decay of law and order, the status of health and education, the low level of economic productivity and communal spirit are contrasted against a “golden age” characterised by “hard work and honesty” and “family and village cohesion” (Buganda Kingdom, 1999: 5) upheld by the structures of the kingdom. These interpretations are also tied to carefully presented demands for federalism (Kingdom of Buganda 2001).

The contours and orientation of any civil society organisation is shaped within the broader political context within which it has emerged. While the capacity of BUCADEF to turn into a prominent development actor is limited, the importance of the kingdom in regional and national political arenas gives all its institutions a special role and obliges all political leaders to deal with them. As regards state-ethnic relations, the transformation of the relations between the NRM and the Buganda kingdom from confrontation to compromise has created its own channels of mediation. The government is careful not to provoke ethnic sentiments that could be used by the kingdom politicians for withdrawing their support for the regime.

The political importance of BUCADEF should be seen from the perspective of politicised ethnicity at large and the contestation over ways of organising political participation and public life. The political project of the kingdom involves the restructuring of state-society relations that is potentially far-reaching. While BUCADEF and kingdom representatives claim to work for all the people in Buganda, this formulation points to unresolved fundamental issues about the precise meaning of political
citizenship in Buganda as a political entity, as ethnic minorities perceive it as a threat. Again, as with so many other issues in the local development arena, rumours abound. While BUCADEF stresses the harmonious relations between Baganda and other ethnic communities, other informants told stories about distinct hierarchies among their beneficiaries on precisely that basis.

The claim that everyone is welcome so long as they are willing to join hands for the development of Buganda is a far from innocent statement, and in fact a controversial basis for social organisation in Buganda. There is also a class dimension to this, related to social struggles around land and ultimately to struggles over the political meaning of ethnicity and monarchism. BUCADEF has in a sense been a vehicle for the kingdom to attempt to bypass such struggles. However, even though a project of the Buganda kingdom, when confronted with conflicts on the ground, BUCADEF inevitably incorporates contradictory tendencies.

Monarchism has historically been the focus of struggles between the Mengo establishment and the peasantry, and between different strata of the latter (Mamdani 1995: 120). This has created complications of its own. BUCADEF cannot bring up the question of land in any direction. On the one hand, to criticise the government’s land policy would be to go beyond their “developmental” mandate. On the other hand, to criticise landlords would also be difficult, even when these are seen as to be standing in the way of community development.

Many observers agreed on the view that BUCADEF’s capacity as a development organisation was limited not only by lack of resources, but also by the role of the kingdom at large. The cultural ties between the kingdom and the population in Buganda have weakened with intermarriages, general individualisation and economic links which have been severed with the selling of land. People seemed to view the kingdom pragmatically, welcome its
cultural expressions, make use of its development facilities but keep a distance to its political project as long as it looks weak. It should be noted that these are impressions on my part, and not based on systematic research, but it is a perception supported by other studies (Englebert 2002). The tensions and ambiguities about what Buganda is and should be still go to the core of the formation of the Ugandan state.

**Community, civil society and state**

The above discussion has centred on the relationship between civil society groups and the state. How do both relate to the constituencies which they claim to represent in society at large? There are simultaneous mechanisms at work. While civil society groups themselves seek recognition or a permanent role in the institutional framework, political actors employ them as vehicles for penetrating into the communities. To the latter, they may be viewed as intervening institutions that offer access or protection. The capacity to make use of such resources is of course unevenly distributed among sections of the community. Because of the financial weakness of most local government institutions, they cannot orchestrate the distribution of development projects at will.

Local governments depend on others, especially foreign NGOs. Although this dependence runs both ways as NGOs need a good working relationship with local politicians to be able to stay in the district. This evidently puts restrictions on their propensity to speak out against corruption or other forms of abuse of power. There is often stiff competition between different administrative units over the geographic allocation of NGOs. This competition is played out along lines of political orientation (expressed in terms of “movementists vs multipartyists” during the period of field work, when the movement system was still operational), religious affiliation, ethnic belonging or a combination of these.
Fieldwork for this study has been conducted in different parts of Masaka. However, a more detailed study of village politics was undertaken in Bulando village, Buwunga Sub-county, a division of Bukoto East County, located in the eastern part of Masaka. Buwunga is roughly five miles southeast of Masaka town towards Lake Victoria. It was previously a prosperous area, but its fortunes were reversed along with the rest of Masaka. Kasozi (1994: 235-239) provides an account of the changes from the early 1960s to the mid-1980s.

Good health and education facilities were left to decay after looting had destroyed the health centres during the 1979 war. The local economy stagnated with the demise of the cooperatives, since bananas and coffee grown by the local population had been sold to the cooperative union. It is now considered a relatively poor part of the district, due to the low fertility of the soil and the dependence on a single cash crop, that is, coffee. Poverty is also self-reinforcing through low levels of education.

Politically, Buwunga is rather similar to other rural areas of the district. NRM candidates generally win elections, although by far lesser margins than is the case in other regions with stronger degrees of NRM hegemony. It is difficult to establish how solid and genuine this support is. In the past, the NRM had structures for mobilisation around campaigns, whereas opposition candidates were not allowed to run officially for instance on a DP ticket. I was told by several informants that during the presidential elections in 2001, armed soldiers surrounded polling stations in different areas of Bukoto East Constituency to ensure that people voted “correctly”. This was however denied by local politicians and local government officials. In view of the well-documented violent character of the election campaign generally (Human Rights Watch 2001a), the information can certainly not be dismissed. Political opposition has been repressed for some time.
Foundation for Human Rights reported in its annual report for 1999 that the local population of Buwunga (and other places) was coerced into taking part in pro-government *chaka mchaka* “political education” courses; in some cases, non-compliance resulted in torture (Foundation for Human Rights Initiative 1999). Vincent Kimera of DP, later FDC and the main campaigner for Kizza Besigye in Masaka in 2001, was elected to represent Bukoto East in the sixth parliament (1996-2001) but was forced to stand down due to lack of academic qualifications. In both 2001 and 2006, John Alintuma Nsambu was elected on an NRM ticket, and President Museveni received a majority of the votes in the Presidential elections.10

Bulando village has around 200 inhabitants, and is rather remotely located, with roads that get washed away in the rainy season. Most inhabitants are small-holding farmers, and several are tenants. Coffee has for a long time been the main cash crop. There is a primary school in the village, but the nearest public health centre, Mazinga, is located a mile and a half away in a neighbouring parish. The closest hospital is a highly regarded Catholic Mission one, Kitovu Hospital. Its quality services would normally be beyond the financial scope for most villagers. When talking about the main problems with regard to health, the discussions understandably soon entered into broader debates on poverty and its causes, since all the interlinked problems that were discussed had their common roots in poverty. Health problems were seen as mainly caused by poor sanitation, such as the absence of latrines, and lack of protected water sources, and specific diseases are invariably worsened by malnutrition. The biggest health problem for the community as a whole is the

10 In 2001, Museveni received 157 out of 285 votes cast at Bulando polling station, while his closest challenger Kizza Besigye got 0 votes! On the other hand, the DP linked candidate Francis Bwengye is – incredibly – claimed to have got in Bulando 121 of the 373 votes he received in the whole of Masaka District; most likely, there was an administrative confusion of votes (Source: Electoral Commission, Masaka District).
large number of AIDS orphans. Some of them are taken care of by their grandparents. Others, however, have nobody to cater for them.

Mothers have not been helped by the shortcomings of public health care, as experienced by the people of Bulando. While most participants welcomed the construction of new health centres, many lamented the shortage of medication and trained staff there. That this is a widespread problem, is confirmed by the Uganda Poverty Status Report 2003 (Republic of Uganda 2003: 147). Health centres were also said to lack electricity for storing medication when available. A common experience was that instead of being given drugs in the health centre or hospital, patients were directed to a certain pharmacy to buy them. This fed into a wider narrative of corruption in the sector, and that services that were supposed to be free had to be paid for – sometimes so much that it was impossible, or that one had to sell land or cattle to pay the fee. People linked this and what was seen as poor quality services to the low pay for health workers, and remarked that the government was aware but did not care.

In Bulando, informants viewed World Vision, along with a few other NGOs as the most efficient vehicle for development efforts. World Vision had been in Buwunga since 1989 (group discussion, 7 November 2000), and has mainly dealt with assisting orphans with education and supporting the construction of schools, health units and safe water sources. Other NGOs operating in the area include Kitovu Mobile; the mobile health care unit of Kitovu Hospital, Masaka Diocese Development Organisation (MADDO), Uganda Women’s Effort to Save Orphans (UWESO), and the Swedish VI agroforestry programme. Over time, these NGOs have set up their own development committees, although some people were dissatisfied with having been left out, claiming that leading persons only distributed information and resources among themselves (group discussion, 25 February 2004).
BUCADEF was disregarded due to its perceived incapacity to deliver. Many people had bought the kingdom’s certificate, but neither BUCADEF nor any other kingdom representatives had made consistent efforts to promote development, according to informants (group discussions: 3 March, 5 March, and 7 March 2003).

Some people were members of community based organisations (CBOs). There were groups for women, youth, animal keepers and crop growers, such as the Bulando United Farmer’s Association (BUFA), *munno mukabi* (“a friend in need”) and the *Tusitukiremu* women’s group. These multi-purpose groups raise funds for specific occasions such as funerals, provide credit or offer links to bigger NGOs. A general observation was that it proved difficult to sustain their activities due to lack of funds (group discussions: 5 March 2003, and 7 March 2003). It was suggested by the men that women’s groups were relatively more consistent and more efficient (group discussion, 5 March 2003). Connections to an outside resource provider are essential.

Everybody was very aware of the resources accompanying the presence of a major NGO. Access to World Vision or similar entities, or to higher levels of the local government system was in turn viewed as altogether dependent on a “good leader”, generally perceived as one with contacts to such organisations or to someone capable of serving as a broker. Again, there is constant competition within and between villages, parishes and sub-counties around the access to services and resources. The ability of leaders to create access is in turn based on ethnic, religious or political belonging, and their capacity to secure protection and strike alliances on that basis. Differences between leaders in this respect can be substantial. While the LC I Chairman in Bulando was generally seen as lacking in connections, his counterpart in another village, a big farmer and businessman, was perceived as more efficient in securing funds.
Local councils were generally looked upon by people in Bulando as effective for settling intra-communal disputes, but by and large as inefficient in securing development, although the population squarely placed responsibility for creating development and providing and regulating services on the government. Views diverged on the activities of the village council, with some complaining that meetings were few and far between and distribution of information imperfect (group discussion, 7 March 2003). Likewise, views differed on the usefulness of the Parish Development Committee, with some defending its work whereas others did not even know of its existence.

A common view, not confined to Bulando, describes local government structures at higher levels as “thoroughly corrupt”. While this may be a common popular view of politicians anywhere, widespread graft within the local government system has been amply documented (Centre for Basic Research 2005), although LCs occasionally fulfil a scapegoat function in this respect. Stories about district and sub-county corruption are frequently used by politicians at higher levels to conceal the ways in which local fraud is systematically connected to large-scale corruption encouraged or orchestrated from the national level. Complaints about difficulties in making the sub-county council hand down the allocated grants to parishes and villages were also rife. Most development interventions come with institutional structures, frequently in the form of development or user committees at different levels.

In the study area, government development committees were only rarely operating due to lack of funding. It was often remarked that “it is very difficult to mobilise people for voluntary work”, and many local politicians and administrators pointed to an increasing monetisation of public life, not least during election campaigns. In cases where NGOs were able to offer some basic incentive, committees would occasionally take off (field notes,
Likewise, there was unanimous disappointment with the two successive MPs (group discussions: 7 November 2000, 3 March 2003, 5 March 2003, and 7 March 2003) who both were said to have come with empty promises only to forget them – “we can only see him on posters” (group discussion, 5 March 2003).

It is obviously impossible to generalise from one village, but it is plausible to assume that this reflects a more general tendency. The limits to popular participation have been underlined, for instance, by de Torrenté and Mwesigye (1999) in their study on health sector provision in other parts of Uganda and more recently by Golooba-Mutebi (2005). The proliferation of development committees at community level echoes the general trend towards pluralised development structures. This may be read as the creation of parallel structures of local government.

In principle, institutional ambiguity could result in parallel sources of democratic interest representation. While it should not be ruled out that some genuine capacity building may take root in the future, for the time being the dominant overall effect seems to be a institutional and political fragmentation. These parallel structures also turn into sites for intense elite competition over peasant loyalties and collective identities, a burning issue especially in the context of the struggle over federalism. This competitive dimension is likely to become more pronounced with the advent of multi-party politics.

A striking feature of the interviews and discussions that were held during fieldwork was the deep cleavage between the “official story” of local politics and the picture that most people gave on conditions of anonymity. While this hardly is unique to Masaka or Uganda, the discrepancy was so marked that a few reflections on it are required. For obvious reasons, I am unable to reference the observations in a stringent way. Nonetheless, it forms an important part of my understanding of local politics during the period of fieldwork.
While the official perspective, offered not only by politicians but by most categories spoken to, predictably emphasised bottom-up planning, popular participation and collaboration between all involved stakeholders striving for deepened empowerment, the version told on conditions of anonymity instead involved themes such as top-down control, politicised rivalry, corruption and influence peddling by elites and political apathy among “ordinary citizens”. While nobody would of course officially claim that conditions were perfect, obstacles were portrayed as temporary and as emphatically not rooted in power structures. What is interesting about this is perhaps not so much the fact that there existed a separation of narratives, but rather the lengths to which most people were willing to go in order to avoid “sensitive” issues, since the observation that politics is shaped by power would appear to be perfectly commonplace.11

An alternative picture of local politics emerging from these accounts would read something like this:

Relations between different kinds of actors in society and in the state are characterised by separation and conflicts to a greater extent than by collaboration and synergy. This seems also to hold true for actors at different levels and acting in different capacities in the political system, such as politicians and technocrats. Between levels, relations are typically hierarchical, and there is limited scope for influence, especially from the community or village level upward. It is very difficult, for instance, for LC I leaders to approach sub-county councillors, let alone challenge them, due to the overall distribution of power, resources, status and hegemony. Both structural, such as levels of education and income, and conjunctural factors, such as political subordination and loyalty, tend to reproduce these hierarchical relations.

11 Another possible interpretation is that local government officials were uncertain of what was really going on in local communities but would not want to be seen to admit this, which is why they held on to the official version. I owe this argument to Frederick Golooba-Mutebi.
There is no iron law governing this, although the leadership factor often makes a crucial difference with regard to access to and distribution of resources among communities. However, political structures are weak, and to a great extent dependent on functioning personal relations. Access is perceived as sustained through a combination of formal and informal attributes, including religious affiliation, ethnic belonging, age, gender, class and political orientation; in short: all markers of social differentiation interact.

According to one observer, “politicisation of community development is all-pervasive…” There is much uncertainty and mutual suspicion, reinforced by persistent interpretations of political orientation, religious affiliation and ethnic identity:

regardless of whether there is any clear substantial basis of the rumours or not. Interpretations arise directly or by association from questions like ‘where does this money come from?’ If a political leader suspects the involvement of ‘opposition politics’ in relation to a government programme or an NGO, close supervision will follow (interview notes, February 2004).

According to another observer:

there is ongoing politicisation around resource allocation from councillors or MPs, who will seek to capitalise on development. If the local leaders have good connections the area prospers – if not, it will perish. District and sub-county leaders will first need to cash in during their time in office. Only after that can they extend to the general good.

The umbrella organisation, Masaka NGO Forum had failed to take off because it was regarded as a vehicle for control on behalf of local political leaders. The typical pattern of political relationship between leaders and citizens is one of top-down manipulation, not bottom-up engagement. Social relations are hierarchical, most of civil society at the local level is weak in terms of finances and general capacity, which:
puts both civil society and communities in a position of
dependence, and communities are dependent upon both
politicians and NGOs. Both formal and real mechanisms of
accountability are weak, and structural obstacles are enormous
(interview notes, February 2004).

Another local observer had this to say:
local patrons and brokers dictate the needs of the community.
Big farmers operate as credit providers. Local capitalists are too
busy to engage in politics on a personal basis, but interfere by
pulling the strings. Normally, there is at least one in a village –
a landlord, a businessman or a prominent farmer – who is the
credit provider. These people use their influence in a number
of ways, by allocating loans, events, resources from condoms
to health units, in order to control the election of chiefs and
councillors… Of course this distorts the allocation of public
resources and public interests (interview notes, November
2000).

According to one account:
there is a widespread popular interpretation of what is
going on… Leaders and ordinary people at lower levels lack
education, skills, experience and power to challenge those
above them, be it NGOs or LCs. In order to get whatever little
they can, they cannot afford to make trouble or to be seen as
‘antigovernment’. To a great extent LCs have developed into
Movement structures, and where there are opposition leaders
these tend to keep a low profile.

One sub-county suffers from having a chairman from the
multiparty camp and he is therefore sidelined by the district
leadership (interview notes, February 2004).

In the experience of several informants, political connections
are activated around elections. Loyal and effective mobilisers are
rewarded, others are removed. Economic contributions during
campaigns are rewarded after them by, for example, allocation
of contracts. Perceived opposition activists or sympathisers are
harassed, co-opted or even beaten up; dissent, however modest
in scope or reach, is cut short. Development initiatives normally benefit people according to hierarchy; political and economic favours need to be paid back, and future political support cultivated. No group or community can afford to be seen as critical – risking to be cut off from networks of access. Everybody knows the implicit limits. This creates a political culture of silence – or whispering – reinforced by the ever growing disjuncture between official rhetoric claiming “all encompassing” politics and the reality manifested as nepotism, corruption and arrogance.

The fact that local political discourse during the time of field work to such a large extent was characterised by assumptions, whispers and rumours necessitates a methodological remark. Evidently it is impossible to verify the truth of all stories, in particular, those about corruption and nepotism that circulated in the popular rumour mill. All storytellers can be assumed to have their own reasons for wanting to influence my understanding. The relatively unambiguous direction of the stories, in combination with documentation from elsewhere (Centre for Basic Research 2005), gives them a degree of credibility, though. Moreover and regardless of the precise truth of the accusations, they reflect popular political consciousness and as such a parallel and influential version of what is going on. Furthermore, the subdued mode of discourse is significant in its own right, as it points to the constraints imposed on open critique by no-party politics.

This evidently also affects civil society. There is an ongoing competition between NGOs where both political and religious identities are tacitly assumed. Most CBOs are seen as having direct or indirect religious and political attachments, in terms of funding and coverage. All civil society organisations need to navigate in this politicised terrain, by its nature informal and implicit. Some groups disengage, while others are even created by or are loyal to leading politicians. As suggested by Brock et
al (2002), there may well be a certain dialectic to this, as such connections may function as channels of interest representation for poor communities. In contexts where democratic institutions for representation of social and political concerns are weak, parallel forms of participation and representation are bound to emerge. Informal linkages may be used both for imposing subordination and control and for breaking out of such relations of domination.

What can be said about the composition of the local state? Whereas the welfare arms of the state suffer from underfunding and weak capacity especially at lower levels, the coercive arms of the state and their extensions in society exercise effective presence when, for instance, the need arises to silence opposition activists and sympathisers, especially around the time of elections. This means that the capacity and legitimacy of the local welfare state is dependent upon NGOs, who by their nature refrain from becoming involved in local policy making for fear of becoming dragged into local politics. This opens up for regulated or unregulated parallel arenas of provision and welfare regimes.

Parallel systems are reinforced by NGO Development Committees and continued illegal health provision as the latter undercuts the capacity and legitimacy of the state. According to one observer, “it is difficult for the local government to compete with NGOs, especially international ones that come with a lot of resources and get things done.” Government provides contacts, but for “development” people turn to NGOs. “Many government programmes are associated with failure. People prefer “NGOs” and “PRA” [Participatory Rural Appraisal, an acronym which is now firmly integrated into community discourse.]12 Their work is very useful”, but the overall unintended consequences are that

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12 However, “PRA” has since ca 2003 assumed another and much less attractive meaning altogether, namely “Peoples Redemption Army”, a rebel group normally referred to as “shadowy”. The government links it to the political opposition party FDC, who in return claims that PRA is a government creation set up in order to frame its leaders.
it tends to fragment the institutional landscape and “alienate communities from the government” (interview notes, February 2004). However, the other side of the coin is that the local state also capitalises on the presence of NGOs, and regains some legitimacy by proxy.

Locally, health services are a potential political asset, although they are rarely given priority in budgets (Jeppsson 2001). Politicisation may occur in several ways. One way concerns the political capital always linked to social service delivery, either as offered by the government directly or by its “creating an enabling environment” for donors and NGOs. Another dimension concerns the competition for money and allocation of infrastructure that comes with competition for this political asset within localities. When asked about general conflicts relating to the health sector context, several informants mentioned the use of condoms (and contraceptives generally) as a sensitive issue, due to the influence of the Catholic church in the region. Catholic leaders have actively agitated against contraceptives and family planning, issues that are on the agendas of most development organisations. It is not uncommon that priests use prayer services and fundraising occasions to attack this practice and people associated with it, notably certain NGOs and the District Health Development Team.

Another source of conflict is the theft of drugs and the prescription of sub-standard drugs, associated with but not limited to the practice of “fake doctors”, yet another typical feature of the informal health regime. Unqualified personnel open up clinics in rural areas and pose as doctors. This is said to be a problem mainly in remote rural areas where the population is unaware, poor and dependent or lack other options; urban people are more aware and have a greater selection of clinics to turn to. It is very difficult for the local government to close down clinics if it cannot offer the local population an alternative health unit. This constitutes a dilemma for authorities. Enforcing
regulations would play into the hands of local politicians who would like to capitalise on popular discontent. As a result, authorities sometimes refrain from confronting quacks for fear of losing popularity. Informal welfare regimes linger on and interpenetrate with formal ones.

What explains the weak capacity of democratic forces in civil society and among communities to participate in and influence policy making and policies? Popular democratic influence is blocked by a number of factors. Financial resources are scarce, placing restrictions upon policy choices. Social relations are hierarchical, especially with regard to age, class, gender and level of education. It is very difficult for people at lower levels to effectively challenge their superordinates.

Local communities are often left at the mercy of higher levels of government and NGOs through patrons and brokers. Lack of politicisation from below is however not merely a matter of cultural-structural obstacles such as poverty, ignorance and illiteracy. Nor is it mainly due to lack of fiscal decentralisation and real scope for decision making alone, although the above factors are significant and contributing. Rather, those factors are better understood within the context of political power relations between centre and locality, between the local state and critical sections of civil society and between local elites and critical sections of local society.

The main reason is the strong degree of NRM control and authoritarian hierarchical relations more broadly on the local level. There is a general pattern of seeking to fit in and lying low, for different reasons. In the case of BUCADEF, the general scope for articulating political demands has waxed and waned with the fortunes of the Buganda kingdom in its negotiations with the central government, but it is also restricted by its own weak position vis-à-vis the local government. World Vision, just like all other foreign NGOs, enjoys a privileged role in development on the condition that it does not engage in politics.
Some conceptual remarks on (de-)politicisation might be in order at this point. The concept is elusive and relative: what is politicisation in one sense may be depoliticisation in another. This is all the more relevant to recognise since the concept is at work on different levels, as analytical category and as used in practice in a particular social formation, and as such an object of study. In Uganda as in other societies, politics has specific connotations. Under the no-party system, one of these was that (competitive) politics equalled “sectarianism” and should be condemned.

At the same time as the official discourse has separated “development” from “politics” as two distinct types of activities, and with the specific recommendation that civil society organisations should concentrate on the former and stay away from the latter, it has reconnected development to politics in another, implicit yet more specific sense, namely through the suggested link between successful development and government politics. But as can be seen in the quotes above, people use politicisation to refer to how certain political groups have hijacked development projects. What can be concluded, however, is that intensified politicisation in the sense of ideological control from above has, as is common, corresponded to the closure of independent politicisation of discourse and organisation from below. Development has largely become politicised in a specific and narrow sense, with an ideology and institutional forms that stress direct community participation at the expense of interest representation and influence within or beyond the political system.

The rather “numb” feeling about the cases examined here should be understood to reflect precisely the reality of a political culture of silence at the time of my fieldwork. Political control, fear and limited outlet for dissent subsumed social conflicts, blocked the scope for independent politicisation and sent political struggles to a shadowy terrain of rumours. Due to the
inherent legal-political contradictions of the Movement system, opposition remained muted. Political repression has been on the increase in Uganda since 1996 and exploded during the 2001 campaigns. Campaigns were characterised by intimidation, in Masaka, DP’s John Kawanga was prevented from campaigning in Buwunga and Bukoto South. The military travelled around at night, threatening people with terrible consequences if they did not vote for Museveni and NRM. Contrary to perspectives that emphasise poverty and ignorance, patronage politics and lack of effective citizenship must be understood in relation to hegemony and the exercise of power through the political system.

Conclusions: Community, state and civil society in local political arenas

This chapter has brought out the complexities of local politics. Struggles over power shift, even from one parish to another. Complexity necessitates a detailed level of analysis, yet there is a general pattern within which local complexity is played out. Relations of domination between different social forces have both central-local and intra-local dimensions. Central-local relations impact on both the local state and civil society. In the case of Masaka politics, they include specific features as the role of Buganda in national politics; the legacy of Catholicism and DP; past wealth built on coffee production; civil war and local decline; the HIV/AIDS epidemic; and the rise of the NRM to domination in local political arenas.

The leaders of local governments need for their political survival to consider both the central government and local power holders. They have to manoeuvre in relation to a variety of political interests that are mobilised, by for instance landlords, the Buganda kingdom, the Catholic church and donors. The scope for any of the groups studied to influence policy directions is shifting but overall relatively limited. Capacity for influence has
been explained in this chapter with reference to the balance of power between social forces and state interventions to regulate them but also by factors internal to the organisations and to the local settings.

Uganda Medical Workers’ Union is hampered by the political weakness of a fragmented trade union movement nationally and the absence of collective bargaining mechanisms, due to state hostility to labour rights and a strategy geared towards marginalising and repressing trade unions. Therefore, their perspectives on problems and solutions of the sector are effectively sidelined. Locally, the union has suffered from weak leadership. The weak financial base of BUCADEF and the restrictions on the political dimensions of cultural institutions place constraints on their effective presence as a development institution. World Vision primarily establishes itself as an efficient development provider but not as an actor on the political scene. To some degree, these incapacities, from the point of view of political demand-making can be related to other reasons as to why NGOs refrain from advocacy work or politicisation. The very nature of their involvement in scattered projects, limited in time, creates a temporary and spatially restricted ad hoc form of engagement, with weak roots in local society. The internal structures for decision making of NGOs tend to impede effective democratic demands by their beneficiaries – who are often addressed in precisely such terms. Furthermore, NGO discourses on poverty and development, with their focus on a narrow interpretation of community empowerment and participatory development tend to stress symptoms rather than underlying causes of problems, which reproduces a neglect of power relations.

It would be misleading, however, to assess the relations between these groups and local politics of development singularly against a model of pressure groups. At least in the cases of BUCADEF and World Vision, it is probably more interesting to
point to the parallel forms of demand-making and mobilisation that they generate. At the same time as these groups to different degrees lack the ability or will to function as pressure groups, they nonetheless constitute alternative sources of social power, who can offer protection and access to different constituencies. At the very local level, to the sub-county and below, World Vision tends to assume the role of the actual welfare arms of the state. BUCADEF is able to draw on the prestige of the kingdom to ensure cultural loyalty in exchange for development programmes.

The kingdom has reintroduced a competing version of how to structure relations between state and society and has expanded some political space for itself, even though that space is regularly narrowed every time the kingdom tries to push the central government for further autonomy. The presence of these organisations in local society furthermore offers points of access to the political system or ways of by-passing it, mainly for more influential sections of the population.

Due to their shifting capacity for interest representation, the organisations under study encounter the state in very different ways. UMWU’s weak leadership in the context of ad hoc forms for negotiations has left the union in a vacuum. Issues that should normally be subject to systematic negotiation are now handed down (or not, as is sometimes the case) from the hospital administration or achieved on an individual basis. BUCADEF is accommodated into structures for community development, also in an ad hoc manner, through the interconnectedness between public, private and NGO forms of provision.

At lower levels, they tend to negotiate their presence with the local state in an everyday informal mode. World Vision has been taken on board in important forums of decision making at the level of the district council but prefer to exercise influence in silent ways. Structures of regulation are overlapping and shifting, and these groups target different regulatory mechanisms. Many
issues remain beyond democratic control because they are handled by institutions that are privatised and informalised. At lower levels and with regard to welfare functions, it is certainly possible to speak of a degree of “civil societisation of the state” (Gibbon 2001: 833).

Different impulses, such as the preoccupation of the central government to seek control over local politics, NGOs’ concern with projects of participation, donors’ desire to promote governance, calls for the activation of “traditional institutions” by the Buganda kingdom and responses to all these merge in shaping local politics.

Institutional configuration is shaped by interest groups, networks and relations of rural authority. At the local level, regular interest groups are often characterised by uneven presence and weak capacity. Local arenas are distinguished by a plurality of overlapping institutional mechanisms, more or less formal or hierarchical, in terms of for example elite networks and coping strategies in the case of poorer social strata.

These mechanisms of control are often based on class, gender, (sub-)ethnic and religious identities. They all have differing capacities to create access to state institutions, due to local power relations, linkages to national or transnational centres of power. Occasionally these entities claim public authority in competition with or in the absence of the state. The links between formal and informal sources and forms of authority run in both directions. While formal rules may not regulate all aspects of public life, they do affect informal rules and activities. All actors need to relate to the imposition of formal rules, which serve to provide a system of reference for control. This has been illustrated above by discussing the different historical trajectories of these organisations and the extent to which they are able to relate to “sedimentary institutions” (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 1997; Jones 2005: 31-33) that is to say the layered institutional
configuration as shaped by past experiences and contemporary examples.

BUCADEF, World Vision, UMWU and other groups have very different kinds of resources to draw upon when seeking to root themselves in the local state and among communities. For World Vision, the lack of social roots is compensated by an abundance of economic resources. As much as BUCADEF represents an institution with cultural prestige, it has been unable to translate this into political influence because of the limited developmental resources on offer. Yet, conditions for local politics in Masaka are strongly shaped by the role of Buganda in national politics, but also by the relations between Masaka and Mengo.

There is considerable overlap between the district administration and NGOs in the field of community development in terms of staffing, funding and implementing. Close contacts tend to spill over into interdependence between sections of the political elite and the NGO leadership, each with their own networks linking them to national centres of power. Does this mean that the current development model tends to reproduce political patronage rather than promotion of democratic citizenship and interest representation? Francis and James (2003) suggest that the “technocratic mode” of design clashes with the “patronage mode” inherent in local politics.

While patronage politics certainly is pervasive, such an interpretation needs to be qualified. Their argument gives much weight to latent structures of undemocratic cultures marked by corruption and clientilism, without discussing the broader political processes that they are part of. It has been argued here that the low degree of autonomy and capacity of interest groups to push for inclusion into decision making processes needs to be understood with reference to the balance of power between social forces, the propensity of the state to engage with some of these forces and exclude others, and the structures of the state.
The contradiction that Francis and James call attention to does not merely follow from a technocratic design that is captured and perverted by some vague “patronage mode” that prevails locally. That contradiction is more persuasively understood in relation to political strategies of the central government to forge alliances with social forces and to the balance of power in society that shapes the responses to these strategies. Fundamental restrictions are imposed on the local leadership, just as they are on local governments all over the country; by dependence on revenue from the central government and by the strong political influence of NRM over LCs, particularly before, but also after the introduction of multi-party politics.

The practice of decentralisation is thus hampered by extremely weak fiscal bases and low levels of capacity, which tend to reinforce re-concentration over decentralised administrative units by way of their reliance on funding and staffing from central line ministries and donors (Francis and James 2003: 327, 334). In contrast to official claims of democratic accountability to the local electorate, there is financial and bureaucratic accountability to donors and the central government. The same contrast between the participation rhetoric and a hierarchical reality can be observed between the different levels of the local government system.

At lower levels of the political system, state-society relations become even more blurred and state institutions are only weakly and unevenly exercising routine functions of taxation, administration and welfare provision. Links between different levels of local government, in particular between LC I and LC III, are often disconnected. The scope for influencing higher instances of decision making is for most sections of society very limited indeed. This does not exclude the possibility of occasional individual or collective economic “empowerment”, but it points to the limits to systematic political engagement
set by a combination of factors, including poverty, hierarchical social relations and political closure in terms of the absence of both (until recently) political parties and of organisationally and politically viable civil society groups. Local politics is strongly shaped by the interpenetration of social, economic and political inequality.

Turning finally to the more general theoretical theme of state formation at the local level, a few reflections will be offered. The inquiry into what constitutes “the state” locally sets out from the observation that central states in developing countries lack capacity to penetrate society in order to extract resources, engage in nation building or to enforce legislation and administration evenly, consistently and reliably all over their territories in the terms of Michael Mann (1986), they lack “infrastructural power”. This theme has been subject to a vast literature. It has been suggested that the state is unable to capture society (Hydén 1983) or that it finds itself captured by local strongmen in society (Migdal 1988). Without going into detail about the relative merits of these contributions, I have drawn on arguments that stress the mutual constitution of state and society (Boone 2003; Migdal et al 1995) in terms of how state institutions are rooted in and reshape power relations in society.

State-centred views with their focus on the capacity of states to penetrate and control society tend to gloss over the ways in which state intervention is fought out at different levels, as well as the different and occasionally competing trajectories of state-society relations. State institutions, especially at the local level, are not only shaped by political calculations of the regime and the presence of a state-party machinery to ensure for instance electoral loyalty. They are also formed by the social forces that try to mould them.

In the present conjuncture, the downsizing and decentralisation of state structures have opened up space for political forces
at the local level. From the perspective of communities, these forces intervene as parallel political entities with specific resources to offer. International NGOs may undertake the role as welfare providers; ethno-regional movements may operate with tacit claims to statehood, to draw on two of the cases discussed here. This has been interpreted as the creation of a continuum of governmental apparatuses (Ferguson 1998: 58) or “degrees or kinds of ‘state-ness’” (Doornbos 2000: 255), where the redrawing of lines between “state” and “society” is crucial for the construction of authority (Hansen and Stepputat 2001). Where the lines should be drawn keeps being contested in all political arenas.

In this chapter, specific features of a specific context are highlighted. But local contexts are not unique, of course; they share some common denominators. In the concluding chapter, I shall broaden the of local politics by placing this close-up picture of the local complexities in Masaka in a wider Ugandan perspective.
Conclusions: Militarism and ‘Governance’ in Uganda

This book has sought to theorise and explain how different state-society relations create or block conditions for democratising the state. It has situated the in the context of the apparent contradictions that characterise Ugandan state formation and state-society relations, from militarism to “governance” participation. The problem has been addressed from a theoretical perspective that stresses the interplay between relations of domination in society, within the state, and among transnational political forces. More specifically, it has analysed state-society relations as they have unfolded through modes of conflict regulation and interest representation in the health sector.

The book set out from the argument that the exercise of state power is mediated – accepted, modified, resisted, and so on – at the level of society and that the character of the state in terms of its capacity and propensity for, among other things, development
and democracy is shaped by its internal composition and its roots among different domestic and external constituencies. When holders of state power seek to consolidate control, they do this in relation to demands from domestic social forces and external pressure and within structural constraints such as inherited institutions and revenue base. What does this mean in contemporary Uganda?

This book argues that the present government has, from an initial position of weakness, consistently sought to secure control in response to demands from contending political forces and to challenges of promoting accumulation and revenue, and consolidating legitimation and a political base, but that political pressure has over time led to tactical moves that result in contradictions between different aims such as economic growth and political support. Measures taken to sustain political support, such as for example creating new districts, has increased public expenses and gradually slowed down growth, as opposed to an earlier phase of reforms when political support and growth complemented each other to a greater degree.

Although achievements of economic recovery and institutional reconstruction are real, they are institutionally and regionally uneven and fragile due to inherent contradictions reproduced by underlying structural weaknesses maturing into political conflicts. The scope and political content of these reforms are heavily shaped by a historical legacy of authoritarian structures, as well as by the contemporary reinforcement of part of them through the way state rulers have based their power among forces in society that have tended to block rather than to promote democracy. While this argument should not be taken to imply structuralist determinism, it does underline the structured conditions for political agency and institutional reforms. In this chapter, I will start by summarising the findings before situating them in a broader context in the second part.
The analysis in Chapter 2 explored the historical roots of the institutional landscape of a multiplicity of welfare regimes. Prior to independence, health services were mainly provided by missions, and modes of provision and regulation evolved in tandem with the fragmenting structures of indirect rule and regional underdevelopment under the colonial state. Only under late colonialism did the state make modest efforts to expand basic welfare services to Africans. After independence, the Ugandan state responded to popular demands by embarking upon ambitious programmes to expand health and education services. Underpinned by export earnings from coffee, facilities rapidly expanded in numbers and improved in quality.

While Uganda in a broad sense followed a rather typical model of state-directed economic policy making and incorporation of interest groups, strong regional power centres provided a countervailing tendency, regional and national welfare systems coexisted, albeit ever more uneasily. While religious institutions continued providing health services, this took place under the close supervision of the state.

The state-centred orientation of the political economy became much more pronounced after the constitutional crisis in 1966 and the resulting centralisation of state power, including economic policy making. Public health and welfare services suffered badly from political and particularly economic destabilisation from the late 1960s onward, and so did the health status of Ugandans. Public infrastructure and regulatory capacity fell apart.

The disintegration of the economy, society and state left a legacy of fragmented and increasingly informal welfare regimes that survived under great stress. Military rule, interim governments and civil war destabilised society in fundamental ways and in the context of institutional decay, insecurity and political repression, most people had no option but to take recourse to a combination of coping strategies. The legacy of connections between formal and informal, public and private health regimes...
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continues to shape policy making and institutional reform in subtle ways. This was very visible during the period covered in Chapter 3, from 1986 to the early 1990s.

When the NRM government embarked upon economic liberalisation reforms, it did so from a position of political weakness and implemented policies through very weak state institutions. These years were characterised by intense political struggles over NRM’s future direction and armed rebellions that challenged the state. Priority was consequently given to macro-economic stabilisation and security. While NRM faced little effective resistance from a delegitimised and damaged political opposition, greater threats came from armed rebellions. State control and legitimation revolved around the politics of security or its absence.

As the NRM had both its institutional origins and its claims to control over state power rooted in armed struggle, restoration of security was and for a long time remained a chief political asset in the south for the new government. In the north and east, on the contrary, insurgencies continued to destabilise society. In both southern and northern Uganda, but for different reasons, health and social welfare in general continued to be neglected during the late 1980s.

Although a great number of civil society organisations were set up, reactivated and or entered from abroad during this period, most were concerned with immediate issues of coping and survival. With only an embryonic health policy, there was rather little to influence in a systematic fashion. As a consequence, informal welfare regimes remained highly important for most strata of Ugandan society and continued to dominate the institutional landscape and influence the workings also of formal public health care.

From the early 1990s the Ugandan state was restructured and expanded. As compared to countries where adjustment
programmes straightforwardly demanded downsizing of the public sector, the Ugandan case was more contradictory. Certainly, Uganda government enforced thoroughgoing retrenchment in the civil service and set out on a military demobilisation programme. But only a few years later, the bureaucracy had grown again, although now in the local state, and the military was being expanded once more.

This change cannot be understood unless related to processes of regime consolidation and state-society relations. By the mid-1990s, the NRM had established firm control over the political landscape. Its achievements in stabilising the state and reviving the economy had consolidated its control over much of Ugandan society as well as award it with legitimacy among donors, who also provided a growing revenue base for the state.

Political control was sealed through the enactment of the new constitution in 1995 and the presidential and parliamentary elections the following year. This offered the government a much stronger degree of autonomy vis-à-vis both domestic and foreign constituencies. Accordingly, it could thereafter embark upon political projects more independently. The more closely the government seemed to be following advice from key donors with respect to macro-economic and formal governance reforms, the further it could stray from donors when it came to more hard-core political issues such as political pluralism and the role of the military in politics. Or more precisely, while donors may have developed concerns about corruption and NRM monopoly over state power (and the US did try to push for multi-party politics during the Constituent Assembly debates in 1995) they have by and large given priority to economic policy compliance.

Chapter 4 tells the story of this period of consolidation, expansion and restructuring of the Ugandan state. State legitimation exercises were carried out in relation to both domestic and foreign members of the broad-based coalition, who in turn from different directions sought to reshape the political
orientation of the state. From the mid-1990s, the government was encouraged by donors to include civil society in policymaking. Due to increased institutional, financial and political state capacity, it could do so from a position of strength and extend its invitation of participation to a selection of favoured civil society actors who had emerged in close connection to the NRM state.

With regard to the social base of the state, including the broad contours of state-civil society relations, the contradictions between the encouragement of partnership and participation, and the closure of interest representation and influence at the level of politics may be qualified in several ways. Participation is limited to certain actors, and the more resources they command, the greater their influence, obviously. The scope for participation varies between ministries, with “soft ministries” being more accommodating. It is restricted to certain issues, while the most important issues and institutions were safely insulated from popular demand making. These contradictions were given their legal expression in the NGO Registration Act of 2006. The structural contradictions that has underpinned the conditions of NGO operations in terms of a threatening restrictive legal framework but accommodative practices render them vulnerable to political manipulation, and have been reproduced in the discourses and practices of individual NGOs, who wrestle with contradictory logics of “partnership” with the state and “advocacy” against it, or of both implementing and monitoring government policies.

What then can be said of the character of the local state and civil society as analysed in Chapter 5? At one level local politics is indeed very composite and structured by specific historical legacies that result in subtle or sometimes even marked differences in levels of development and political orientation even within a single district. At the same time, most local governments are strikingly similar with regard to their relation
to the central government in that they are financially unviable and correspondingly politically vulnerable – particularly so, of course, under no-party rule.

Differences between districts largely follow regional historical fortunes, in individual cases bolstered by the influence of national political heavyweights where these are prominent sons (in most cases) or daughters of the soil. The latter impact may of course lead to occasional clashes between intervening kingmakers, normally operating in the national political arena, and local strongmen, but this is invariably preferred by the local population as compared to the absence of such power.

The extraverted character of the local state at the district level stems from other external influences apart from the reliance on revenue from the central government and political dependence on NRM under no-party rule. One such influence follows from the weak resource base and is manifested in the form of resourceful NGOs such as World Vision or other donor programmes. These are taken onboard as unacknowledged but effective partners in local government, rather like the central government has embraced donors at the national level. At the same time, NGOs need to navigate in the local political context, downplay any political pretensions that they might have and relate to local power brokers such as politicians, religious leaders and landlords.

In the case of Masaka, yet another external influence comes from Mengo and the leadership of the Buganda kingdom. BUCADEF has been analysed as a tool for the kingdom to reclaim its relevance in developmental terms, and the district leadership needs to relate to the shifting terrain of Mengo-central government relations. While the district leadership evidently is not keen to surrender power to Mengo, they still have to tread carefully in view of the popular support that the Kabaka enjoys. Hence, within rather severe financial and political restrictions
for the local state, local politics is fluid and shaped by delicate considerations of informal influence.

The findings from Bulando suggest that the state is weakly and unevenly institutionalised at lower levels of the system, or the level where the majority of Ugandans lead their lives. Again, this is not to suggest that the state is absent; it is to say that different state institutions are present and absent to varying degrees from the point of view of local communities. This differs between regions, over time and in relation to different sections of society.

In the case investigated at the level of village politics, the welfare institutions of the state were notable by their relative absence, or more precisely: by their distant presence. But this needs to be qualified. There is a primary school in Bulando (although the standard of education there may be subject to debate, as with most government primary schools in poor rural areas); but the health centre is far away, as are the sub-county headquarters, not least in terms of political accessibility. A village elite has access to the state at the sub-county level or beyond. Although not always manifestly present, the state impacts on local politics in some ways, even if indirectly and by unintended consequences.

The findings point to the existence of parallel political arenas at the local level. Following Jones (2005: 33-34), one may speak of a *bricolage* of sedimentary state and non-state institutions, which to shifting degrees are embedded in local society. For some groups and individuals, local informal arenas replace state ones, while for others these arenas function as vehicles for connecting to the state at other levels, directly or through power brokers. Foreign NGOs, in themselves power brokers, may be superficially rooted even where they energetically develop their own institutions such as development committees. One cannot, however, exclude the possibility that in the absence of immediate
state welfare and development intervention, these groups may, by combining material and spiritual resources as in the case of World Vision, gain relevance and quickly embed themselves by becoming indispensable.

A decade ago, Bazaara (1997) wrote about a looming agrarian crisis even in previously relatively prosperous Masaka. In the context of rapid population growth, land fragmentation and erosion, coffee wilt, unresolved land tenure relations, small local markets and limited employment opportunities, one may foresee the continued relevance of NGOs and the permanent institutionalisation of ad hoc forms of governance structures that characterise current local health regimes.

The above summary may unsurprisingly be interpreted as a critique of governance expectations. Does it then render support to a neo-patrimonialist reading of Ugandan politics, recently articulated by critics of the NRM government (Barkan 2005; Mwenda and Tangri 2005)? Not really. The influence of vast patronage networks, informal and corrupt modes of primitive accumulation among complexes of business people, politicians and high ranking military, and an arbitrary and increasingly personalised rule over key state institutions by the president need to be related to relations of domination in society as these impact on state formation, as well as to countervailing tendencies in order to explain the scope for and content of patronage politics. As such, these features may be thought of as both causes and symptoms of authoritarian rule. I shall seek to illustrate this from the health sector.

In August 2005, what came to be known as the Global Fund scandal was made public. It was disclosed that billions of shillings, donated by the Geneva based Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, had been diverted in an extensive series of scams and that government ministers had been involved. Popular fury exploded against what was seen as vultures
stealing from the sick and dying patients. The three ministers in the Ministry of Health had to leave the government after the 2006 elections in a move widely interpreted as a concession to donors and the public. Evidently, this was a temporary and largely symbolic sacrifice that may not have affected the deeper structures of corruption or the regulation of the health sector.

The Global Fund saga nevertheless typifies the decay of state institutions and points to underlying problems. Parallel to struggles between ministries over resource allocation and policy priorities, informal political and economic struggles over accumulation and influence are manifested within state institutions. Alongside its routine functions, the state is an arena for intense factional infighting among the ruling class, and the main reason that countervailing forces within for example, the Ministry of Health are too weak to resist is that certain groups are seen to have been given leeway “from above”. But again, such patronage politics needs to be understood in a broader context of presidential authoritarianism and suppression of opposition politics at party political and civil society levels. I shall elaborate this argument in the remaining part of this concluding chapter.

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This study set out with a broad aim: to examine the formation of state-civil society relations in contemporary Uganda in order to illustrate and explain the scope and capacity of different social forces to create access to/and democratise the state. It has sought to address that topic empirically through detailed case studies of state-civil society relations in the health sector, at the level of national politics as well as locally in Masaka District. Now, it is obvious that the case studies undertaken cannot in themselves provide sufficient evidence in order to either corroborate or refute any specific theory about the nature of the contemporary Ugandan state.
First of all, the findings need to be related to conclusions from other studies. But that is not enough. Empirical conclusions are also essentially dependent on the plausibility of theoretical arguments. This final section seeks to situate the findings in precisely such empirical and theoretical contexts in order to relate the parts to the whole, so as to enable a return to the wider scope that motivated the study. It draws on existing empirical work on other instances of state-civil society relations, in other political arenas and regions, as well as on theoretical reflections of a more general kind.

In order to bring out what is specific and what is typical about the cases studied here, I will start by going beyond the civil society cases in this study and compare them to other instances and then move on to discuss how state-society relations have evolved in other parts of Uganda. After that I seek to situate health politics on the broader canvas of state formation in Uganda in its entirety, including the transnational dimensions of this. Finally, I shall make a brief comparison between Uganda and a few other countries.

**Civil society beyond the present cases**

How typical are the cases analysed in this study? Judging from a number of studies (Dicklich 1998; Bazaara and Nyago 1999; Oloka-Onyango and Barya 1997), the conclusions offered above about the characteristics of the groups under study correspond to a typical pattern. When the NRM came to power, it accommodated all political forces, placed a ban on political parties and incorporated civil society. Civil society was structurally weak and eroded after years of turmoil. The NRM chose to promote and elevate development NGOs and subordinate unions and cooperatives, a strategy that was both consistent with neo-liberal economic policy and an integral part of its project to institutionalise a political base.
The persistent weakness of Ugandan civil society can be attributed to structural factors, such as weak middle and working classes and strong landlords, reinforced by political conjunctural ones, such as the incorporation of many civil society organisations into a project for state reconstruction under a restrictive political framework. This has created a pluralised but apolitical NGO based civil society, oriented towards “community development”. Appeals to popular participation are prominent in shaping civil society strategies for rural development more broadly.

The preoccupation with “ownership” and “empowerment” has its ideological roots in the governance model and shares important aspects of its technocratic governance populism with both the NRM doctrine and the World Bank’s notions of “poverty reduction” (Harrison 2004: Chapter 6). Workshop and consultancy modes of engagement with constituencies dominate. Cross-cutting forms of public-private-NGO “partnership models” in social policy making seem, not only in Uganda, to lead to institutional fragmentation of decision making arrangements and ad hoc forms of regulation and frequently also to informalised structures of access to these arrangements – in contrast to expectations of synergy effects (Bangura 2001).

One common denominator of the institutional linkages created between state and society under the present government in Uganda is that they encourage community participation within given limits but disconnect participation from interest representation around issues of power and influence in society. This is further reproduced by an official discourse that stresses the separation of “development” from “politics” and appeals to populist notions of “the poor” and restrains the articulation of different perspectives on more general aspects of economic policy making or politics at large.

The participatory tendency may transform the modes of regulation of interest representation within certain policy arenas,
as more actors are accommodated into them. However, this is not without its own complications of accountability. Furthermore, it is contingent upon particularistic as opposed to institutionalised relations and overdetermined by the main tendency towards authoritarianism. When interest representation around political issues, both within the political system and through civil society organisations, is effectively blocked, most people are likely to turn to any channel of influence that may serve their interests. Another aspect of this, as observed by Tidemand (1995a: 44) is that with different degrees of privatisation of social services, there is less to control through political institutions.

In shaping its relations with society, the NRM government opted for a general strategy of inclusion. This had different dimensions. One was the close regulation of the parameters for the operation of interest groups in order to ensure that no undue “political” activities were undertaken. The suppression of most politicised social movements, the successful incorporation of some (the women’s movement being the most prominent example – see Goetz 2002, Tripp 2000), and the emergence of NGOs and community based organisations through a combination of local coping strategies and structures of foreign development aid has resulted in a recomposition of civil society (Dicklich 1998).

When it comes to issues of real influence, the NRM state has sought to bypass urban based, middle class political elites with bases in civil society and parties and instead forge direct links with the peasantry through LCs. With a crude distinction, the NRM state is populist, with the President’s frequent claims to rule on behalf of the masses (Carbone 2005), rather than corporatist, although it displays characteristics of both modes of incorporation.

Gibbon (1992) suggests that some general characteristics of contemporary “post-developmentalist” civil society are the predominance of groups with a narrow social base; a mode of internal decision making based on hierarchy rather than
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membership; and ad hoc forms of engaging the state. Such propositions rhyme with the findings of this and other empirical studies on Uganda’s civil society. Overall, while this kind of civil society may pluralise social life and in some cases expand the parameters for participation, it only rarely strengthens the interests of subordinate groups (cf. Huber et al 1997: 328).

At this point, it is useful to elaborate on the discussion by Huber et al of the “contradictions of contemporary democracy” (1997). More precisely, what is relevant for the purposes of this discussion is their contention that while decisive structural features, including the nature of class relations, state structures and international relations which frame the current conjuncture are conducive for promoting formal democracy, these features at the same time tend to obstruct social and participatory dimensions of democracy.

This apparent contradiction bears clear resemblance to the arguments and conclusions of this study. In the Ugandan context, the paradox has in this study been formulated as the coexistence of technocratic governance and militarism. To draw on Huber et al’s argument, these seemingly diverging tendencies are really linked and constitute different expressions of authoritarianism. They are not linked in a seamless way, though, but connected as different expressions of how political groupings have over time sought to shape the form and content of the state. This is best explained by the balance of power between different political forces in society, within the state and at the transnational level.

In Uganda, the apparent paradox was during the no-party system in place until 2006 not manifested as contradictions between formal and deepened democracy but as tensions between controlled participation in LCs and for selected civil society organisations in poverty reduction arenas, on the one hand, and marginalisation and militarised repression of outright opposition politics, on the other. However, since the introduction
of multiparty politics in 2006 the contradictions between fragile
democratic forms and institutions and authoritarian social
relations and political practices that tend to undercut the former
have been deep and wide.

The guided and restricted participation for accommodating
social forces and the suppression of more radical ones is also,
incidentally, reminiscent of the political reforms of late
colonialism. The structural shift in the fiscal base of the state
towards an economy and a state built on foreign aid has meant
that external political interests in the shape of governments,
transnational organisations, private capital and international
civil society are more influential in shaping the state than
are domestic social forces. Also, this has occurred in far from
straightforward ways, as many of these external interests have
had different agendas and have also in different ways been
appropriated by the government as their interventions have
increasingly been internalised into the state apparatus.

Yet another dimension of this discussion is that much social
life is not easily captured by references to state and civil society.
Informalisation continues to shape patterns of coping strategies
with regard to health provision and beyond. State presence is
highly shifting in extent and quality. Much provision of health and
access to it, such as formal and informal markets for medication
and treatment, remains very weakly and unevenly regulated. In
spite of stated aims of partnership between public and private
forms of provision, the health regimes, particularly – but not
only – in remote areas, remain shaped by coping strategies,
resulting in institutional fragmentation and stratification of
access and influence.

**Local politics beyond Masaka**

As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, local politics in
Masaka has many roots. State-society relations are shaped by
overlapping trajectories, including the role of Buganda within
Uganda, the role of Catholicism and DP within Buganda as well as in national politics, the political economy of migrant labour and coffee production and the destruction of Masaka town during the 1979 war and its continued decay after that. Compared to the other parts of the country, however, the central region has enjoyed stability and relative prosperity since 1986.

The theoretical argument proposes that local political arenas are shaped by a combination of intra-local and global-national-local power relations and that regional differences run deep. The admittedly fluid patterns of public authority found in local arenas are shaped in relation to systematic attempts at structuring central-local relations. The scope for local claims to authority is closely connected to the uneven ways in which such structuration is played out. Before exploring further how such differences may shape state-society relations, I will make a few comments on the common denominators within which local variations currently occur.

The organisation of local government along lines of “popular participation” has been an important dimension of restructuring state-society relations. In the early 1990s, RCs were transformed by more general decentralisation reforms, placing the responsibility for service delivery with Local Councils. On one level, the dynamics of local politics is shifting between districts due to variations in local government capacity and the specific local social structure. More broadly, however, a main tendency has been a gradual shift in the political identity of local government institutions from democratic organs to state-party vehicles for local mobilisation.

While LCs transformed the role of local government in a more democratic and participatory direction by replacing the institution of the chief with elected councils, the limits to both participation and democracy have gradually become more visible. Political participation was until 2005 exclusively confined to LCs, within the Movement system. The real as opposed to formal
autonomy of LCs is circumscribed by their generally low capacity for revenue extraction, leading to dependence on centrally allocated and to a large extent earmarked financial grants. This reinforces the political vulnerability of these economically unviable local entities. It would be an exaggeration to describe LCs as through and through politicised by the government. They have harboured contradictory tendencies, being at the same time arenas for popular participation, NRM structures and local state forms.

Regional support for suppressed opposition forces places limits on the imposition of NRM hegemony, consistent and effective political penetration from above is typically more limited at lower levels. As the tensions inherent in the construction of the NRM itself grew, however, the political and bureaucratic dimensions of LCs gradually came to overshadow the democratic one. By and large, LCs have over time become increasingly significant in cultivating a rural political base for the regime. This rural electoral support has in turn been instrumental in securing NRM victories in the presidential and parliamentary elections of 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011.

Again, though, there are important regional and local variations on this theme. Many peripheral areas – not only in the north, but also in the east, the far west and within the central region, such as Kalangala District to the immediate east of Masaka, in Lake Victoria – are weakly integrated into the national economy and state structures. This similiar has many causes, including historically rooted underdevelopment in combination with contemporary political marginalisation. Even in core areas, effective state presence is geographically, temporally and institutionally uneven. For the sake of clarity, I shall illustrate this point through a discussion of health and state-society relations in, until very recently, war-torn Acholi region. This will also make it possible to interrogate state formation
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through the medium of health and social policy regimes in a more elaborate way.

As discussed in previous chapters, a series of rebellions broke out in northern Uganda after 1986, following the disintegration of former national armies and in the context of a political vacuum and a deep social crisis in the north. Another way of viewing these rebellions is that the civil war never ended in 1986 – it just shifted battleground from central to northern Uganda (Finnström 2003: 100-109). Acholi region was then plagued by civil war until 2006.

The LRA rebellion started in the late 1980s and has ebbed and flowed in intensity. After a government offensive in the early 1990s, peace settlements were close in 1994 but failed at the last minute. The war took off again and entered a more brutal phase as LRA targeted civilians on a massive scale, killed adults and abducted children. In 1996, the UPDF started to move civilians into what it called “protected villages”. The process of displacement is disputed. The government has always claimed that people moved voluntarily but critics have charged that much displacement was forced and that property was looted.

In 2002 the UPDF set out on its “Iron Fist” offensive, which pushed the LRA into southern Sudan but which also triggered abduction of children on an unprecedented scale. The number of people living in camps doubled to 800,000, ordered there by a UPDF ultimatum pronounced that anyone moving outside the camps would be treated as a potential rebel. In 2006 it was estimated that 1.6 million people – among whom 95 per cent were of the Acholi population – were internally displaced in Acholi, Lango and Teso regions (Rodriguez 2006). Conditions in the camps were appalling. Security, supposedly the reason for their establishment in the first place, was erratic; poverty was rampant. HIV/AIDS rates by far exceed the rest of the country. People died in the hundreds – or according to one report, even more than one thousand (WHO 2005) – every week from easily

While local governments in other parts of Uganda have functioned as vehicles for control and inclusion, state-society relations in Acholi are characterised by their dramatic distortion, epitomised by forced displacement into camps that has created a lasting state of emergency and in effect informal apartheid with regard to basic citizenship entitlements. Hence, state-society relations mean something completely different in Acholi than in Masaka. The welfare arms of the state have by and large withdrawn and have for some time been replaced by a great many entities. Education and health is provided by local and international NGOs and UNICEF, while is food by the World Food Programme. Much as humanitarian aid is indispensable for the survival of the population in the camps, it is unwittingly caught in the logic of militarised politics (Finnström 2006).

The composition of the Ugandan state in Acholi is heavily tilted towards its coercive institutions. Much of civil society, apart from religious organisations, has entered from outside and remains unable to address the humanitarian catastrophe in political terms, partly because they are the very same groups that also constitute part of the informal welfare institutions of the state, disconnected from and subordinate to its repressive organs. This has also resulted in the subordination of local civil society and the separation between state and society, as the state denies local society possibilities of expression and organisation.

It is easy to note that the Uganda government denied its citizens in the camps their basic human rights in terms of protection, health and education. With regard to the protection of its citizens, the state failed completely in Acholi. In order to go beyond this observation, however, one needs to apply a political of how this humanitarian disaster came to be and why political demands related to it have been neglected for so
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long. One such analysis offers the perspective that for a long time, the state consciously dismantled all forms of political opposition stemming from parties or social movements among the Acholi population by discrediting such expressions as “rebel collaboration”, leaving the bulk of the population in a vacuum between the government and the rebels by condemning them to a life in camps (Branch 2005; Finnström 2003).

The Ugandan experience of state formation points among other things to ad hoc regulation of welfare functions and the simultaneous systematic creation of new institutional linkages that deepens the political presence of the central state in local arenas, but with deep regional differences. While fragmentation of state authority is more visible in relation to welfare functions of the state, its coercive apparatus is often marked by its heavy presence. Of local level complexity needs to be connected to patterns of central-local relations, including the way central power holders have developed specific strategies in order to deal with regional power configurations in combination with the capacity of these social forces to respond to intervention. This requires that both state and civil society are analytically disaggregated, and that the “presence” or “absence” of the state is discussed in relation to the balance of forces in society.

State formation beyond health: Militarism and governance

While noting that the situation in the camps certainly is extreme, it is absolutely fundamental not to treat the north as a residual category or as an exception. On the contrary, it is necessary to incorporate the northern war fully into the understanding of the Ugandan state in order to expand and revise that understanding. The particular composition of state and civil society in Acholi region, and the role of militarism and coercion there, requires a discussion of the overall direction of institutional and territorial dimensions of state formation in Uganda and how power
relations have structured the selective generation of development and consent as well as underdevelopment and coercion.

In this section, I attempt to elaborate the theoretical argument about state-society relations, not only within the contexts drawn upon in the previous sections, but also in relation to central dimensions of state formation in Uganda more broadly. The incumbent government has consistently sought to re-root the state in society in response to challenges of consolidating control and of cultivating a political base. While achievements of economic recovery and institutional rehabilitation are real, they remain not only fragile due to inherent contradictions reproduced by underlying structural weaknesses, but also one-sided and shallow due to the absence of democratic processes. What follows is an attempt to answer the main research question, the scope for social forces to democratise the state, although in its reverse form. What has been the nature of the social relations that have blocked democracy and formed the basis of authoritarian rule?

A fundamental assumption with regard to the argument developed below is that state formation is a very complex process and needs to be understood in its historical context. While, as in the Ugandan case, donors might be more concerned with institutional reforms of for example the bureaucracy, often with a technicist bias, such reforms are always enmeshed in political struggles with economic, social and institutional roots over state power and its social foundations. This proposition is coupled to the argument that state formation as ongoing process is bound to consist of parallel, overlapping and contradictory tendencies, more or less coherently regulated.

Contradictions arise partly from the different interests of ruling elites, other social forces and external actors, which are all reflected in the state. They are also due to the fact that state managers seek to gain control, frequently within institutions marked by relatively low regulatory capacity, through often contradictory strategies for accumulation and legitimation. For
similar perspectives on state formation, see Hutchful (2002) on Ghana, and Mustapha (2002 a) on Nigeria. That said, the following remarks about “main tendencies” need to be understood as crude shorthand, which implicitly encompasses these complexities and countervailing trends.

In 2005, the government succeeded in amending the constitution to the effect that presidential term limits were abolished. This highly contentious issue had become a central part of a transition process which also involved legalising political party activity, so that the February 2006 presidential and parliamentary elections were held under a multi-party dispensation. Although not quite as violent as the 2001 elections, the process as a whole was marred by state-inspired coercion, in addition to other forms of rigging. Furthermore, throughout the entire period from 2001, there has been a marked tendency towards the militarisation of the entire state apparatus. How can such intensified repression be situated within the long-term process of state-society relations? The following explanation revolves around an account of shifting forms of government control, and in particular its changing accumulation and legitimation strategies, following from struggles and cracking and emerging coalitions within and outside the state.

When NRM took over power, it was a relatively weak political grouping, prompting it to strike alliances with stronger political and social forces in order to consolidate its rule. In so doing, it inevitably incorporated contradictory political tendencies. Among those tendencies were not only representatives of established power centres such as the DP and the Catholic church. The government also accommodated factions of capital which had acquired their wealth through state-based speculative accumulation during the era of economic instability, the groups popularly known as mafutamingi. Even though liberalisation and inflow of development aid gradually transformed the revenue base of the state and dismantled parastatals as direct source
of instant wealth creation, old and new groups of *mafutamingi* entrenched themselves in the state (Mamdani 1990b: 434-435). As Mamdani pointed out in the mid-1990s:

there is today a contradiction between the democratising tendency in our politics and the anti-democratic thrust of the economic policy contained in the IMF programme. Given time, that contradiction is bound to surface (1995: 78).

It is a principal contention of this book that this is precisely what happened and that the anti-democratic tendency superseded the democratic one in the political arena, too, through the ways in which speculative economic elites entrenched themselves in the state, and the government correspondingly suppressed autonomous organisation that seemed to offer resistance to those and similar forces.

The structure of the state was transformed during the period of NRM consolidation from the early 1990s, with civil service, privatisation and decentralisation reforms. Another shift, strongly promoted by key donors, was to concentrate domestic influence on decision making around economic policy to an insulated group of elite technocrats in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) – a “poverty reduction Dream Team” (Brock *et al.* 2002: 7), or a transnationalised elite (Robinson 2001). The relative success of the economic reform programme stabilised a ruling coalition of leading donors, pro-liberalisers in the government and economic beneficiaries of the reforms, underpinned by broader political support for NRM from rural constituencies in southern Uganda and many sections of civil society.

The policy framework promoted by this coalition centred on macro-economic growth, low inflation, state reforms and, implicitly attached, an acceptance from donors for a continued political monopolistic control – a dominant model which in this study has been called a technocratic governance regime, under
which the ruling coalition was successful in coordinating and ensuring its economic and social reproduction.

NRM reformulated its legitimation efforts, based on governance success, and directed it towards new local and foreign constituencies. References to radical nationalism and popular democracy were unsurprisingly used more infrequently, but were not altogether abandoned as they occasionally proved instrumental in justifying restrictions on political pluralism. NRM consolidated its political control with the 1995 Constitution in which, to repeat, the temporary no-party agreement was codified into a Movement system in spite of protests by parties and moderate NRM leaders, through the 1996 elections. This froze the political landscape, and with hindsight made it appear more stable than it probably was. Seeds of discontent and renewed opposition were sown during this period. The tensions between different political interests, not least within NRM and the state apparatus, some of whom were sidelined politically and economically by this model, grew stronger during this period, and would eventually burst open.

During this period, privatisation of parastatals took off, something which dramatically raised the stakes in the struggles for resources and state power and generated factionalism. Many cases of privatisation were tainted by gross corruption, repeatedly involving friends and family of the President or other top politicians in collusion with international capital (Human Rights Watch 2005a; Tangri and Mwenda 2001). States are always shaped by contestation between different interests, including strategies of ruling class factions to develop both their own institutions and those of the state in order to ensure the reproduction of both in relation to resistance from subordinate forces. When subordinate political forces are weakened and alienated, the state runs the risk of being reduced to nothing more than an arena for intense factional infighting among the ruling
class. Something of the sort that happened in Uganda in the late 1960s and during the 1970s. So what about the Movement state? Was there greater scope for various social forces to impose discipline on ruling elites?

Undeniable achievements had been made compared to earlier governments. Economic liberalisation removed some forms of parasitic economic monopolism, and during a coffee boom in the early to mid-1990s this generated some degree of surplus in coffee producing areas. A “peace dividend” brought about favourable conditions for building and construction, the developing of infrastructure and economic expansion generally, which created a new middle class with vested interests in the new order. The local state had been democratised to some degree. Bureaucratic, coercive and welfare institutions of the state were relatively stabilised, which reinforced their capacity and legitimacy, not least in the eyes of the beneficiaries of the economic boom.

This seems to support an argument of uneven, contradictory but still transformative capitalist development. The argument advanced here, however, is that those achievements have proven to be unsustainable as they were undercut by another destabilising tendency through the social relations that underpinned state reconstruction and economic liberalisation. The basis of resource extraction and distribution, control and legitimacy of the NRM government has rested upon a conjuncturally specific and therefore unstable configuration of regionally distinct rural political loyalty, donor support and military control. One aspect of this is the persistent weakness of the domestic bourgeoisie and the growing factionalism and corruption discussed above.

Informalisation is longstanding and has been profound in reshaping the economy, society and state. It impacted on the formation and economic activities of all classes, but in different ways. Hence, the fractured organised expressions of class interests are structurally rooted in this kind of political economy. This
is linked to the fragmented and incoherent nature of the state and its institutions that are sites of struggles between different social forces. Precisely because of the unstable and unsettled nature of state formation in Uganda and subsequent weak institutionalisation, such struggles are often magnified rather than contained by state institutions themselves, at least during conjunctures when contradictions evolve into political stress and crisis.

Related to this is the insulation of technocrats and the suppression of alternative perspectives on economic policy making. Evidently, there is a crucial difference between forms of accumulation based on plunder and forms conforming to legality, however narrow the scope of such legality. The common denominator of these manifestations of control over economic policy making, however, is that they were protected and promoted by restrictions on the political freedoms that would have enabled protests from either competing elites or from subordinate groups. The argument advanced by Rueschemeyer et al (1992: 64-66) is that in order for democracy to be promoted and consolidated, the state must be relatively autonomous from dominant classes and, correspondingly, sufficiently embedded among subordinate ones. In Uganda, the opposite has been the case.

Following an initial period of intense political struggles, to a large extent within the state, over the direction of economic policy making and political pluralism, a more antidemocratic faction of the NRM, supported by key donors and linked to sections of speculative capital gradually gained control from the early 1990s and demobilised political opponents within the broad-based coalition. Dominant political groups with their power bases in the military entrenched themselves in the state and offered privileged access to their economic protégés. This led to cracking coalitions and fall-outs within the state-party,
during the 1990s expressed as internal and informal struggles over the direction of NRM, but from the late 1990s fought out in the open, resulting in new lobby groups and eventually in political parties.

As resistance to corruption and political authoritarianism grew in strength, the government responded with increasingly repressive measures. In addition, dominant classes loyal to the government have been divided among themselves. Parallel informal modes of primitive accumulation created tensions between different factions of capital, and those tensions constitute another source of the current political instability and authoritarianism.

It is hence necessary to understand authoritarianism in a broader sense than as militarisation. Therefore, it is worth restating Bangura’s argument about the social basis of authoritarianism presented in the first chapter: “the basis for authoritarian rule should be located primarily at the level of material relations, that is, it expresses a particular resolution of contradictions in particular forms of accumulation” (1992: 46). In line with that argument, it is claimed here that capitalist development in Uganda is still uneven and weak, epitomised by the implications of the 1972 expulsion of the Asian capitalist class and the expropriation of their property by Amin loyalists. While distinct changes have taken place in terms of the sources of accumulation, the ethno-regional composition of the bourgeoisie and the precise nature of their relationship with the state, there is continuity with regard to the importance of the interconnection between business, state power and military influence.

In Uganda, the military is for historical reasons institutionally significant, and firmly entrenched in the political economy, including illicit and illegitimate forms of accumulation (Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers 2004: 400-410). One significant feature in the Ugandan case is that the present army, just like
the ruling party, has its origins in a rebel group. This has created inseparable ties between the political and the military leadership, and in extension also to business groups. The rise of strong state, business or military networks means that military coercion constitutes both a source of accumulation of wealth and power and a means of repression of protests against it.

This double bind, the military as source of political and economic control, is what explains the recurrent militarisation of the state as a response to real and perceived opposition even within the state itself, as has been the case with militarised threats by the executive against the judiciary. This should not be understood in the reductionist sense that the military functions as the inevitable tool for the ruling class. There are many sources of the important role of the military in Uganda’s politics. The historical institutionalisation of the military in the Ugandan state corresponds to the weakness of class based organisations and is what gives authoritarianism in Uganda its characteristic as militarised form.

The weakness of different factions of the bourgeoisie and middle and working class based organisations has enabled informal and clandestine connections in the business, military or politics nexus of primitive accumulation alluded to above (Tangri and Mwenda 2003; United Nations 2002). Again, this is not the only kind of accumulation that takes place, and it certainly does not justify the catch-all notion of a “criminalisation of the state” (Bayart et al 1999; see Mustapha 2002b for a critique). But it is a crucial dimension of capitalist development in contemporary Uganda, and it goes a long way to explain the violent response by the state to accusations of political authoritarianism linked to military corruption made by former allies and insiders in the context of a shrinking and fragmenting power base and reluctance of foreign supporters. Or to phrase it according to the theoretical argument of this study, struggles between political
forces in society and within the state have transformed the institutional structure and the political orientation of the state in a militaristic direction.

This feature is also central in explaining the precarious balance between authoritarian and constitutionalised modes of regulation of social relations in Uganda generally. To return to Bangura’s argument, its second part runs: “the dynamics of authoritarian rule and struggles for democratisation develop at the level of civil society” (Bangura 1992: 46). Just as primitive accumulation points to the convergence between militarism and capitalism, its manifestations have provided a focal point for converging resistance against it.

For a long time, the NRM government managed to merge economic liberalisation and authoritarian political control without encountering serious resistance. The inherent contradictions between institutional reforms and contentious social processes that were mentioned in the introduction of this book were eventually reproduced and manifested, however, in both state and society. Protests were waged against corruption and repression at both popular and elite levels of politics and led to cracks in the NRM and in the military, then eventually to the decision in 2005 following a referendum to legalise political party activity. Since this change goes to the heart of the research problem, the democratisation of the state, it is pertinent to elaborate on it.

The opening up for multi-party politics was an undeniable victory for the proponents of political pluralism. To some extent it was a consequence of pressure from the political opposition within the no-party system, and donors’ impatience also had significant impact. Still, it is important not to overestimate the democratic content of this change. It was very clear already from 2003, when the proposal was first made that the NRM’s official position was, that the turn-around was not due to a change of
heart regarding the merits of political democracy, but a tactical manoeuvre in order to control internal dissent. Also, formal political pluralism has been undercut by intensified repression.

I propose that the move to multi-party politics is best understood in terms of crisis management as opposed to being a genuine conversion to political pluralism – the NRM leadership sought in one stroke to reinvent its legitimacy among donors, to pre-empt dangerous divisions within the military and to soften criticism against its bid to abolish constitutional restrictions on presidential terms. And it is power relations between political constellations within and outside the state that explain why formal democracy has so far been subverted by increasing militarisation.

While most donors now appeared to realise that many claims about governance success were incomplete at best, different donor agencies pursued their own political agendas, resulting in a shift from a rather stable coalition to a more fluid pattern of multiple games between the Ugandan state and its foreign partners. For instance, the President suddenly changed his position on fighting HIV/AIDS in a direction that would supposedly please the US religious right influencing politics on reproduction under the incumbent administration. He also came out quickly in support for the war in Iraq in 2003 and later claimed that he had been “mislead” into doing so.

In structural terms, though, it can be argued that contradictions of accumulation, through an intensification of factional infighting entrenched in the state, resulted in that patterns of primitive accumulation within the business, military and politician nexus discussed above undercut the logic of technocratic liberalism, a shift which enabled corruption and ultimately reinforced political authoritarianism. The very form of primitive accumulation the mafutamingi thrived upon, promoted and, in the face of growing opposition, even necessitated a shift
in authoritarian political regulation from stabilising control, to destabilising coercion. For these reasons, and also because of the significant institutional role of the military in Ugandan politics, coercion as a mode of control gradually grew in importance also in the previously peaceful south.

It should be noted, though, that the government’s revealed militaristic approach to political opposition is nothing new. Already in 1993, it responded to political rallies by rather insignificant groups within DP and CP with a display of police and military force and threats of “dead bodies” (Barya 2000a: 10). Just as the northern war has merged with the “war on terrorism”, so has politics in Uganda more broadly. In its attempt to pin down the opposition, the government seeks to suggest links between the leading opposition party Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), an elusive rebel group called People’s Redemption Army (PRA), LRA, and (implicitly) Rwanda. The leader of FDC, Kizza Besigye, was charged with treason for those very reasons.

Such measures have intensified the securitisation of politics. Over the last few years, this has been manifested by the militarisation of other state institutions – military control over the police force, representatives of security forces on the NGO Registration Board, the Media Centre and the tug-of-war over supremacy between the High Court and the General Court Martial which has lead to dramatic stand-offs. These events have sharply brought to a head the wider struggles between political forces outside and within the state over the political orientation of the latter: over whether the supreme locus of state power in Uganda is the constitution or the armed forces.

Special military forces surrounded the high court when the latter, following a ruling by the constitutional court, was about to release a number of persons, accused of being members of PRA and of being guilty of high treason, on bail in November 2005 and again in February 2007. Hence, contrary to claims
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of reconstruction and stabilisation of the Ugandan state, that tendency is countered and undercut by a continuous pattern of violent destabilisation; most clearly in the north, but more recently, as shown here, extended to Uganda as a whole as the government has become less concerned with covering its iron fist with a velvet glove.

Rather than viewing the northern experience as an exception, one needs instead to incorporate it into an overall understanding of the Ugandan state and to recognise the inbuilt contradictions of different strands of control as foundations for state power in the way they very unevenly articulated between regions. This unevenness has been so pronounced that it has been possible to present it as a dualism rather than as two related parts of one political whole: regional divisions have become engrained to the point that they are seen as a fact of life. In effect, contemporary state formation tends to reproduce colonially created patterns of regional underdevelopment, inasmuch as the state takes on completely different shapes in the north and the south.

The post-1986 period witnessed a reconstruction of the state, almost from the ashes, by a political organisation that started out as an army. In its early phase, the politics of the NRM state fundamentally revolved around enforcing control and security, however much the content of those concepts differed among regions. In both symbolic and very concrete (defeating and incorporating rebel groups) terms, the initial legitimacy and control of the NRM in its relevant constituencies – the regional political bases – rested on the military and the security it had brought to the civilian population by politicising armed conflicts.

Correspondingly, forms of resistance and the repression of that resistance outside those areas were articulated in terms of militarised politics. The very dimensions that rooted the state in society in southern Uganda took on their inverted manifestation in the north and alienated the state from society. In the north, the
military repressed rather than guaranteed security and blocked as opposed to promoting the exercise of citizenship. In Acholi, the purely coercive aspect of the state has outweighed all others, and its heavy presence has also provided avenues and protection for shady forms of accumulation. Throughout Uganda, security has remained the central dimension of politics under the NRM but in ways rooted in and reproducing colonial and postcolonial divide-and-rule politics in a way that is reminiscent of Mamdani’s (1996) argument about the bifurcated state.

Uganda in the international political economy
The Ugandan political economy is incorporated into the world economy from a subordinate position and in an uneven and distorted ways. Within that context, the NRM government has strengthened its political autonomy throughout Uganda’s career from the international basket case to showcase and successful African adjuster. The particular coalition of external and internal political forces at work has had a vested interest in rebuilding and consolidating a “governance state” (Harrison 2004). But what is the nature of the political order that promotes such a coalition? If imperialism is taken to mean something like global “structures of inequality reproduced through a capitalist system of both political and economic power” (Bracking and Harrison 2003: 7), then it appears clear that it makes sense to locate subordinate groups in Uganda at the receiving end of imperialist relations that are also inherently expansionist and potentially violent. But one needs to recognise the historically specific forms that imperialism takes on under global capitalism, beyond mere nation-state rivalry (Halliday 2002: 86-88).

In the Ugandan case, the relatively successful application of economic and institutional reforms elevated it to a “success story” status and created considerable leeway within the framework of imperialist domination for the local ruling class in shaping domestic politics through rebuilt state structures. It is argued in
this study, however, that the constellation of forces upholding the state has reproduced regional disjuncture and institutional fragmentation and incoherence, as well as authoritarianism at the level of state power.

The changing structuration of the state and the shifting expressions of authoritarian rule are explained by a relatively stable coalition that emerged during a critical formative period in the 1990s between the domestic and external forces with converging interests in upholding authoritarian political regulation of uneven accumulation and by the weak and fragmented nature of resistance to authoritarian domination. With growing resistance to authoritarianism and corruption and related struggles between political forces in society and in the state, the government has increasingly responded by militarising the state in its entirety.

External intervention impacts on state formation in critical but ambiguous ways. Pronounced international presence has translated into complex configurations of power as opposed to straightforward external political influence. Faithful application of economic adjustment programmes has given greater, not less, political autonomy to state managers, in relation to both other domestic and external constituencies. The acceptance by the government to surrender sovereignty of decision making over the framework for economic policy has given it sufficient autonomy and resources to control of state power.

The high degree of dependence upon external revenue and the concessions made in relation to foreign providers of resources resulted in the Ugandan state having as much of an external constituency as a domestic one. A convergence of interests emerged between the NRM, sections of domestic and international capital and donors around constructing a state capable of attracting investments, promoting capitalist development and protecting these interests through relatively stable bureaucratic
and coercive state institutions in the endemically volatile Great Lakes region.

But also more routine modes of accumulation point to an imperialist logic. Tensions that follow from capitalist development are not reducible to conflicts within the ruling class. The state sides with foreign and domestic capital against labour and is an active part in subordinating labour to the expressed or imagined demands of capital. The labour regime is a clear case of repressive “Bloody Taylorism”. Defending the decision to fire around 200 striking female workers who protested against poor working conditions, including abuse, in a foreign-owned textile factory outside Kampala in 2003. The President was reported to have said that “I sacked those girls because of indiscipline and their action would have scared off investors who had plans of setting up business here. They would have thought that the labour force in Uganda is undisciplined” (Monitor, 040322), and “Anybody who encourages strikes among our workers at the very moment we are struggling to break into external markets is worse [enemy] than Kony [the LRA leader]” (Monitor 031029-031105). Labour organisations have been too weak and disorganised to offer consistent resistance. The very recent changes in labour legislation in favour of labour are an exception, but are also to a considerable degree, concessions from the government to demands from US labour organisations that Uganda, if not respecting labour rights, would lose its preferential African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) status.

There are links between militarism and labour. In Gulu district, one former LRA leader who was granted amnesty (and then immediately turned into a vocal government supporter) was made manager of a government funded farm, on which rescued LRA abductees work under slave-like conditions, including torture (Nyakairu 2006). The wider theoretical point that this admittedly anecdotal evidence is intended to illustrate is that institutionalised regulation of social relations of, for
instance, labour and militarism are different but related modes of authoritarian control with common roots in the domestic social relations and foreign intervention that underpin state power.

The other dimension of imperialism concerns the geopolitical intervention in the post September 11 context of “the war against terrorism”. It is evident that local, national, regional and global power relations have interplayed throughout the northern war. From the mid-1990s, it expanded into a regional proxy war. The LRA was backed by the Sudanese government in response to Uganda’s support of SPLA rebels in southern Sudan. Recently, LRA forces moved into north-eastern DRC. All along, important donors have either accepted or supported Uganda’s military strategy, even though demands have been made to complement this with negotiations. In the wake of the September 11 attacks, Uganda quickly adopted an anti-terrorism law, and the LRA was put on the US list of international terrorist organisations.

Already in the late 1990s, the US incorporated Uganda, along with Ethiopia and Eritrea, as a front-line state in the “war against terrorism” to contain the Islamist government in the Sudan. Another form of international intervention, supposedly a counterweight to militarism, comes by way of humanitarian aid. Much as this is indispensable for the survival of the population in the camps, it can be argued that humanitarian aid is caught in the logic of militarised politics (Finnström 2006).

A third expression of external intervention comes from the International Criminal Court (ICC), which on requests by the Ugandan government has issued arrest warrants for LRA leaders. Foreign intervention as such does not create but enters into and reinforces militarisation of politics and local and regional conflicts. Neither governance nor violence is exclusively shaped by imperialism. However, domestic and regional political struggles are fought in a context at least partly defined by external intervention.
With the turn to economic liberalisation, donors and creditors were brought on as informal but crucial members of the broad-based coalition. Transnational power structures hence impact heavily on policy making in contemporary Uganda. This does not mean that the state and the interests represented by it are essentially dependent on whims of external actors. In one sense, the state is obviously financially dependent on donors and creditors for sustaining even its most basic functions. There is rather limited leeway for departing significantly from the economic framework preferred by these external actors; something the government is quick to point out when the need arises to divert protests over unpopular reforms.

On the other hand, there is also room for bargaining. Straddling between external and internal interests runs both ways, as the restructuring of the state has involved the incorporation of its highest echelons into what Robinson (2004) calls a transnational state, something which also, though more indirectly, is the case with the state apparatus in different policy arenas and at all levels.

The often-proclaimed special status of Uganda as a success story has created a two-way dependence between donors and the government, with different implications for different donors. Not only has international intervention influenced the resource base, but also the institutional composition and the legitimacy of the state in relation to domestic constituencies. The historical trajectory of Uganda’s politics has also in turn impacted significantly upon external intervention there, not in spite of, but precisely because of ambitious external involvement by way of investing vast financial resources and legitimacy.

Supporters of economic reform find it hard to admit that their policies may not be very deeply rooted in economic transformation and that they actually in certain ways reinforce corruption. Others, with regional security interests, are willing to accept slow and democratically ambiguous political reforms.
in exchange for loyalty and perceived stability (de Torrenté 2001: 43-51). In recent years, relations between donors and the Ugandan government, seemingly increasingly unwilling to perform according to the script of good governance, have turned sour. However, within the ongoing “war on terror”, most recently in Somalia, Uganda is likely to reaffirm itself as a reliable ally of the West, something that is likely to continue feeding into a domestic logic of militarised politics.

State and civil society beyond Uganda
The Ugandan experience may finally be illuminated by some brief notes on state-society relations in a few select comparative cases. In Kenya, the historical trajectory of state-society relations led to a different turn. In the early 1990s, a coalition made up by a section of the Kikuyu bourgeoisie in central region cut off from state patronage networks under the Moi government, and increasingly vocal groups in civil society consisting of professional associations, human rights groups and religious institutions protested against an authoritarian and corrupt government with waning support presiding over a decaying economy.

The opposition was given support by key donors who put pressure on the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU) government. A decade-long process culminated in a change of government in 2002; it is increasingly clear, however, that this has not transformed the deeper structures of Kenyan politics. In Uganda, state legitimacy has been stronger; democratic forces in civil society are weaker and transnational power structures have so far seemed to favour political status quo. In Tanzania, political liberalisation was introduced by the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party itself, fully aware that in view of the practical absence of political opposition it could steer a guided democratisation process. Even though party political opposition was long frozen in Uganda, political cleavages run much deeper than in Tanzania, and the NRM government cannot as easily as CCM control the political transition uncontested.
A third case, in many ways similar to Uganda, is Ghana, where a faction of the military led by Jerry Rawlings took power in 1981. Ghana’s experience during the 1980s, when a military government shifted from radical rhetoric to textbook economic liberalisation with large degrees of external involvement coupled with “no-party democracy” and rural populism as social and ideological base preceded Uganda’s by a few years. Why did Ghana return to stable, albeit shallow, multi-party democracy in the early 1990s?

Returning to the explanatory framework, one difference between Ghana and Uganda is the composition and orientation of civil society and the way this corresponded to state structures. In Ghana, a relatively autonomous and active civil society, based on both ethnic and class identities, had emerged during colonialism. While its democratic expressions were largely suppressed during the 1980s, a coalition, in many respects similar to the Kenyan one (though with a bigger role for labour and a smaller for religious institutions) managed to impress its demands for political pluralism on the government (Akwetey 1994). This process found the support of donors.

In Uganda by contrast, civil society, especially its nationwide and class based expressions, is much weaker. The political aspirations of Buganda were contained through the alliance with the government. By contrast, the People’s National Defence Council (PNDC) government in Ghana never managed to contain the economic and cultural elites in southern Ghana, including the important Ashanti region, as loyal regional power brokers.

Urban-based civil society groups in Uganda are only weakly connected to rural areas, where the NRM has developed a dense institutional network of mobilisation through the LC system. Correspondingly, the role of the military in the structures of the state is more marked in Uganda, leading to severe repression of political dissent. External actors, finally, for different reasons accepted the government’s rationale for the ban on parties.
While the World Bank and IMF as well as certain bilateral donors had become dependent on Uganda as “success story” and were unwilling to “destabilise” the reconstruction, the US came to embrace the NRM government largely for geo-political reasons. Along with other governments of “the new breed”, Ethiopia and Rwanda, Uganda assured the US of its regional indispensability in containing the Islamist government in Sudan. Both the US and UK have supplied military aid to the Uganda as a reward for its loyalty in “the war against terrorism”. While enthusiasm among western governments with “new breed” leaders faded some time ago, ties to them remain in place.

In contrast to cases which since the 1980s have experienced phases of economic stagnation and adjustment and political authoritarianism followed by popular protest and political liberalisation, Uganda’s trajectory after 1986 led to the convergence of economic liberalisation and reconstruction by way of economic growth, enforcement of law and order and institutional rehabilitation in the southern parts of the country. Weak internal political (as opposed to armed) resistance to reforms and strong external support for them reinforced government legitimation efforts and political support in these areas.

The political and economic contradictions inherent in the NRM model of authoritarian political control over economic liberalisation for capitalist development and state formation became manifest only from the mid-1990s. From the 1996 elections, it was evident that the government increasingly used coercion to assert its control. The tensions that could no longer be accommodated by the Movement model included growing economic inequalities, fuelled by corruption with perceived ethno-regional connotations linked to military involvement and enhanced control – in increasingly striking contrast to the official discourse of national development, inclusive participation, demilitarisation and political liberalisation.
These tendencies have manifested the underlying instability of the reconstruction of the Ugandan state. Institutional reforms have proven fragile, as they have been only weakly anchored among social forces with the capacity and inclination to defend hard-won gains – and this is how the empirical cases of this study help to illustrate the general argument, which in turn provides the context within which to understand these particular experiences.

The contradictions summarised above, were only episodically and weakly politicised during the 1990s. The interconnection between the balance of power in society, state structures and transnational power structures prevented the emergence of sustained political opposition until the late 1990s, when grievances were systematically linked and articulated by dissatisfied insiders in a way that in the run up to the 2001 elections threatened to divide the core power bases of the government: the NRM as its political organisation, the military as its initially silent, but increasingly vocal back-up, and the western region as its key voting block.

The process of liberalisation that was initiated from above in 2003 and translated into multi-party politics in 2005 has been heavily shaped by this legacy insofar as there is striking incongruity between formal expansion and real stagnation and occasional contraction of the democratic space. This is an immediate continuation of the 2001 election campaigns, where the military and a range of more or less regular security apparatuses were instrumental in influencing the outcome. More profoundly, though, the contemporary re-militarisation of Uganda’s politics points to a continuation of long-standing and deep-rooted authoritarianism that has fundamentally shaped the construction of Uganda as a state and society in ways this book has sought to explore, empirically as well as theoretically.
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