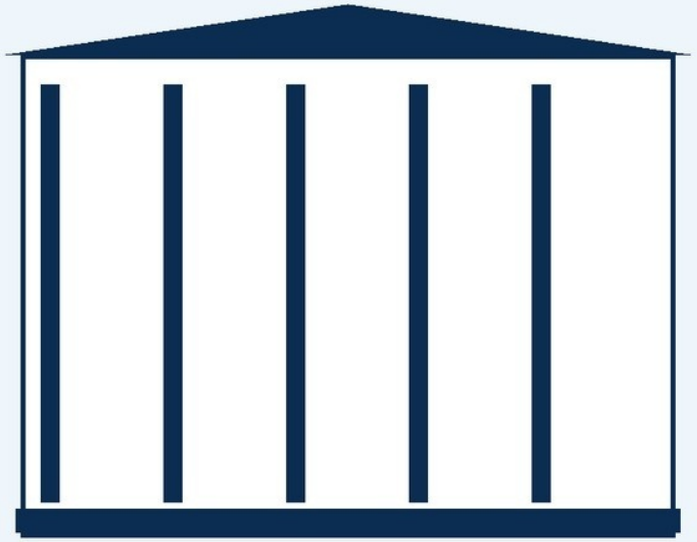
SYSTEMS OF GOVERNANCE & THE FUTURE OF THE PRESIDENCY



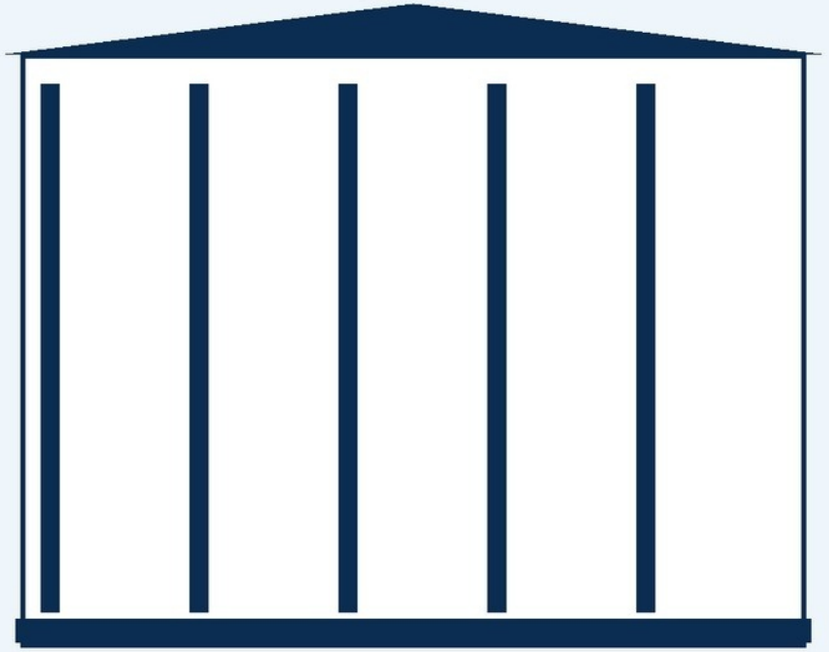


A Constitutional Conversation for a Stable, Inclusive and United Uganda

Institution Before Individual • Service Before Position • Uganda Before Self

UGANDA TODAY

- A strong State, but a highly centralised system.
- A contested presidency and recurring political tension.
- Regional imbalances in power, resources and development.
- Growing public demand for a fairer and more inclusive system.



THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

HOW SHOULD UGANDA BE GOVERNED?

DRIVER OR CAR? — PERSON VS SYSTEM

THE PERSON (THE DRIVER)

- Leadership character and judgement matter.
- A leader can improve or damage a system.
- But the leader is temporary.

SYSTEM
= THE CAR

THE SYSTEM (THE CAR)

- Rules, institutions and processes organise power.
- The system shapes how power is acquired, used and limited.
- A strong system outlives any one leader.

KEY LESSON: Uganda's challenge is not only WHO drives — but WHAT SYSTEM they drive within.

SYSTEMS OF GOVERNANCE: THE SPECTRUM

CENTRALISATION



Power concentrated at the centre.

DECENTRALISATION



Administrative functions move down.

DEVOLUTION



Real decision-making power moves down.

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT



Larger regions receive defined autonomy.

FEDERALISM



Power constitutionally shared between federal and state governments.

Government = WHO rules.

Governance = HOW power is organised and exercised.

ONE HOUSE, MANY ROOMS — UNITY DOES NOT REQUIRE UNIFORMITY

THE 1962 CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT

Buganda
special federal status

Ankole
federal status

Bunyoro
federal status

Toro
federal status

Busoga
distinct arrangement

Rest of Uganda
district status

WHAT THIS TEACHES US

- Uganda has previously combined national unity with different territorial arrangements.
- Diversity can be recognised without turning regions into separate countries.
- Shared power is a design question — not simply a slogan.

UNITY DOES NOT REQUIRE UNIFORMITY.

THE SALEH–OTUNNU CONSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY PROPOSAL

NATIONAL CONSOCIATIONAL COUNCIL

(Apex coordinating body — chaired by the Presidency)

ELITE COOPERATION CHAMBER

Government, NRM, willing registered political parties and parliamentary liaison.

GRASSROOTS & MULTI-STAKEHOLDER CHAMBER

Religious, elders, women, labour, youth and other civic actors.

TECHNICAL & IMPLEMENTATION SECRETARIAT

Turns commitments into budgets, programmes, timelines and monitoring.

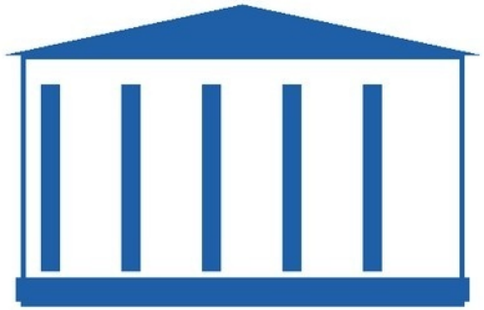
THE CRITICAL TEST

Does this proposal redistribute constitutional power — or organise broader participation around existing central power?

REFORM ACCESS TO POWER — OR REFORM THE STRUCTURE OF POWER ITSELF?

THE PRESIDENCY QUESTION

REFORM ACCESS?



Who gets into State House?

OR

REFORM THE PRESIDENCY?



How much power should State House have?

Maybe the problem is not only WHO occupies the chair — but HOW MUCH POWER the chair holds.

LEARNING FROM OTHER FEDERATIONS

NIGERIA

Federal + strong presidency

Shows federalism can coexist with a powerful single executive.

GERMANY

Federal + parliamentary

The Chancellor leads government; states influence federal law through the Bundesrat.

SWITZERLAND

Federal + collegial

Seven-member Federal Council; annual rotating president; first among equals.

USA

Federal + presidential

Strong separation of powers between executive, legislature and courts.

KEY TAKEAWAY: There is no single “perfect” model — Uganda must design for its own history, diversity and needs.

THE UGANDA CONSTITUTIONAL LABORATORY — FULL ARCHITECTURE

FEDERAL CONSTITUTION
(Supreme Law)

CITIZEN
Source of Power

→

LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Village → Sub-county → District

→

CONSTITUENT STATE
One of 16 States

→

BICAMERAL PARLIAMENT
People's House + States' House

→

COLLEGIAL FEDERAL EXECUTIVE
(7–9 equal members)

INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY
(Constitutional Court)

ONE UGANDA — MULTIPLE LEVELS — SHARED POWER

THE PEOPLE → LOCAL GOVERNMENT → 16 CONSTITUENT STATES



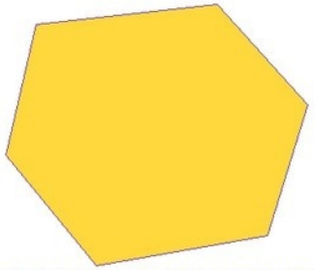
CITIZEN

Full and equal citizenship



STRONG LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Services, planning and accountability



16 CONSTITUENT STATES

Self-governing within one Uganda

- **One Uganda**
- **Equal Citizenship**
- **No Internal Passports**
- **No Ethnic Ownership of a State**

Historical identity can inform a state; it must never imprison citizenship.

WHO DOES WHAT? — DIVISION OF POWERS

CONSTITUENT STATE POWERS

- Agriculture
- Local economic development
- Schools administration
- Primary & regional healthcare
- State / local roads
- Culture & tourism
- Local planning & markets
- Some taxation

FEDERAL POWERS

- Defence
- Foreign affairs
- Citizenship
- Currency & central banking
- International treaties
- Macroeconomic policy
- Major inter-state infrastructure
- Constitutional rights & national standards

SHARED / CONCURRENT POWERS

- Water
- Energy
- Environment
- Natural resources
- Public-health emergencies
- Higher education
- Large infrastructure
- Inter-state transport

KEY PRINCIPLE: Power goes upward only where common national action is genuinely necessary.

FISCAL FEDERALISM — WHO RAISES, WHO SHARES, WHO SPENDS?

Federal taxes

Nationwide taxes for national functions.

State taxes

Taxes set and collected by constituent states.

Shared taxes

Revenue divided by constitutional formula.

Resource royalties

Local + State + Federal shares.

Grants

Conditional or unconditional transfers.

Equalisation transfers

Funds to reduce gaps between richer and poorer states.

EQUALISATION FUND

Minimum standards for every citizen:

- Health
- Education
- Water
- Infrastructure

FEDERALISM SHOULD DECENTRALISE OPPORTUNITY — NOT DECENTRALISE POVERTY.

FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS — TWO HOUSES + A COLLEGIAL EXECUTIVE

BICAMERAL PARLIAMENT

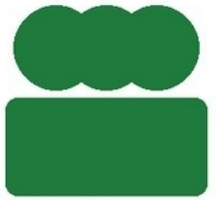
PEOPLE'S HOUSE

Representation mainly by population.

STATES' HOUSE / FEDERAL SENATE

Represents constituent states and protects state interests.

COLLEGIAL FEDERAL EXECUTIVE



- 7–9 equal members
- Collective executive authority
- Rotating chair / president
- No permanent domination by one region
- Competence + inclusion + constitutional rules

Presidency becomes an institution rather than a throne.

GUARDRAILS AROUND POWER

CONSTITUTIONAL COURT

Interprets the Constitution and resolves federal–state disputes.

SECURITY UNDER THE CONSTITUTION

Army and security services serve the Republic — not an individual or party.

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Protected as guardians of heritage, but outside partisan executive power.

DIRECT CITIZEN TOOLS

Referenda, petitions, public hearings, access to information and participation.

POWER MUST BE LIMITED, CHECKED AND ANSWERABLE.

THE FOUR TESTS OF THE UGANDA CONSTITUTIONAL LABORATORY

1 UNITY

One citizenship • one national defence • one foreign policy • one international personality

2 AUTONOMY

States receive real constitutional powers, decision-making space and revenue.

3 ACCOUNTABILITY

Citizens know who is responsible; clear roles reduce blame-shifting.

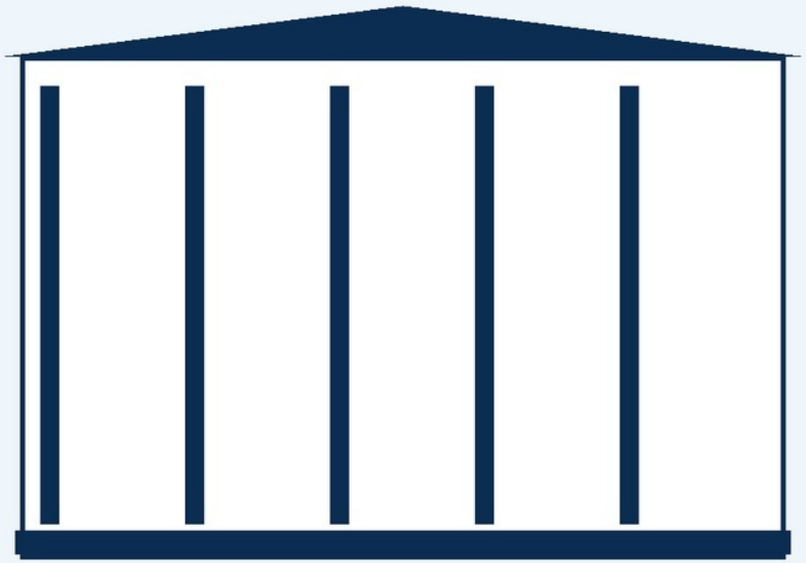
4 ANTI-CAPTURE

Power is divided so capturing one office does not mean capturing the whole country.

RISKS TO WATCH: **Local strongmen • corruption • identity politics • boundary disputes • slow collective decisions • bureaucracy • inequality**

No governance system removes human weakness. Good governance prevents human weakness from becoming national catastrophe.

FINAL REFLECTION — THE BIGGER QUESTION



QUESTION 1 — THE POLITICAL-INCUMBENT TEST

Does Uganda need a STRONGER PRESIDENT — or STRONGER CONSTITUTIONAL INSTITUTIONS?

QUESTION 2 — THE POLITICAL-OPPOSITION TEST

If the person you dislike most won tomorrow, would the Constitution you support TODAY still make you feel PROTECTED?

WE ARE NOT JUST CHANGING A PERSON.
WE ARE BUILDING A SYSTEM.