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Citizenship moods in the late Museveni era: a cartoon-powered analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article develops the concept of citizenship moods to analyse citizens' emotional (dis)engagements with the state in Uganda. Through a reflexive analysis of ethnographic and media material from 2019–2021, we claim that around the time of the 2021 elections, after 35 years of rule by Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement, the most prevalent moods among Ugandans were fear, contentment, cynicism, anger, hope, and despondency. Prior to the elections, hope soared, but this gave way to despondency following the state's violent crack-down on opposition. Building on work on citizenship, affect, emotion, and politics, we theorise that citizenship moods are experienced both individually and collectively; coexist, transform, and fluctuate over time; and affect and are affected by political and societal change. In Uganda, a key change is the growth of intersecting ethnic, regional, generational, and class inequalities. Citizenship moods structure, transform, and vitalise the relationship between the state and its citizens, and analysing them contributes to imagining the possibilities of democratic change in Uganda and beyond. The article introduces a method of cartoon-powered sociopolitical analysis. The inherent attunement of cartoons to bodily postures and expressions enables analytical insight and effective communication of research results, and can contribute to advancing research justice.

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Citizenship as a category of experience rather than merely a legal status is steeped in, productive of, and moulded by moods. In this article, we build on research on citizenship, and on affect and emotion in politics, to advance the notion of *citizenship moods* as a means for describing citizens' emotional (dis)engagements with the state. Specifically, we trace Ugandan citizens' experiences of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) state, and their perceptions both of the regime's success in protecting and providing for them, and of their own ability to hold the state accountable. Our means to this end – cartoon-powered socio-political analysis – provides a novel way of capturing

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and disentangling citizenship moods during what we refer to as the 'late Museveni era', given that president Yoweri Museveni is (officially) 76 years old at the time of writing, and has already been in power for more than 35 years. Our method explicitly integrates the first author's practice as a cartoonist and political commentator into the iteratively interpretive process of collaborative analysis, and conveys our belief that scholarly work is strengthened when we acknowledge that our positionalities, commitments and moods shape our analysis.

In the general elections of 2021, Museveni's NRM secured another term amid violence and widespread allegations of election irregularities. During the period leading up to and the months following the elections, we argue that the most prevalent moods among Ugandan citizens were anger, fear, cynicism, despondence, contentment, and hope. As we will show, such moods are not clear-cut and mutually exclusive, but can be momentarily 'captured' so as to show the complex ways in which they overlap and coexist. Following anthropological analyses of affective states, our interest is to explore how moods structure the space between the state and citizenry, how they emerge and evolve amid the historically embedded relationships between the state and citizens in Uganda, and how they influence the possibilities of democratic change in the country.

We begin by sketching how our concept of citizenship moods builds on and contributes to existing literature on citizenship and affect. We then introduce cartoon-powered socio-political analysis as a method that captures the somewhat elusive nature of moods, and that allows for increasing the communicability and social relevance of research. Thereafter, we delineate aspects of Ugandan history and contemporary societal dynamics that we see as particularly relevant for understanding citizenship moods in the country. In light of this background, we present a combined textual/graphic analysis of prevailing citizenship moods and their dynamism in Uganda before and after the 2021 elections. In the conclusion, we reflect on the implications of our analysis and method for research on Uganda; for theorising on the state, citizenship and affect; and as a means for addressing epistemic injustices.

Theorising citizenship moods through emotions and inclusion

As an expanding body of scholarship has highlighted, citizenship is not just a legal category, but rather, an experienced relationship between individuals and either the state[1] or other 'structures of rule and belonging'.[2] Particularly central for our analysis is the view that citizenship is both material and embodied. The notion of **material citizenship** draws on Ahimbisibwe's[3] analysis of the centrality of material assets for citizenship in Uganda, which emphasises that citizens not only hold legal status as members of a state, they also have stomachs to fill and school fees to pay. In this light, citizenship moods in Uganda are crucially shaped by the increasing inequality between Ugandans, and the way in which unprivileged citizens experience this inequality as exclusion from the state. With the notion of **embodied citizenship**,[4] we highlight that citizenship is not just an abstract category: like individual and collective moods concerning the state, citizenship is also corporeal, and thereby experienced in and mediated through a range of bodily processes and sensory experiences.

Interest in the relationship between politics and what are variously termed emotions, feelings, sentiments, or affect has surged across academic disciplines in recent years,

much of it under the rubric of the 'affective turn'.[5] This diverse literature converges around the desire to debunk the separation of emotion and reason. Most classical political thinkers disdained emotions as a threat to rationality, and as a hindrance to the development of 'good' citizenship and functioning 'modern' states.[6] – a view vehemently questioned from numerous directions in recent decades. Social psychologists Peter Burke and Jan Stets have highlighted emotions as central for national affinity and bonding,[7] while political psychologist George E. Marcus's work portrays emotions as pivotal for citizenship: without enthusiasm, the citizenry would be passive, and without anxiety, it would not be sufficiently motivated to try to change anything.[8] A similar argument is made by philosopher Martha Nussbaum, who sees emotions as essential for moral judgment and functioning political culture.[9]

Meanwhile, anthropologists have built on Ann Stoler's notion of 'affective states'[10] to assess the role of emotion in sustaining the state as a source of authority, and to unpack the contextually specific affective charge of encounters between citizens and states. In an Introduction to a special issue on the theme, Laszczkowski and Reeves utilise Mitchell's notion of the 'state effect',[11] which they view as emerging 'through the affective engagements of ordinary citizens and non-citizens in relation to state agents and state-like activities: their feelings, their emotions, their embodied responses as they navigate state bureaucracy or anticipate state violence'.[12] In this vein, Montoya, for instance, interpreted the 'passions on display in El Salvador's 2009 elections [as] related to a renewed sense of possibility … for how Salvadorans imagined their relationship within the state'. Resonating with this, we employ the notion of moods to interpret Ugandan citizens' (dis)engagements with the NRM state as they evolved prior to, through the time of and in the aftermath of the 2021 elections. We argue that ahead of the elections, a window of opportunity seemed to be opening for changed relationships between Ugandans and the state – only to be closed shortly thereafter.

But why do we speak of 'moods', and not, as is more common in the relevant literature, of 'affect' or 'emotion' – and why 'citizenship' rather than 'political' moods? First, 'citizenship moods' references the differentiation commonly made between 'emotion' as fleeting, and 'mood' as more persistent and stable, albeit not static.[13] Relatedly, while 'emotion' is most typically understood as an individual experience, the concept of 'mood' refers more explicitly to something that can be both individually and collectively felt. Second, while 'political mood' can also refer to people's views on political parties or topics of public debate, we use 'citizenship mood' to refer more specifically to the relationship between the state and its citizens. Third, although literature on affect provides us with key inspiration, we opt to speak of 'moods' rather than 'affect' because whereas the latter is largely used in certain academic circles, 'mood' is a word understood by most English-speakers, including our research interlocutors and the Ugandan public.

From the above starting points, we draw four general characteristics of citizenship moods that inform our analysis. 1) They are embodied and reflective, which means they emerge from the material realities of citizens' lives, and rather than being mere pre-subjective 'intensities' as conceived in some strands of affect research,[14] they are subject to and are moulded by both individual contemplation and collective debate. 2) At their heart are experiences of (non)belonging and (non)recognition by the state, since membership in a national community, even when endorsed by law, does not

guarantee citizens equal access to recognition and rights.[15] 3) Citizenship moods emerge in particular historical contexts.[16] For instance, the tensions around how rights and recognition are divided take very particular shape in Uganda, where the category of citizenship emerged out of the subjugation of multiple ethnic groups under a colonial state.[17] 4) They are embedded in social relations. As Brennan argues, it is because of their relationality that humans have an innate ability to sense the moods of others,[18] an ability we put to use in our cartoon-powered analysis.

Cartoon-powered socio-political analysis

In this article, cartoons are not simply objects of analysis, rather, their production is both a method of analysis and a means for research communication. The analysis we present draws on participant observation and interviews, informal discussions, and media and social media materials we have accumulated over the course of our long-term research in Uganda. Jimmy Spire Ssentongo's insights draw particularly from his ethnographic research on pluralism in Western Uganda (Kibaale) and transitional justice in North-Eastern Uganda (Karamoja), and from his media engagement and lifelong embedded observation of everyday life in Kampala and rural Central Uganda.[19] Henni Alava's analysis is grounded in ethnographic research on Christianity, politics and citizenship in Northern (Kitgum) and Central (Entebbe) Uganda, which has included countless interviews and conversations, some sustained for over a decade.[20]

Research for this article began in late 2019; just over a year before the 2021 elections; with a conversation about how hard it was to put a finger on the mood in Uganda at the time. Building on our earlier collaborative work,[21] we decided to attempt to trace the mood in an analytical manner. To this end, we began to read through Ugandan media sites, social media feeds and our recent fieldwork notes, and to initiate discussions on the theme with interlocutors and acquaintances in Central and Northern Uganda, with the notion of 'citizenship moods' on our minds. After struggling to articulate our emerging arguments in a conference paper, it occurred to us to see whether 'moods' might be better captured in images – the way Spire (penname) does in his cartoons for the Observer, and through his Facebook page (Spire Cartoons) and Twitter account (@SpireJim).

Recently, the role of cartoonists as critical entertainers and public commentators in Africa has received growing scholarly attention.[22]As observed by Peter Limb in *Taking African Cartoons Seriously*, in their simplicity, cartoons can penetrate the mystique and hype around politics, and provide access to 'everyday' reactions to politics in a way that public opinion polls, for instance, cannot.[23] Our use of cartoons in this article is somewhat different, however, in that we deploy their power not simply to communicate, but as an imprecise yet, we argue, powerful method of interpretive socio-political analysis.[24] The article's text and cartoons resulted from a back-and-forth process: brainstorming, writing and re-writing, Ssentongo giving graphic form to emerging arguments, and joint reflections on our own and our audiences' responses to the images.

By intuitively tapping into art as a method for analytical inspiration, we followed what has in recent years become an increasingly well-trodden track. Political scientists have shown growing interest in cartoons as objects of analysis,[25] and scholars like Joe Sacco have showcased the ability of graphic novels to convey social analysis and critique. [26]

Nick Sousanis's 'Unflattening'[27] literally *illustrates* how academic thinking is limited by the privileging of text over image, and how drawing and images, used alongside text, can provide novel insights. We had from the get-go conceived of citizenship moods as profoundly embodied, and thereby also as experienced in our bodies as researchers; yet, when working only with words, we were limited in bringing bodies to the text. In a fascinating account of drawing, dancing, and writing, Jääskeläinen and Helin show how the use of drawings can make space for a researcher's sensing body in a way that enables analysis of materials that otherwise get 'flattened' by the textual form.[28] Reading this work after Ssentongo had drawn the first cartoons, we realised that due to their careful attunement to posture, the cartoons captured things that text struggled to convey. The cartooning process thus shaped and sharpened our observations and arguments.

As a final step to the method, and to avoid the risk of being trapped in echoes of our own sentiments, in November 2021 the cartoons were all posted together on the Facebook and Twitter accounts of Ssentongo, together with a text introducing our research and the question 'do these images capture the moods around the 2021 elections?' Ssentongo regularly posts their cartoons, both those published in the Observer and ones unpublished, onto these accounts, each of which is followed by over 120,000 people. The followers, some of whom write behind pseudonyms, include both those who share Ssentongo's political critiques and those who expressly support the incumbent regime. The 'citizenship mood' posts triggered close to 3,000 responses (overwhelmingly 'likes' and 'laughs'), over 100 shares, and hundreds of comments. Most of the commentators said the cartoons 'nailed it', while some asked for certain aspects to be highlighted further. Overwhelmingly, requests for clarification concerned issues that we already discussed in the article text, yet some of the remarks also led us to nuance our arguments. Most notably, and as we will discuss further when analysing the mood of hope, the responses convinced Ssentongo that Alava's insistence on including hope as one of the citizenship moods was not as mistaken as Ssentongo's own growing frustration with the situation had at the time led him to conclude. The online responses to the cartoons cannot be considered 'proof' of our analysis, yet they do provide indication that the cartoons, and the moods we had identified, resonated beyond our personal impressions alone. From our epistemological starting point, and in light of our desire to push the boundaries of prevalent patterns of knowledge production, this was more than enough.

Linda Åhäll has noted that when political scientists turn to neuroscience – a research field portrayed as 'rational' – they often end up reconstituting the very dichotomy of reason and emotion that they seek to dismantle.[29] Our turn to comics did the opposite: it was a conscious embrace of our intuition; a faculty we believe is often left out of accounts of research. As Pinker and Harvey write in their reflection on uncertainty in anthropologies of the affective state:

> A gesture or a tone of voice might imply a particular disposition or mood – or perhaps not … [W]e argue that a focus on affect call[s] attention anew to the intrinsically relational, and by extension uncertain, quality of the ethnographic method. This defining attribute of ethnography continually vexes any attempt to finally disentangle what we think we know about others from the worlds we inhabit ourselves.[30]

To problematise the division between us – the 'researchers' – and the 'citizens' whose moods we seek to understand, it is useful to recall Stoler's description of the obsession colonial authorities had for gauging the public moods of 'the natives' in the colonies.[31] We hope that the risk of our analysis producing a 'rationalist' gaze is at least partially countered by the cartooning method. A related risk of which we have been warned is that our method produces caricatured images of the Ugandan citizenry. Yet we argue that research relying on words is at least as likely to do so, with the fundamental difference that its caricatures cannot be as easily accessed or judged by those it represents as can Ssentongo's drawings.

The cartoons here contain both gentle and snide critiques of the incumbent regime, and seek to make clear our ethical and political commitment to justice and freedom from violence for all Ugandans. These commitments align with the artwork and public commentary of Ssentongo, and with our engaged scholarship: the cartoons simply make transparent what is more typically hidden behind a veil of academic jargon. Indeed, we make no claim to neutrality: through our lived experiences and the networks of commitment and care in which we are entwined in Uganda, we are emotionally engaged and implicated in the moods we describe.

Dynamics of citizenship and inequality in Uganda

We now turn to the dynamics that shape citizenship moods in contemporary Uganda. Building on Laszczkowski and Reeves' contention that 'the salience of particular moments of subjective feeling … stems from specific histories of subjectification and particular experiences of rule',[32] we suggest that citizenship moods are fundamentally connected with citizens' perceptions of how well the state has succeeded in protecting and providing for them. These perceptions, in turn, are shaped by whether citizens feel that the way in which protection and provision is divided between groups, particularly one's own group, is "fair". Obviously, what constitutes fair is deeply contested. As Cheeseman et al. argue in their analysis of the moral economies of elections, two influential registers of morality – the civic and the patrimonial – shape politics in Uganda.[33] Since these registers often pull in different directions, political debate and policy making is conditioned by the need to balance between them. This analysis helpfully challenges liberal ideas of 'civic education', nurtured by development donors,[34] by acknowledging that what motivates citizens to engage in elections can be personal and group interest, rather than some abstract notion of 'civic virtue'. What might be condemned in one moral register, such as prioritising development initiatives for one's own ethnic group or 'vote-buying' (the civic), may appear entirely justifiable in the other (the patrimonial).[35]

To a degree, citizenship moods can be explained in light of the different moral registers Cheeseman et al. identify. However, in recognition of the complexity of identity politics,[36] we suggest that the patrimonial register must be augmented by a broader range of divisions – class, age, gender, religion, alongside urban/rural divides – that coexist with and complicate ethnicity. To understand citizenship moods, it is vital to pay attention to these other axes of division, all of which profoundly influence how much access people have to protection and provision from the state, and consequently, their perceptions of it. A brief account of these divisions in Uganda is thus a prerequisite for our attempt to account for the citizenship moods they engender.

Uganda is a complex colonial creature.[37] Under British rule, previously fluid boundaries between ethnic groups were solidified for administrative convenience, thus heightening ethnic consciousness and stereotypes.[38] This led to the creation of two sets of citizenship identities, the national and the subnational,[39] whereby 'the concept of Uganda as a republic continued to make little sense to the citizenry'.[40] Identity politics were further complicated by colonial missionary policy, which allowed two denominations to compete with each other countrywide, leaving Uganda at independence bifurcated between an Anglican state and a Catholic opposition. The complex crisscrossing of ethnic and religious divisions up until the present has invited manipulation and hindered coalition-building,[41] and every regime since independence has been perceived to favour both the regional and religious identity of its president.

Yoweri Museveni's NRM, which came to power in 1986, initially tried to address the problem by creating a broad-based system, purporting to be as inclusive as possible.[42] While some commentators commended it for its attempts to depoliticise ethnicity,[43] it soon took a back turn. In Rubongoya's words, 'regional/ethnic broad-basedness was not meant to be inclusive. Rather, the NRM sought to pander to different regions and ethnic groups in exchange for political support. Clientelism had gained regional and ethnic content.'[44] Vokes' observation that the 'government's spending on new infrastructure has been highly uneven across the country'[45] is widely shared by Ugandans. The flammability of the topic was made clear in the run-up to the 2021 elections, when a group of Ugandan comedians known as Bi zonto and a prominent blogger, Basajja Mivule, were arrested for listing Ugandans from Western Uganda who hold prominent positions in the government. Although many Western Ugandans highlight that it is only a select few among them who reap the benefits of Museveni's reign,[46] media accounts as well as our own observations indicate an increase in resentment towards 'Westerners' overall. This is not simply about ethnic hatred; rather, at its core is the sense that particular groups are gleaning more than their fair share of national wealth.

Uganda was projected as one of the fastest growing economies in Africa in the late 1980s and 1990s, yet economic growth has been coupled with a growth in income inequality, which is patterned by intersecting age, gender, and rural/urban divides. In 2017, over half of the national income was in the hands of the richest 20% of the population,[47] and despite the official grand utopia of development featured on billboards,[48] many Ugandans have seen little improvement in the standards of public social service delivery, and have no access to quality education or healthcare..[49] A staggering 53% of citizens are under 18, and a further 22% are aged 18–30s.[50] Conservative estimates[51] place youth unemployment at 13%, and of those who are employed, over a third are underemployed.[52] Poverty levels are higher in rural areas[53], where over 80% of Ugandans live.[54] The resultant youth migration to towns has created a notable new constituency: 'ghetto youth'[55] have no personal memory of tumultuous earlier eras, whereby the NRM's narrative of 'liberation' carries little appeal among them.[56] These dynamics produce mixed results for citizens' access to protection and provision by the state. Some are increasingly discontent, while others strive to protect their positions or to position themselves in a way that might enable access to state resources. Increasingly, the NRM regime has adopted a combination of violence, legislative autocracy, and patronage;[57] what Tapscott[58] refers to as 'arbitrary governance'; to manage these tensions and maintain its hold on power.

Increased public dissent in particular has led the regime to tighten its grip on political expression. Prior to the 2021 elections, Covid-19 functioned as a handy reason to limit opposition rallies in attempt to curtail the growing support for pop-star turned politician, Robert Kyagulanyi (aka Bobi Wine) and his National Unity Platform (NUP) party. New forms of restrictions have also been imposed to control public debate on social media, including the Regulation of Interception of Communication Act (2010), which allows people's private communications to be tapped. During the 2021 elections, the entire Internet was shut down for a full week starting two days before polling day, and, at the time of writing, Facebook remains banned.

Against the backdrop of the above dynamics, we turn now to trace how citizenship moods fluctuated during the run-up to and in the aftermath of the 2021 elections. As we will show, citizenship moods co-exist and change in complex ways both across time, and from one citizen to another: while some moods are fairly static, others fluctuate, sometimes with clear cyclicality. As in previous elections, the 2021 elections were preceded by a surge of hope for change, particularly among those who were tired of the regime. This was followed by increased violence, which led to more anger, fear, and ultimately a slump from hope to despondency. The analysis that follows is aided by the cartoons which Ssentongo drew to momentarily capture citizenship moods prevalent in Uganda during the given time period. They condense themes that were indicated to us through verbal and textual materials - informal chats, interviews, online debates, and the conversations we were having to iteratively make sense of our data.

Chronic fear and contentment

> You young people are involved in what you don't understand. If someone can even order you to keep in your houses without food and you stay there [during the COVID-19 lockdown], how do you start to think that you can remove him from power? (An elderly man in a casual chat with youths at a motorcycle garage, Nyanama town, 2019).

The fact that so many Ugandans continue to vote for Museveni can be seen to reflect a fairly wide-spread mood of contentment, yet an analysis of contentment, and of statements like that quoted above, shows how interspersed each mood is with others. Most notably, we argue that fear functions as an undercurrent to all other citizenship moods in Uganda. Fear appears in two forms which often feed into each other: chronic fear that the violence of the past will return, and acute fear of fresh, state-perpetrated violence.

In the first cartoon (Figure 1), an old lady dressed in faded NRM yellow counters a young "air-headed" man's red-bereted demands for change by reminding him of the past. The image captures fear informed by memories of the 'bad old days' of '*duka duka*' (run, run). Such fears are pervasive among Ugandans who personally experienced the brutality of Idi Amin and Milton Obote's regimes. For this ageing and diminishing number of people, the narratives of 'at least we can sleep now' ('*twebaka ku tulo*' in Luganda), and 'do not return us to the past', remain strong. A similar narrative also has traction among certain groups of younger people, such as those in Acholi and Lango, who carry memories of the war between the Lord's Resistance Army and the NRM government[59]; and in Karomoja, where many are simultaneously appreciative and apprehensive of the NRM government, following its high-handed disarmament of cattle rustlers in the recent years.[60]

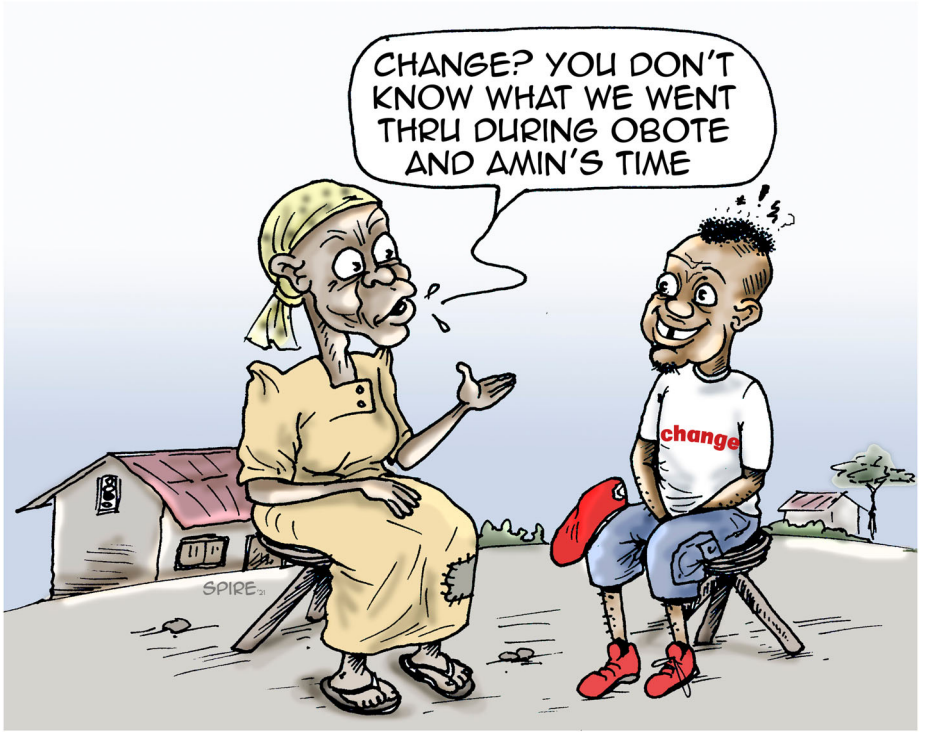


Figure 1. Citizenship mood 'fear of the past'.

Speaking of the 2021 elections in late 2019, a woman born in the 1970s in northern Uganda but living in Entebbe told us:

> I always just vote for the President. I don't see him as having done very much for me. But I vote for him anyway, so as to not give myself trouble. You know, the youth are really many these days, and they don't fear. But the ones who have grown in Kampala, they have no idea. Growing up from the North, there has [*sic*] been too many guns in my life … [t]he memories are very alive in my mind. (Fieldwork notes, 2019)

Many Ugandans see keeping Museveni in power as a better option than having him or his supporters start a war. This fear is also consciously perpetuated: in every election since 1996, the NRM regime has explicitly threatened Ugandans with the imminent risk of new violence were the NRM to be pushed out of power.[61]

While growing numbers of Ugandans are unhappy with Museveni's government, others are contented enough with its performance to support it (Figure 2). Many are satisfied because their expectations of the state are very low, so that even if they receive very little in exchange for the taxes they pay, they are happy enough that at least there is some symbolic or material improvement. A health centre built in the area, a tarmacked road, or the fact that working with the government increases the likelihood of such things happening, have all been cited to us over the years as some of the reasons for voting NRM. 'No government is going to put money or food in your hands', a lady from rural Central Uganda said. Such sentiments are captured in the image of young parents walking from a hospital with their newborn, and can

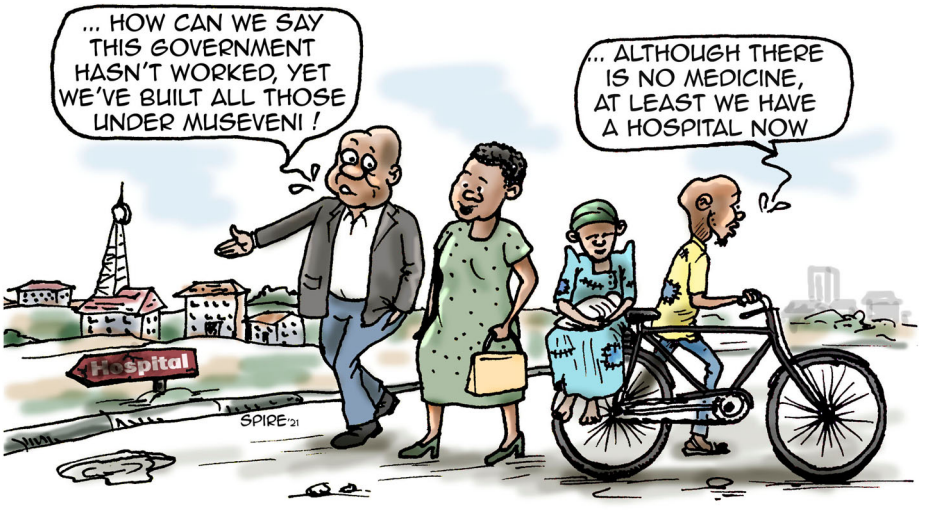


Figure 2. Citizenship mood 'contentment'.

be seen to reflect Cheeseman et al's analysis on elections: many are content because they consider what the government does for them a favour, rather than as their due as citizens.

Many of those who support the regime are also motivated by short-term personal interest, either because the state provides them with patronage, or merely allows them to prosper through their own enterprise. One medical student who decided not to vote at all in 2021 rather than vote against the regime for fear of chaos told us, 'However much we hate the guy, however useless this government is, it has been proven that it is still possible to thrive under him.' Combining fear, contentment and a certain level of cynicism, the statement reflects how deeply moods are intertwined and why analysing the rise in different types of inequalities, whereby some Ugandans can 'thrive' while others cannot, is crucial for understanding both cynicism and anger among the electorate.

Cynicism and anger

The prevalence of what we call cynical citizenship moods in Uganda is grounded in people's understanding of the presidentialist and patrimonial nature of the Ugandan state, and in their subsequent choice to play the system rather than be crushed by it. Those who profit from state patronage and the suffering of others could be described as sinisterly cynical. Often, however, cynicism is characterised rather by a banal everydayness, and it is this that is captured by the cartoon below (Figure 3).

In our reading, a cynical mood refers not only to people's descriptions of having lost hope. It is also evident in the ways in which they discuss the political system and their methods of manoeuvring within it – including their choice to vote. This is well captured in a story told to us by an interlocutor:



Figure 3. Citizenship mood 'cynicism'.

> A friend of mine got one million shillings for ticking ballot papers for Museveni in the previous elections. When she came to me a year after the election to ask for money for school fees, I told her forget it. She should have thought about this when she was asked to tick. Instead of the million, she should have demanded a post at the revenue authority or something, so that at least [her] efforts would have made for something sustainable.

Recently, there have been increasing numbers of individuals and groups organising strategically to reach the president for handouts or to get access to state resources and opportunities.[62] This adds to a long-standing trend, since over the years, several eloquent critics of President Museveni; e.g. Beti Kamya, Beatrice Anywar, Joyce Ssebuggwawo, and most recently Norbert Mao; have shifted party allegiances and become eloquent advocates of the president's agenda. Following the NRM's clampdown on Bobi Wine, examples abounded: ghetto groups were awarded with cash for mobilising for Museveni, while musicians and social media influencers shifted allegiances in site of the national public.[63]

Two bloggers, 'Full Figure' and 'Bajjo', who had been coaxed from People Power into the NRM, turned their coats again after the elections, saying the NRM abandoned them on tribal grounds in doling out rewards. Musician Hassan Ndugga crossed to Museveni's side in 2019 and quipped that 'Politics is gambling' (Butereevu, BBS Terefayina, January 14, 2020); when he failed to get what he was promised, he released a song hitting out at the president for overstaying his time in power and for ignoring the poor. And right

before the 2021 elections, Ronald Mayinja, who had been one of the regime's musical critics for years, was co-opted to sing Museveni's lead campaign song titled 'The vote is for Mzee [Museveni]'.

The idea that one's vote is for sale, and that support for leaders is contingent on their distribution of benefactions to citizens, resonates with long-standing patrimonial structures of governance. Schneidermann has argued that the ambiguous relationships between Ugandan musicians and politicians reveals a shift in political culture, wherein musicians perform complex brokerage roles amid the mixed expectations of their fans, their need for security and income, and those with political power.[64] Yet from the ordinary citizens' perspective, such manoeuvring often comes across as simply cynical. Indeed, while patronage may resound with traditional norms,[65] its particular form and extent appear to be increasingly diverging from the 'traditional' morality of patronage, and eating away at citizens' trust that leaders have the general populations' best interest at heart. Growing inequality compounds this mistrust. Indeed, recognising the growth in age, ethnic, and class-based inequalities is absolutely vital for understanding why we group cynicism and anger together under the same subtitle. Thriving under Museveni's regime is mostly possible for those who have the means to study for a profession that assures them a livelihood or who have the connections required to find work in sectors where jobs are few and far between. Thus the cynical calculations of the lucky few, be they politicians, musicians, or silent supporters of the regime that is feeding them, tend to provoke anger in others.

The cartoon on anger captures real actions of a man who paraded an effigy of President Museveni down the middle of a road in Kampala, flogging it while castigating Museveni through a megaphone Figure 4. At the time of writing this article, he remains locked up. As the regime has continued to hang on to power, anger has become increasingly prevalent among Ugandan citizens, manifesting in what are often reckless expressions. Responding to a question about what she sees ahead in the 2021 elections, a well-educated unemployed woman almost spat with annoyance:

> I wish he [Museveni] would just drop dead and leave us all in peace. What has he ever given us, except these Chinese roads? Does he think we're STUPID? Enough is enough. It's no longer the old who are angry, it's the youth. We are many. And we don't have jobs. (Interview, late 2019)

Anger, she argued, was at a level far higher than in 2016. 'People may disappear and it gets covered up, but now people are willing to take the risk. They send links of "He Must Go!", and take selfies wearing People Power colours.' Picking up her smart phone and waving it angrily in the air, she concluded, 'This is our war.' In a vivid example of what Scott described as the 'weapons of the weak',[66] during the November 2020 'Free Bobi Wine riots,' Museveni's campaign billboards and posters were defaced, while people wearing yellow clothes were asked to remove them in public and scores of them were assaulted.

Since the 2016 elections, the key channel through which feelings of anger among Ugandan citizens have been funnelled has been the People Power Movement, and later the NUP. Throughout 2019, 2020, and 2021, Wine's attempts to organise concerts/rallies have been repressed, which has incited Wine's followers even further. With most of the physical public space being violently patrolled by government forces,

much of this anger is vented in the relatively safer social media space through memes, music, insults and cartoons. Prominent among the angry activists has been Stella Nyanzi, the feminist scholar and activist aligned with the opposition party, Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), and the People Power movement (not NUP),[67] who was arrested in 2017 and charged with cyber harassment for calling the president a 'pair of buttocks', and eventually convicted for this and other related offences to 18 months in jail.[68] The cartoons of Ssentongo, and others like Ogon, as well as Nyanzi's poems, can be seen as an expression of anger paired with hope, producing action. Yet as we now turn to describe, hope is frightfully easy to shut down. As an interlocutor who was completely drawn up in PP mobilisation prior to the elections put it once the elections were over,'[when] there's nothing you can do about it, you end up sitting back and just dying with your frustration, because there's no outlet, no release.'

Hope, acute fear, despondence

Prior to the 2021 elections, hopeful citizenship moods increased in many parts of Uganda. Not only was this apparent in our research interactions and observations, an Afrobarometer survey also indicated that 58% of Ugandans believed that elections work 'well' or 'very well' as a mechanism for holding non-performing leaders accountable, a significant increase from 47% in 2015.[69] After four failed attempts by Kizza Besigye, there was a new player on the scene, who seemed to be catching the imagination of both



Figure 4. Citizenship mood 'anger'.

Ugandan and international audiences. Some years ahead of the 2021 elections, Bobi Wine filled Ugandan radio space with hopeful lyrics: 'when we come together as one we can change our destiny[70]; 'when the struggle is over we shall wear the victors' crown … we shall walk with swag in a new Uganda'.[71] Many young people, especially in Southern and Central Uganda, saw hope in Bobi, and his popularity was strikingly high. Urban youths, and some older people who had not been particularly excited about politics before, looked forward to voting, and hopes for change (Figure 5) were further raised by observations that the state was responding to his popularity in a panicky manner.

It was in this setting, we claim, that the NRM government began purposefully cultivating a mood of acute fear, compounded with that of cynicism. While Museveni has been said to be 'a master in manipulating collective political affect'[72], he is equally a master of violence when manipulation of affect fails. Intimidation, violence, and bribery have been significant factors in recent elections:[73] army trucks and teargas tanks are strategically parked in conspicuous positions such as roundabouts, military helicopters hover over Kampala, and long lines of soldiers patrol the streets. In the run-up to the 2021 elections, the deployment of security personnel and military artillery was greater than during any previous elections under Museveni. Citing COVID-19 as a convenient cover, security forces fired teargas to disband opposition rallies even in small rural towns. Opposition supporters risked being crushed if they took to the streets, and as the election neared, many were roughed up or kidnapped by unidentified government agents.

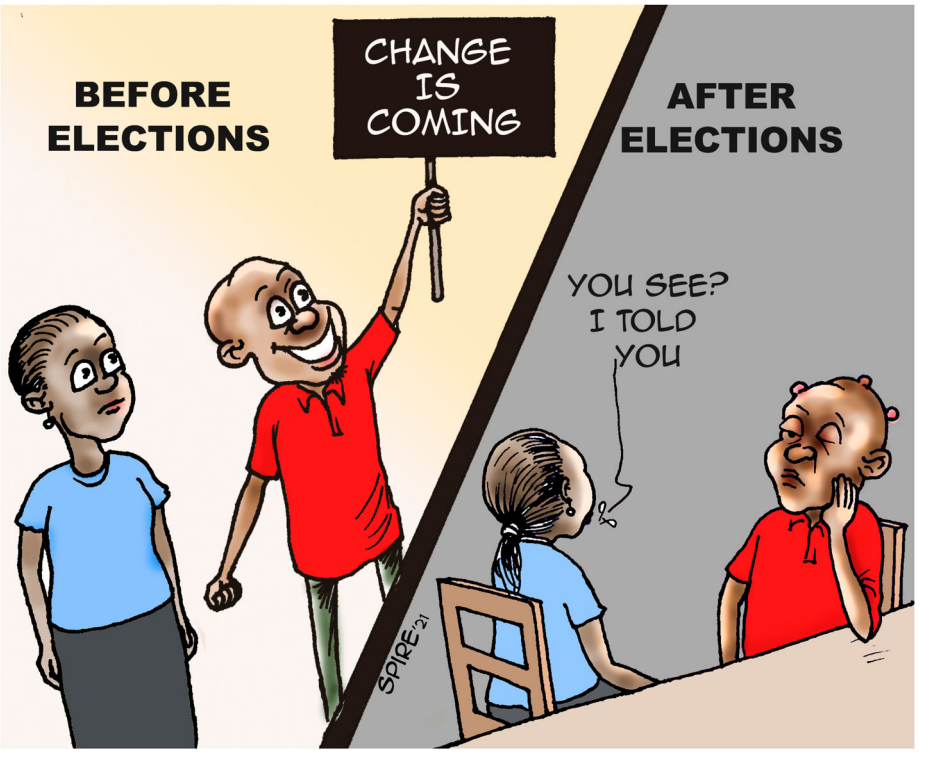


Figure 5. Citizenship moods 'hope' and 'despondence'.

The second cartoon on the fearful citizenship mood conveys the entanglement of fear related to the past and fear in the present (Figure 6). While the president insists that the NRM is the guarantor of peace and that he will crush those who disturb it, the opposition-leaning, red-shirted man cowering under his table encapsulates the knowledge that it is the government's pissing on its citizens that must not be disturbed. The government's redeployment of the peace narrative during the 2021 elections played the double strings of chronic and acute fear to perfection. In this narrative, the opposition and its young (particularly male) supporters are framed as villains threatening to resurrect the monster of Uganda's past violence. Through this narrative, the regime both distances itself from the violence, and plays with its threat; the president and some NRM cadres (such as Gen. Elly Tumwine, Kahinda Otafiire, Shaban Bantariza, etc.) have stated that a mere ballot paper cannot remove them from office, subtly implying that the only way to replace someone who came to power through the gun is by the gun. Importantly, the narrative also plays with the generational divide, constructing a youth phobia among elders.

In November 2020, over 50 opposition supporters were killed when government forces crushed protests in Kampala following Bobi Wine's arrest at a campaign rally.[74] In December 2020, Wine's entire campaign team was rounded up and arrested on the campaign trail in the Ssese islands: several of them remain imprisoned while waiting

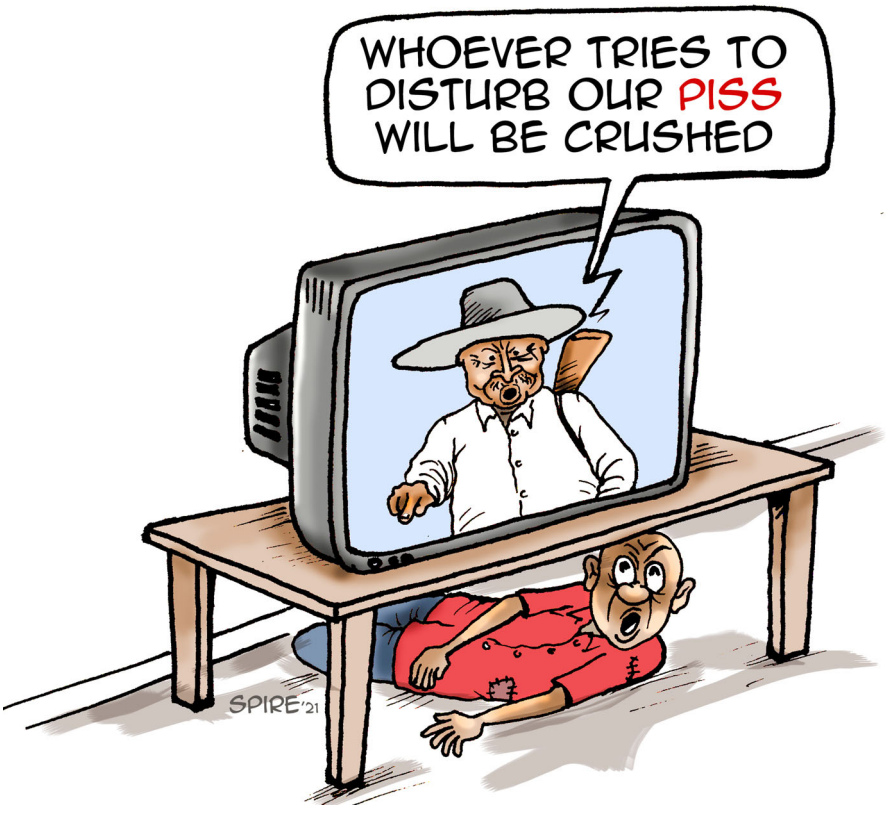


Figure 6. Citizenship mood 'fear'.

to be court-martialled for 'possession of arms'. Some weeks after the election, journalists covering Wine's submission of a petition to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Kampala were beaten with batons by security operatives.[75] Altogether, NUP has reported over 400 of their supporters missing following clandestine military operations, and others found dead. All this served to feed a mood of fear, adding to a repository of the same mood's historic precedents among Ugandans, and pre-empting ideas of protest or resisting the state. As hope for change slowly faded, despondence spread to take its place.

The above cartoon captures key aspects of the despondency prevalent among Ugandans (Figure 7). A young woman with roots in the West Nile but living in Entebbe explained her lack of interest in politics:

> In this Uganda, the president has been there for 30 years, so even if you vote, nothing changes … So I have no interest in voting. I just welcome any leader who comes. The Bobi Wine thing, it's not good he was tortured, but there's nothing you can do, so I don't support him any more than I do any other party, and my friends are all the same … So you just pray, and you cope with things the way things are. (Interview, Entebbe, October 2019)

Her statement, like the cartoon, highlights how often expressions of despondence invoke theological determinism. As the young woman explained, 'I don't think things will



Figure 7. Citizenship mood 'despondence'.

change in 2021, or if they do, if war breaks out, if that is what God has decided, then that is your fate. I pray for peace, that's all.' As we argue elsewhere, such sentiments are prone to manipulation by the government and pro-government religious leaders, who pacify people's political passions by preaching that leaders come from God, and by encouraging retreat to prayer.[76]

Despondence also connects with fear. For many in northern Uganda, a legacy of state violence has led to a 'subdued citizenship' wherein voting for the NRM is conceived as a pragmatic alternative to activism and even 'a necessary life-preserving measure'.[77] Such calculations were also evident in the statement made to us in late 2019 by a man from northern Uganda:

> The one you send to Kampala [your MP], maybe before he used to help your village, but today, that is no longer there. So people have lost their hope in voting. As long as no one comes to beat you up at home, it is okay … So why can't I just remain at home with my family, rather than supporting any kind of politics, which will just destroy my life? Up to now people are in prison for doing that … So for 2021, there is no any difference for Uganda. Not then, not any time as long as Museveni is alive. Even those who are for Bobi Wine, they know this … Museveni is untouchable. His leadership is military. Even if you see what is wrong, you should just be quiet. (Interview, Entebbe, November 2019)

In light of how widespread such clairvoyance was prior to the election, it is not surprising that the voter turnout in 2021 was a paltry 52%. Among our acquaintances, some chose not to travel to vote due to fear of unrest along the way, others stayed away because they believed the vote would be manipulated, while some opted out of voting due to the belief that neither Museveni nor Bobi Wine, the key contenders, offered what Uganda needed.

The lightening of the mood to one of hope in 2020 was thus only momentary. With state violence heightened, elections marred by gross irregularities, the court election petition aborted, and all outlets for protest blocked by the state, post-election debates petered out in confusion and in-fighting among the opposition: despondence was resurgent. The NUP's campaign slogan, 'We are removing a dictator', gradually changed to, 'Nothing lasts forever.' The dwindling of hope did not come as a surprise to those who had not been caught up in it, especially after the experience of Besigye's violent deflation in previous elections. As captured by Ssentongo's combined cartoon on the two moods, sceptics considered those who still had hope naïve. The pattern of elation and deflation was also seen around the 2011 and 2016 elections. Yet in 2021, Ugandans who still had hope of change seem to have plunged deeper into despondency than in previous election cycles. When even the slightest spark of protest was snuffed out, so was much of the mood of hope. Agitation shifted from calls for 'change' to the release of political prisoners.

A year after the violent crushing of opposition protests, a Facebook user commented on our cartoons: 'My heart still bleeds and I shudder at what happened in November. It took me by surprise. I never expected it.' A bleeding heart provides infertile ground for hope, and these types of sentiments served to confirm much of the despondence we felt as researchers following Ugandan politics. Yet what took us by surprise was the insistence of a handful of commentators that despite everything, hope remains. One of them wrote:

> [Y]ou haven't represented the spirit of those of us [who] are resilient, still hopeful, and absolutely refuse to give up. The hopefuls among us, us that continue to encourage and cheer on our opposition leaders and help them up when … they have been beaten down … Represent us and the picture will be complete.

Such statements also confirmed our sense that hope was best represented - as in the article we had by then drafted - together with fear and despondence. As another commentator put it, '[the cartoons] try to reflect what happened but they do miss that part where people are hopeful that whatever happens the last words will be "THANK U GOD"'. Indeed, the main hope for change still held by many of our interlocutors is that the inevitable passage of time will eventually catch up with Uganda's now 78-year-old head of state.

Conclusion

To conclude, we wish to elaborate on three interconnected points. The first of these concerns patterns of Ugandan politics under Museveni. Bobi Wine generated a mood of hope among Ugandans, and many previously politically passive citizens were invigorated. As one of our interlocutors put it in 2020: 'In almost all the Whatsapp groups, politics prevails; in the bar, in birthday parties; politics has become part of our daily bread, when before, it was left to politicians.' Yet the mood of hope took a huge hit after the election: while the die-hard few remained hopeful, many others slunk to despondence. This pattern repeated what has been seen in Uganda's earlier elections, yet we argue that in 2021 the fall was steeper than before. Both the NRM regime's scaling up of violence and clientelism in response to rising hope and anger among Ugandans, and the speed with which these measures led to a flattening of hope for change, and catfighting between opposition groups, point to just how unlikely it seems for power to be transferred in any future elections in which Museveni is a candidate.

The second point echoes previous research on affective states[78] and emotions and politics[79] to highlight the centrality of moods in state-citizen relations. As the Ugandan case shows, citizenship moods are both persistent and malleable. Similar to the case described by Montoya,[80] Ugandans approaching the 2021 elections envisaged the possibility that a regime transition might allow formerly excluded citizens to gain access to state power and resources. Yet that hope was quashed when elections were hijacked by the regime. Complementing previous scholarship on the complexity of citizenship in postcolonial Africa,[81] we have shown how citizenship is both moulded by and engenders intersecting and fluctuating moods. The analysis we present also highlights the need to understand shifts in these moods as profoundly related to the growing inequalities brought about by neoliberalisation.[82]

Our final point concerns both methodology and, relatedly, the ethics and politics of research. Experimenting with what evolved into a method of cartoon-powered sociopolitical analysis provided us with vital insights into citizenship, politics, and inequality in Uganda. Our experience suggests that cartoon-powered analysis, and other arts-based methods, can provide a powerful way of gauging citizens' moods concerning politics, which can be particularly useful in situations where the use of survey methods, for instance, is logistically or financially unfeasible. Furthermore, the cartoons created through the research process provided us with the means of communicating our findings to a much broader audience, including our research interlocutors, than is the case for most academic research. By increasing social relevance, cartoon-powered analysis can help address some of the underlying epistemic injustices that plague research on Africa.[83] Moreover, by making explicit the relationality of moods, and the degree to which all scholarly analysis is based on intuition and 'crafted out of fields of doubt

and indeterminacy',[84] such methods can contribute to breaking down the artificial barrier between the academic as 'knower' and the citizen as 'known'.

Notes

1. Kabeer, "The Search for Inclusive Citizenship."
2. Koning, Jaffe, and Koster, "Citizenship Agendas in and beyond" 121.
3. Ahimbisibwe, "Exploring Obutyamye as Material Citizenship in Busoga Subregion, Uganda."
4. Alava, "The Everyday and Spectacle."
5. Clough and Halley, *The Affective Turn*.
6. Hordern, *Political Affections*.
7. Burke, and Stets, *Identity Theory*.
8. Marcus, *The Sentimental Citizen*, 111.
9. Nussbaum, "Cultivating Humanity"; Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*.
10. Stoler, "Affective States."
11. Mitchell, "'Society Economy and the State Effect.'"
12. Laszczkowski and Reeves, "Introduction," 7.
13. Ketai, "Affect, Mood, Emotion, and Feeling."; Burke and Stets, *Identity Theory*.
14. see Steinmüller, "'Father Mao' and the Country-Family" for a critique.
15. Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*; Ng'weno, "Beyond Citizenship as We."
16. Laszczkowski and Reeves, "Introduction," 7.
17. Ng'weno and Aloo, "Irony of Citizenship," 147.
18. Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*.
19. Ssentongo, "Spaces for Pluralism in 'Ethnically Sensitive"; Ssentongo, *Quarantined: My Ordeal in Uganda's*; Ssentongo and Okok, "Rethinking Anti-Corruption Strategies."
20. Alava, *Christianity, Politics and the Afterlives of War;* Alava, "Tiny Citizenship, Twisted Politics."
21. Alava and Ssentongo, "Religious (de)Politicization."
22. Dodds, "Popular Geopolitics and Cartoons"; Hammett, "Political Cartoons, Post-Colonialism and Critical African Studies"; Limb and Tejumola, *Taking African Cartoons Seriously*.
23. Duus, 'Presidential Address: Weapons'.
24. for a similar methodology, see Böhrer, Döbler, and Tarkkala, "Facemasks, Material and Metaphors" 7.
25. Sani et al., "Political Cartoons in the First Decade."
26. Sacco, *Palestine*; *Footnotes in Gaza*; *Paying the Land*.
27. Sousanis, *Unflattening*.
28. Jääskeläinen and Helin, "Writing Embodied Generosity."
29. Åhäll, "Affect as Methodology," 2.
30. Pinker and Harvey, "Negotiating Uncertainty," 18.
31. Stoler, "Affective States."
32. Laszczkowski and Reeves, "Introduction," 8.
33. Cheeseman, Lynch and Willis, *The Moral Economy of Elections in Africa*.
34. For a critique grounded in philosophical pragmatism and East African contexts, see Holma and Kontinen *Practices of Citizenship in East Africa*.
35. Cheeseman, Lynch, and Willis, *The Moral Economy*.
36. Keller, *Identity, Citizenship, and Political*
37. see Mafeje, "The Ideology of 'Tribalism'"; Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*
38. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*; Ssentongo, "Spaces for Pluralism."
39. Keller, *Identity, Citizenship, and Political Conflict in Africa*.
40. Kabananukye, "Ethnic Diversity: Implications to Development," 262.
41. Alava and Ssentongo, "Religious (de)Politicization."
42. Rubongoya, *Regime Hegemony in Museveni's Uganda*.

43. For an overview, see Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda*.
44. Rubongoya, *Regime Hegemony*, 15.
45. Vokes, "Signs of Development", 315.
46. Taylor and Matsiko, "How Uganda's Election Re-Exposed."
47. Oxfam International, "Who Is Growing?"
48. Vokes, "Signs of Development."
49. Asiimwe, "The Impact of Neoliberal Reforms."
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51. UBOS, "State of Uganda Population Report 2018."
52. UNFPA, "Worlds Apart in Uganda."
53. The World Bank, "Poverty Maps of Uganda."
54. World Population Review, "Uganda Population 2020."
55. Baral, "Bad Guys, Good Life."
56. Reuss and Titeca, "When Revolutionaries Grow Old."
57. Perrot, Makara, and Lafargue, *Elections in a Hybrid Regime*; Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda*.
58. Tapscott, *Arbitrary States*.
59. Alava, "'Acholi Youth Are Lost'?"
60. Närman, "Karamoja"; Ssentongo et al., "Post-Disarmament Community Conflict Resolution."
61. *Daily Monitor*, "Bantariza Gun Remarks Trigger Public Uproar," 3 December 2019, sec. Nation. https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/bantariza-gun-remarks-trigger-public-uproar-1862672?view = htmlamp.
62. Wilkins, "Capture the Flag."
63. Friesinger, "Patronage, Repression, and Co-Optation."
64. Schneidermann, "Ugandan Music Stars."
65. Cheeseman, Lynch, and Willis, *The Moral Economy of Elections*.
66. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.
67. Nyanzi, *No Roses from My Mouth*.
68. see "Naked Bodies and Collective Action."
69. Kakumba 2020
70. Wine, *Uganda Zukuka*.
71. Wine, *Tuliyambala Engule*.
72. Vokes, "Signs of Development", 306.
73. Titeca and Onyango, "The Carrot and the Stick"; Vokes and Wilkins, "Party, Patronage and Coercion."
74. Andrew Bagala, "Death Toll from Riots Rises to 50." *Daily Monitor*, 24 November 2020. https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/special-reports/death-toll-from-riots-rises-to-50--3208320.
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76. Alava and Ssentongo, "Religious (de)Politicization."
77. Alava, "The Everyday and Spectacle," 102.
78. Stoler, "Affective States"; Laszczkowski and Reeves, "Introduction."
79. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*; Marcus, *The Sentimental Citizen*.
80. Montoya, "The Turn of the Offended."
81. Ng'weno and Aloo, "Irony of Citizenship," 147.
82. Wiegratz et.al., "Introduction: Interpreting Change."
83. Ssentongo, "'Which Journal Is That?"
84. Pinker and Harvey, "Negotiating Uncertainty," 18.

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