
3. **2008** “What’s in a name: reproducing division through language,” CASID roundtable


**Publications**

1. **2005** *Kamloops This Week*, Kamloops, columnist, “World Watch”

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**PROGRAMME**

The Final Oral Examination for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(Department of Political Science)

**Sabina Sharan Singh**

1999 Queen’s University MA
1995 University of Victoria BA

“Democracy and Dictatorship in Uganda: A Politics of Dispensation?”

Monday, April 28, 2014
9:00am
David Turpin Building, room A144

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. R.B.J. Walker, Department of Political Science, UVic (Supervisor)
Dr. Marlea Clarke, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)
Dr. Gregory Blue, Department of History, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Mustapha Pasha, Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Ian Putnam, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, UVic
Abstract

Many scholarly and policy evaluations of governance in Uganda have blamed limited commitment to democracy in the country squarely on the shoulders of state leaders. This dissertation considers a broader range of explanations and raises questions about the limited understanding of democracy expressed in the prevailing literature. It does so by considering historical contexts, international and global structures, and the relationship between local political cultures and the contested concept of democracy. Claims about democracy and 'good governance,' it suggests, are used to justify very narrow procedural prescriptions for the domestic state on the basis of a systematic neglect of Uganda's specific political history and the structural contexts in which the Ugandan state can act.

More specifically, this dissertation engages with one of the key controversies in the literature on the politics of development, that concerning the degree to which accounts of democracy favoured by the most powerful states should guide attempts to create democratic institutions elsewhere. It argues that at least some of the factors that are often used to explain the failure of democracy in Uganda can be better explained in terms of two dynamics that have been downplayed in the relevant literature: competition between different understandings of how democracy should be understood in principle; and the international conditions under which attempts to impose one specific account of democracy - multiparty representation – have marginalized other possibilities. These dynamics have undermined processes that arguably attempt to construct forms of democracy that respond to very specific socio-cultural conditions.

Fundamental disputes about how democracy should be understood are already familiar from the history of democracy in Western societies, where struggles to impose some forms of democracy over others have defined much of the character of modern politics. The importance of the international or global dimension of democratic politics has received less attention, even in relation to Western societies, but is especially significant in relation to Africa's political history and its position in the world. After reviewing the history of struggles over forms of governance in Uganda, this dissertation explores a series of unique open-ended interviews carried out in 2009 with important political actors in Uganda. On this basis, it argues for the ongoing centrality both of the always contested character of democracy and of attempts to impose particular accounts of democracy through internationalised and globalised structures. An appreciation of both dynamics, especially in the historical context that has been downplayed in much of the literature, offers a better scholarly ground on which to evaluate contemporary politics in Uganda than the choice between multiparty systems and dictatorship that remains influential in discussions of the Ugandan case. Such an appreciation is in keeping with important recent attempts to think about the possibilities of democracy in Uganda in postcolonial terms and to resist the forms of neo-colonial politics that are examined here as a 'politics of dispensation.'

Awards, Scholarships, Fellowships

2011 – Graduate Entrance Award, University of Victoria
2003 – Graduate Entrance Scholarship, Simon Fraser University

Presentations

1. 2010 “Indigenizing Democratisation: No Party Democracy in Uganda” British Columbia Political Science Association