



WEAK UGANDAN DEMOCRACY, STRONG REGIONAL INFLUENCE

Elizabeth Murray, Berouk Mesfin, and Stephanie Wolters



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ABOUT THE REPORT

In the wake of Uganda's contentious 2016 presidential election, this report explores key elements of the country's domestic politics and foreign policy as well as their regional and international ramifications. A joint publication of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the report draws on interviews conducted in Uganda, Ethiopia, South Africa, and the United States and on desk research.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Elizabeth Murray is a senior program officer in USIP's sub-Saharan Africa program. Berouk Mesfin is a senior researcher in charge of the Horn of Africa region within the Conflict Prevention and Risk Analysis Division of the ISS. Stephanie Wolters is the division head of the Conflict Prevention and Risk Analysis Division of the ISS.

Cover photo: Mbale, Uganda—Citizens passing by a wall filled with electoral propaganda promoting Ugandan president Museveni and his party, the NRM, for the general Ugandan elections. (Istock photo/copyright: gaborbasch)

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United States Institute of Peace

2301 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20037

Phone: 202.457.1700

Fax: 202.429.6063

E-mail: usip_requests@usip.org

Web: www.usip.org

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[Demonstrating his willingness to deploy the UPDF in support of African security issues and in support of the priorities of allies in the region and further afield has strengthened Museveni's image and conveniently minimized attention on Uganda's democratic decay.]

Summary

- Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986 after leading the National Resistance Army's armed struggle for control of the country.
- Initially hailed as one of Africa's new, progressive, and capable heads of state, Museveni has seen his favorable reputation tarnished by his unwillingness to leave office.
- Sensing threats to his campaign, Museveni orchestrated widespread political repression in the months leading up to the elections; he was elected for a fifth term of office in February 2016 in an election that drew international criticism.
- Museveni has come to be seen as the most dominant leader in the region and an essential ally both to many neighboring countries and to the West.
- Uganda's prominent regional role has allowed Museveni to deflect criticism of Uganda's weakening democracy.
- Through Uganda's deployments to the African Union Mission in Somalia, its participation in missions to counter the Lord's Resistance Army, and its intervention in the South Sudanese crisis, Museveni demonstrated his willingness and capacity to deploy his armed forces to advance his foreign policy objectives. His various interventions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, however, damaged Uganda's international reputation.
- Polarization and repression within Uganda remain high and relations are strained between Museveni and some of Uganda's allies. Museveni's eventual succession is uncertain and presents a risk of increased political tensions.
- Analysis of recent international interventions and the drivers behind them offers insight about Uganda's future foreign policy, whether under Museveni or a successor.

Introduction

Since coming to power in 1986, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and his political party—the National Resistance Movement (NRM)—have played a strong role in the East African political landscape. Self-styled as a Pan-African leader, Museveni has relied on his reputation and on the nation’s armed forces to exert influence in neighboring countries. As Uganda has engaged significantly in the region, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan, and Somalia, the NRM has used a variety of measures to significantly curtail political rights and civil liberties within its own borders. These tactics have had troubling consequences within Uganda, where democratic institutions and policymaking capacity have eroded noticeably.

Uganda’s 2016 elections and the repression around them have attracted considerable attention from both its citizens and the international community. Allegations of fraud aside, President Yoweri Museveni’s 61 percent vote share demonstrates significant public support. Since the election, calm has largely returned to the country, though polarization between the NRM and its political opposition is still high. As Museveni begins his fifth term, questions remain about whether his domestic and international stature and reputation have been damaged by the government’s many acts of repression in the lead-up to the election. Several of Uganda’s neighbors and key allies condemned the elections, raising questions about how this may affect the country’s standing in the region and its relationships with the United States and Europe.¹

This report explores key elements of Uganda’s domestic politics and foreign policy as well as the relationship between the two, particularly in light of Museveni’s controversial victory in the February 2016 presidential elections. It argues that a large proportion of Uganda’s current domestic policies are aimed at maintaining Museveni’s hold on power and that Uganda’s regional leadership role has also been a key dimension in cementing Museveni’s relationships with important domestic, regional, and international constituencies.

Research included desk research and forty-five interviews from April 2015 to April 2016. The majority of interviews were conducted in person in Kampala in April and May 2015. Others were conducted in person in Ethiopia, South Africa, and the United States in the months that followed, and by telephone with interviewees in Uganda. Identifying details of interviewees have been withheld to preserve anonymity. Unless otherwise cited, statements and conclusions in this report are drawn from fieldwork interviews (for detail, see the Appendix, page 25).

Museveni: National and Regional Giant

After gaining its independence from Great Britain in 1962, Uganda was first governed by Milton Obote, initially as prime minister and then as president. Both Obote and Idi Amin, who seized power from Obote in a 1971 coup, were from Uganda’s north and perceived to favor their own ethnic groups at the expense of others. Amin’s brutal rule during the 1970s cost at least eighty thousand and as many as five hundred thousand Ugandans their lives before he was overthrown in 1979 by a coalition led by Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere.² One participant in that uprising was a young Yoweri Museveni, who had studied in Dar es Salaam during his university years. After Amin’s defeat, elections the following year saw Obote returned to power and Museveni, along with several other candidates, defeated. Declaring the elections rigged, Museveni began to assemble his National Resistance Army (NRA).

After a five-year guerilla war, Museveni and the NRA took power in January 1986. When he assumed power, Museveni established a no-party system that restricted party activities but allowed the NRM to operate unencumbered on the grounds that it was a movement

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rather than a party.³ Individual parties were prohibited from campaigning, holding rallies, or nominating candidates for office. The 1995 constitution and 2000 referendum entrenched the no-party system. A 2005 referendum allowed a return to multiparty politics. Also in 2005, a constitutional amendment removed presidential term limits.

During the first fifteen years of his rule, Museveni was perceived internationally as foremost in a group of African heads of state characterized as a “new breed” of leaders.⁴ He was praised, particularly in Washington, for his leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS, for returning to the Asian community property that had been confiscated under Amin, for his adoption of World Bank–recommended economic reforms, and for restoring stability in the south of the country.

Museveni’s favorable international reputation has been progressively tarnished, however, by a number of controversies. These include his refusal to leave office, widespread political repression, the Uganda People’s Defence Force (UPDF)’s questionable performance against the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda, and Uganda’s contentious interventions in the DRC (formerly Zaire). Despite all this, Uganda—specifically Museveni and the UPDF—has maintained its position as a key ally of the West and a regional leader, in large part because the UPDF has become one of East Africa’s most capable military forces and Museveni has shown his willingness to deploy troops regionally.

Within Uganda, Museveni retains loyalty among large swaths of voters who lived through the wars of the 1970s and 1980s and are grateful for the relative stability and security under the last two decades of his rule. Over the past several years, however, this support base has declined, particularly in urban areas, in part because of weaker loyalty among younger voters and also because of broad citizen concerns over unemployment, corruption, and service delivery.

Pre-Election Tensions Within the NRM

President Museveni’s February 2016 victory secured him a fifth term of office. The Ugandan government, however, has drawn significant rebuke for both its refusal to allow a fair competition and the questionable execution of the election itself.⁵ In the months before the election, Museveni and his NRM allies in government intensified their well-practiced repression, which has been thoroughly documented by both Ugandan and international organizations.⁶

At the same time, tensions within the NRM in the lead-up to the elections put Museveni on the defensive and led him to rely on an increasingly smaller set of close advisers. These intraparty tensions included dissent by a group of “rebel members of parliament (MPs),” the vocal dissatisfaction of a group of defeated primary candidates, and the estrangement of two former senior party figures. The most widely publicized of these challenges was the departure of former prime minister Amama Mbabazi. A historical NRM loyalist who fought in the civil war that brought the NRA to power in 1986, Mbabazi served several senior roles in government before becoming prime minister in May 2011. He was sacked by Museveni in September 2014 and shortly thereafter dismissed as secretary general of the NRM.⁷ The reason for his dismissal, though not explicitly stated, was widely acknowledged to be Museveni’s suspicions of Mbabazi’s presidential ambitions.⁸ After briefly attempting to seek the NRM nomination, Mbabazi announced that he would run as an independent. He subsequently decided to join the opposition coalition “the Democratic Alliance (TDA)” in September 2015 before the coalition fractured and he formed the TDA–Go Forward campaign.

As the election approached, Mbabazi showed public support as high as 12 percent in opinion polls, though ultimately he received only 1.5 percent of the vote.⁹ His poor performance in the elections is attributed to his being regarded as corrupt and widely disliked within the party.¹⁰

After his break with the NRM, Mbabazi was also cut off from the party grassroots structures, which Museveni used to mobilize support for himself. Despite his disappointing showing in the 2016 election, it is possible that Mbabazi may mount another campaign in 2021. Although Mbabazi was not well regarded within the party or by the general public, his departure heightened anxiety among the inner NRM circle about the outcome of the election.

Museveni's alliance with former intelligence head David Sejusa (also known as David Tinye-fuza) is another key relationship that soured between the 2011 and the 2016 elections. Sejusa was serving as coordinator of intelligence organs when he left the country in 2013 after reportedly uncovering a plot that he and other senior leaders were to be murdered for their opposition to Museveni's grooming his son Brigadier Muhoozi Kainerugaba for the presidency. After continuing to criticize Museveni during his exile in London, Sejusa returned to Uganda in December 2014, at Museveni's invitation, and seemed to briefly realign himself with the regime. Shortly thereafter, though, he began to publicly criticize Museveni and to encourage Ugandan citizens to support Forum for Democratic Change candidate Kizza Besigye or Mbabazi instead. In January, the government brought charges of insubordination against Sejusa, who was an official in the UPDF until his dismissal in late May 2016. He remained imprisoned at the time of the elections but was released on bail in early April 2016. Sejusa's criticisms of Museveni made for constant media fodder during the 2016 election season and added to the sense that the NRM was embattled as elections approached.

Not only had relations with Mbabazi and Sejusa soured, discontent within the party about the primary elections was also widespread. In early 2015, several hundred defeated primary candidates protested what they perceived as the NRM's unfair treatment of their candidacies in the 2010 primaries. After the October 2015 primaries, a new group of defeated candidates came together to speak out against irregularities—which included missing voting papers, delayed elections, and incorrect names on ballots.¹¹ Some went on to run as independents and were subsequently elected to Parliament, including several who defeated key NRM ministers and junior ministers.¹²

Another troublesome faction within the NRM as the elections approached were four parliamentarians who had been temporarily expelled from the party in early 2013 for acts of insubordination, such as criticizing Museveni on a radio show and participating in the Parliamentary Forum on Oil (which runs counter to the NRM position).¹³ In October 2015, the Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling in their favor, mandating that they could not be banned from Parliament by their party.¹⁴ All four ran and won in the 2016 parliamentary election: Muhammad Nsereko and Wilfred Niwagaba as independents and Barnabas Tinkasimire and Theodore Ssekikubo within the party. These MPs on their own are not a strong or large enough constituency to influence policy outcomes, but they may continue to speak out in ways that the NRM perceives as antagonistic. The Supreme Court ruling in their favor may also indirectly encourage dissent among other MPs.

These three developments added to the sense that Museveni was more embattled than he had been in previous elections. The vocal dissent from individuals and groups previously loyal to the NRM led the party to redouble its efforts, which included heavy repression, to win the 2016 elections.

Growing Climate of Repression

Despite simmering intraparty conflict and decreasing support in urban areas, Museveni remained dominant and favored as the elections approached. Among the factors contributing

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to this dominance were government repression, a partisan security sector loyal to the president, and intelligence agencies answerable to the presidency.

With the return to multiparty politics in 2005, the NRM leadership increased its use of incentives and fear to consolidate its power. Repressive laws and partisan government bodies have markedly limited dissent and political plurality. Of particular note is the 2013 Public Order and Management Act (POMA), which requires that any meeting involving political matters be registered three days in advance and approved by local authorities. POMA has been used to curtail political rights: its scope is so broad as to theoretically include most public gatherings, but it has been applied selectively against opposition gatherings while permitting NRM gatherings to proceed. It was invoked to detain opposition candidates Amama Mbabazi and Kizza Besigye in July 2015, to break up opposition gatherings in Soroti and Jinja in September 2015, and to detain Kizza Besigye multiple times in the days before and after the elections.¹⁵

The recent passage of the controversial nongovernmental organization (NGO) bill in November 2015 is another setback for political freedom in Uganda. Although the measure was not signed into law until January 2016, government obstruction of civil society was significant throughout 2015.¹⁶ In signing the bill, Uganda joined several of its East African neighbors in legalizing increased monitoring, supervision, and scrutiny of civil society groups. Uganda observers point out that as the bill neared passage in late 2015, the mere specter of increased government oversight and possible prosecutions of NGO staff was enough to silence a significant segment of civil society in the lead-up to the elections.

Human Rights Watch highlights media interference as another way the NRM influenced political discourse. The Uganda Communication Commission, district commissioners, intelligence, and the police all sway media coverage in favor of the NRM, particularly in rural areas.¹⁷ Their methods include intimidating and harassing journalists, threatening closure of radio stations, and bribing journalists.

Repressive laws and policies are all the more effective and have all the more impact in Uganda given the partisan security sector and an intelligence community answerable to Museveni. This community consists of two agencies, established under the Security Organizations Act of 1987, that are directly responsible and answerable only to Museveni, who administers them without institutionalized parliamentary oversight or significant public scrutiny and appoints their directors.¹⁸ The first of them is the Internal Security Organization, which is the primary intelligence-gathering and counterintelligence agency and is present in all parts of Uganda down to the lowest parish level.¹⁹ Its main functions include monitoring selected dissidents and all opposition groups capable of posing threats to the regime. The second agency is the External Security Organization, which is concerned with observing foreign governments and forecasting external conditions and trends that could affect Uganda's foreign policy.

In practice, however, other agencies also perform intelligence functions. One is the Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence (CMI), which gathers and reports information about military conditions, interventionist activities, and intentions of neighboring countries. The CMI reports directly to Museveni, at times without the chief of the defense forces, who is nominally responsible for oversight.²⁰ The Uganda Police Force also carries out intelligence functions within the Directorate of Criminal Intelligence and Crime Investigation. Its inspector general, Kale Kayihura, is a powerful military officer who has held significant power in a variety of roles and is known to be loyal to Museveni.²¹ Like him, many intelligence directors and officers have military training or experience and retain close ties to the UPDF.²² Given wide discretion in methods of collecting and processing information and their proximity to Museveni, the

intelligence agencies are well positioned to hinder the activities of Uganda's political opposition.²³ Museveni is also known to play agencies and senior figures off one another to an extent that they "actually appear to be working against each other."²⁴

Under Kayihura, the ties between the police and military have increased and strengthened. The militarization of the police has been a slow project. Although Uganda's armed forces have always been pro-Museveni, the police were pro-opposition during the earlier years of Museveni's rule, evidenced by the strong pro-opposition vote tally in police barracks in the 1996 and 2001 presidential elections.²⁵

Following this, Museveni strategized to underfund the police and then portray the force as weak and ineffectual.²⁶ The move was effective, paving the way for placement of both military leaders and rank-and-file within the police beginning in the early 2000s.²⁷ Museveni nominated General Katumba Wamala as inspector general in 2001 and Kayihura as Wamala's successor in 2005 when Wamala returned to the military.

The recruitment of hundreds of thousands of "crime preventers" over the past two years under Kayihura is one of the ways that the police force has evolved into a pillar of support for Museveni. To serve as a crime preventer in Uganda, candidates—often unemployed youth—complete a several-week class that includes "self-defense skills, crime prevention and promoting values of patriotism." In 2014, the government announced a recruitment campaign ahead of the 2015 papal visit and the 2016 general elections. A year later, the Uganda Police Force reported certifying at least 1.5 million crime preventers.²⁸ These individuals receive only modest stipends and foodstuffs but have been promised participation in government economic projects.

The large numbers of crime preventers, lack of clarity on their mandate, and their oversight by an unabashed NRM loyalist have all attracted the concern of Ugandan and international human rights groups.²⁹ The impact on the election was ultimately unclear; crime preventers were involved in few direct confrontations but may have contributed to the lower turnout in opposition areas by intimidating prospective opposition voters. The European Union Electoral Observation Mission's initial report cited crime preventer intimidation as one factor influencing the election in favor of the NRM.³⁰ Anecdotally, a group of Ugandan professors report that crime preventers are better received in rural areas, where support for Museveni is stronger and the formal security sector's presence is weaker. Although the ultimate impact of the crime preventers and the future trajectory of this force may be unknown, the partisan security sector inarguably played a central role in repressing political dissent before the 2016 election. In bringing five low-ranked officers and one crime preventer before the police disciplinary court on charges of mistreating Besigye supporters, the police force has indirectly acknowledged its biased behavior. The trial itself has been criticized, however, for blaming low-ranking officers for carrying out orders that they received from their superiors.³¹

Keeping the Inner Circle Happy

At the same time that repression has shored up Museveni's power, the NRM has strengthened its base through patronage. These twin tactics helped ensure Museveni's 2016 victory.

When the NRM took power in 1986, Uganda had thirty-three districts. This number had increased to 112 by 2010. Each new district brings substantial economic benefits and opportunities at the local level: 225 new staff are employed to administer the district, which receives a minimum of \$280,000 for supplies and construction.³² In addition, each district receives at least one seat in Parliament, depending on the number of constituencies within the district.

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Analysis of electoral results demonstrates that Museveni's average vote share in new districts is consistently higher than his national average, and that in the 2011 elections he won more than 90 percent of the districts created in 2009 and 2010.³³ By depicting a new district as a personal gift to the people, Museveni inspires a degree of gratitude among the voting population. Although the government did not succeed in creating the twenty-five new districts as proposed in 2015, four new districts were created and came into being on July 1, 2016.³⁴ Parliament also created forty-three new constituencies (subdistricts) in 2015, which each have a member of Parliament. Of these, at least twenty-eight elected an NRM MP.³⁵ Although districts and subdistricts are created under the guise of bringing services closer to the people, in reality they are a powerful tool to influence electoral results.³⁶

The creation of new districts enables the NRM to maintain its strong base of rural support. Similarly, advisory and cabinet roles offered in Kampala help keep the political elite content. The president has a cabinet of between seventy-five and eighty members and more than one hundred advisers. Museveni claims that Uganda's complex policy and programs necessitate a large cadre of advisers, but many of the advisory and cabinet posts are in reality another tool for the NRM to smooth over fissures within the party and to prevent powerful individuals from leaving the fold.³⁷

Given that several advisers are assigned to special duties and more than a dozen to political affairs, it is unclear what substantive contributions these players make to policymaking. The proliferation of districts and smaller administrative units, along with the maintenance of so many advisers and a large cabinet, are a significant expense to the central government. The funds spent to maintain the loyalty of the inner circle may actually have an indirect role in fueling broader citizen discontent by limiting the budget available for other projects.

Solid Support, Contentious Win

Museveni registered 59.3 percent of the vote in the 2006 elections and 68.3 percent in the 2011 elections. As 2016 approached, voters expressed continued support for Museveni; a Research World International poll from December 2015 and January 2016 showed 51 percent.³⁸ Museveni clearly retains significant support, particularly among rural and older voters who are grateful to him for having ushered in a period of relative peace after years of war under Amin and Obote.

Disunity within the political opposition also helped Museveni retain relative strength as the elections approached. In June 2015, most opposition parties formally banded together as TDA and agreed to advocate for specific reforms and to field joint candidates for the presidency, Parliament, and four levels of local government. TDA was received optimistically in its early days but fractured in September 2015 when its member parties failed to agree on a presidential candidate.³⁹

The Ugandan government was widely criticized for the repression prior to the election and also drew international criticism for its performance on the day of the election itself. On the morning of election day, Ugandans woke up to find that the government had blocked social media and chat sites in a bid to prevent people from "telling lies."⁴⁰ The opening of several polling stations in Kampala and Wakiso—two opposition strongholds located at most forty-five kilometers from the Electoral Commission office—was delayed by several hours because the commission had not delivered the voting materials. The heavy presence of security forces was reported throughout the country, particularly in the urban areas. The approximately 150,000 security personnel deployed included a large proportion of regular police and constables recruited especially for the election, but also UPDF, intelligence officers, and prison wardens.⁴¹ The legality of this deployment is debated. Some international observers and Ugandan civil society argue

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that the police force is not fulfilling its prescribed role as an impartial guarantor of the election, but the Ugandan government maintains the legality of the deployment.⁴²

Repression of political opposition continued during the voting and results period. Kizza Besigye was detained on election day when he arrived at a residence in Kampala to investigate alleged ballot stuffing, was detained on a near daily basis in the ten days after the elections, and remained effectively under house arrest between the February elections and the May inauguration. Because of this, he did not meet the deadline to file a formal petition disputing the results. On March 1, Amama Mbabazi did file a timely petition with the Supreme Court alleging intimidation and irregularities in the tallying process, but the petition was formally dismissed on March 31.

Although most Uganda observers agree that Museveni indeed garnered a majority of votes on February 18, the electoral process has been criticized by domestic, regional, and international observers. The Citizens Elections Observer Network of Uganda, which deployed observers to seven hundred polling stations and all tally stations, acknowledged that in most locations election day processes and tabulation “were conducted relatively well” but emphasized that “the credibility of the entire elections process was underscored by fundamental and structural flaws.”⁴³ The African Union Electoral Observation Mission assessed the elections as “largely peaceful but not without shortcomings.”⁴⁴ Although not strongly worded, the statement was meaningful because the African Union tends to be reluctant to directly criticize the elections of member states even when clear shortcomings are present.

The European Union was more critical in its initial statement, declaring on February 20 that “the National Resistance Movement’s...domination of the political landscape distorted the fairness of the campaign and state actors were instrumental in creating an intimidating atmosphere for both voters and candidates.”⁴⁵ The day after the election, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called Museveni to express concern over government intimidation and the repeated detention of opposition candidate Kizza Besigye. Museveni has been defiant, dismissing critiques of the Electoral Commission as “rubbish” and declaring that he does not need lectures from the international community.⁴⁶

At least seventeen ministers and junior ministers—some particularly close to Museveni, including Minister of Information and Guidance Jim Muhwezi and Minister of Defence Crispus Kiyonga—lost their seats in the 2016 elections. Several of these defeats are linked to the internal NRM controversy after the primaries.⁴⁷ This seeming defeat, a Ugandan journalist in Kampala suggested, may prove an unexpected advantage to Museveni in that he will be able to reward new and younger party enthusiasts. Because the defeated ministers will likely remain loyal to NRM, the nomination of younger ministers may enable Museveni to expand and deepen NRM support within the party elite.

Sensing more threats than in previous elections, particularly given the very public break between Museveni and Mbabazi, Museveni and his inner circle went to great lengths to guarantee a clear Museveni victory. Ironically, the systematic repression may not have been necessary. Given his 61 percent of the vote, Museveni might have won in the first round of elections even without the repression. Now, in the aftermath, Museveni’s and the NRM’s legitimacy may be damaged. This question is particularly pertinent in light of the government’s continued crackdown on Kizza Besigye. Besigye escaped house arrest on May 11 to be “sworn in” as president by Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) colleagues during a mock inauguration ceremony, and shortly thereafter was arrested and charged with treason. His trial began in June and was adjourned in July for a month to allow time for investigations. Given these developments, reconciliation between the NRM and the FDC in the near future is remote. Although Museveni

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comfortably secured another term and was successfully inaugurated on May 18, government repression is likely to continue for the foreseeable future as Museveni and the NRM face continued criticism from both within and outside Uganda.

A second important uncertainty is the timing and nature of Museveni's eventual succession. With his 2016 victory, Museveni has won a fifth term of office, which would be his last under the current presidential age limit of seventy-five. He has publicly stated that he will not seek to raise or remove the age limit, but his detractors believe that he may try to amend the constitution.⁴⁸ The government's domestic legitimacy and the eventual Museveni succession will primarily affect Ugandans, but will also play into relationships with neighbors and allies.

Uganda's central role in regional affairs means that questions about the future leadership of Uganda matter not only within the country, but also for the region. During Museveni's time as president, he has been the primary architect of foreign policy. Analysis of Uganda's primary foreign interventions and the motivations behind them demonstrates that much of Museveni's policy is driven by his unique worldview and is thus likely to differ under his eventual successor.

Foreign Policy: Personalized Decision Making and Weak Institutions

The government of Uganda and its armed forces have significant influence in the region. Although foreign policy is complex and highly interventionist, it is not institutionalized. It is instead personalized and centralized, and interviewees report that the president exerts tight control in consultation with a small group of close confidantes, including his wife Janet and his brother Salim Saleh.

Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa is a member of Museveni's inner circle as well as father-in-law to Museveni's son Muhoozi. A successful businessman, Kutesa reportedly delegates significant responsibility to his deputy minister, Oryem Okello, who is known for both his loyalty to Museveni and his competence. Museveni is reported to make most major policy decisions—both domestic and external—himself, however, based in large part on information presented directly to him by the intelligence services.⁴⁹ He is described by interviewees as being “the strategic thinker and the decision-maker on foreign policy” and as “running policy from the State House.”

Ugandan foreign policy, then, is not developed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The ministry has been marginalized, if not excluded, from decision making and is even described as a sort of catch-all for individuals that the regime doesn't know where to place. The ministry's power to merely execute policy—rather than to make it—is similar to its role under Amin and Obote. Nonetheless, the ministry's surviving apolitical career diplomats are disenchanted by continuously being replaced by loyalist appointees. Given limited training, a low pay scale, and political appointees in the most senior posts, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs understandably offers limited appeal as a career track for young professionals.

Some drivers of Uganda's foreign policy, including Pan-Africanism and the quest for East African integration, are uniquely tied to Museveni and his political trajectory. Others, including economic interests, regional stability, and leverage with key allies, are also driven by Museveni but are likely to continue as priorities regardless of who Museveni's eventual successor is.

Pan-Africanism, a key strand in Museveni's political philosophy since his studies in Tanzania in the 1970s, continues to influence his vision for East Africa.⁵⁰ Pan-Africanism embraces and supports legitimate resistance to oppression. Uganda's Pan-Africanist philosophy was evident in its country's financial and political support to African national liberation movements in Sudan, Rwanda, the DRC, and even South Africa. The strand of thinking continues to influence Museveni's decision making today. Museveni is motivated to demonstrate that instability and conflict

within Africa can be met with African political will and capacity to respond. He also desires to be recognized and known as a “go-to” leader within Africa who is willing to deploy his armed forces where needed to support regional security and stability.

Pan-Africanism plays into the historical animosity between Uganda and Sudan, which has a strong influence on Uganda’s foreign policy. Museveni has opposed Sudan’s Islamist political project since the 1980s. He fears forced conversions to Islam and was thus highly critical and suspicious of the domination by Sudan’s Arab elite over the African ethnic groups in the south prior to South Sudan’s independence. As a result, he has strongly supported the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army and its two leaders, John Garang and current South Sudanese President Salva Kiir.

Museveni has believed for decades that Sudan is Uganda’s greatest threat and that Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has tried to destabilize Uganda by overtly supporting the LRA. Sudanese leadership equally suspects Uganda of trying to destabilize Sudan and has repeatedly called for Uganda to end its support to Darfuri rebel groups and the umbrella Sudanese Revolutionary Front. A major objective of Uganda’s foreign policy for the past two decades has been to keep Sudan’s influence at bay. This effort was most recently on display in the UPDF’s deployment to South Sudan in support of Salva Kiir during the 2013 to 2015 civil war. Although the past ten months have brought a slight warming in the relations between Museveni and Bashir, Museveni’s mistrust of Bashir is unlikely to fade entirely. As such, counterbalancing Sudan will likely remain a foreign policy priority for Uganda for the duration of Museveni’s term of office.

Both Pan-Africanism and economic considerations influence Museveni’s push for regional integration, which Uganda is formally pursuing within the East African Community (EAC). Ugandan policymakers understand that their country’s national economic structure is small and vulnerable, and that consolidating trade and economic relations and attracting foreign investments are vital. With this in mind, Uganda has expended substantial diplomatic energy on the integration process within the EAC. Museveni’s substantial influence in the region and his efforts to portray himself as the region’s senior statesman have made policymakers in neighboring countries somewhat skittish about regional integration, however. Integration to date has primarily been economic—the removal of trade barriers. The next envisioned step is a defense pact that would theoretically require that member states seek permission from the EAC before carrying out a military intervention beyond its borders. Many Uganda observers question whether Museveni is genuinely willing to enter into an arrangement that could hamper his highly interventionist foreign policy. Nonetheless, uniting East Africa under one governance structure is a vision that has motivated Museveni throughout his political career, and East African unification continues to feature prominently in his public discourse.⁵¹

Although much of Uganda’s foreign policy is driven by Museveni’s unique world view and goals, real economic concerns also influence Uganda’s foreign policy. Relations with its immediate neighbors, which Uganda refers to as ring states, are a high priority. Most exports are destined for these neighboring countries: Kenya, the DRC, Sudan, Rwanda, and South Sudan each import between 6 percent and 11 percent of Uganda’s total exports.⁵² Uganda’s landlocked status requires that it particularly maintain positive relationships with its easterly neighbors, whose ports are crucial for Ugandan trade. Since the discovery of significant crude oil reserves along its western border, Uganda has alternatively explored collaboration with Kenya or Tanzania on the construction of a heated pipeline to transport Uganda’s oil. In early 2016, Uganda entered into an agreement with Tanzania for the construction of a pipeline, in spite

of the sharp drop in the value of crude oil and the lower market value anticipated for Uganda's viscous oil.⁵³ Protecting Uganda's economic interests and ensuring access to the sea are foreign policy priorities not unique to Museveni and not likely to change under a different president.

Uganda's willingness to deploy its large and comparatively well-trained army regionally has also earned Museveni respect in the region and the West. Uganda analysts have documented how Uganda has continued to receive significant military aid in spite of backsliding democracy because it is perceived to be playing an important role in combating terrorism, in particular with its sizable contributions to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). In using war against terrorism rhetoric to describe his enemies, Museveni has philosophically aligned some of Uganda's military campaigns with the West's priorities, particularly those of the United States. This has consequently deflected criticism on internal governance issues and the UPDF's questionable record in northern Uganda and the DRC.⁵⁴ Demonstrating his willingness to deploy the UPDF in support of African security issues and in support of the priorities of allies in the region and further afield has strengthened Museveni's image and conveniently minimized attention on Uganda's democratic decay.

UPDF: The Uganda People's Defence Force

The Uganda People's Defence Force is an influential foreign policy actor and a power guarantor for Museveni, who is its commander-in-chief. The armed forces are both the primary implementer of Uganda's foreign policy and a driver of foreign policy; maintaining their loyalty is essential to ensure that they remain a pillar of support for the government. The UPDF is known throughout the region to be comparatively well trained and well equipped. With ten reserved seats in Parliament, the UPDF is a formal stakeholder in all major policy debates and is "the major instrument of Ugandan foreign policy regionally and internationally."⁵⁵

Few official figures or independent writings are available about the nature and structure of the UPDF. Data from the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies suggest that its personnel strength varies from forty thousand to forty-five thousand.⁵⁶ The UPDF is under the direct supervision of the chief of Defence Forces, which is the highest position within the force. It comprises two main services governed by the UPDF Act of 1995, the Land Forces and the Air Forces.⁵⁷ The Land Forces, the largest and most essential in terms of number of troops and weapons, are organized into five divisions. These are positioned on a territorial basis and are complemented by the Motorized Infantry Brigade, the Armoured Brigade, and the Artillery Division.

An important third service is the Special Forces Command (SFC), which has assumed a preeminent role within the UPDF and has practically become, according to an interviewee in Kampala, "an army within an army which is not provided for in the UPDF Act." Previously known as the Presidential Guard Brigade, the SFC numbers about twelve thousand. It is tasked with physically safeguarding Museveni and his entourage, protecting key installations, and safeguarding areas of natural resources.⁵⁸ It is better trained, equipped, compensated, and capable of much faster deployment.

Since its creation in 2011, the SFC has been commanded by forty-one-year-old Muhoozi Kainerugaba, Museveni's oldest son. Although he does not have extensive experience in combat command, he has risen quickly in the ranks. His nonprocedural promotions have caused concern and dissension within the ranks of the UPDF, interviewees agreed. The possibility that he is being groomed as his father's successor has been a source of controversy among Museveni's inner circle, most notably David Sejusa, who publicly broke with Museveni in 2013 when he claimed to have uncovered a plot to assassinate him based on his opposition to the so-called Muhoozi

project. In mid-May 2016, shortly after Museveni's inauguration, Muhoozi was promoted from brigadier to major general. Uganda's defense and military spokesman Colonel Paddy Ankunda announced that this promotion is to ensure that Muhoozi holds the necessary rank to continue to command the Special Forces as it expands into an autonomous service alongside the Land and Air Forces.⁵⁹

The UPDF is plagued by widespread corruption, coordination issues, and a shortage of skilled military professionals.⁶⁰ It operates under a biased system of recruitment, appointment, and promotion such that a network of NRM loyalists is installed at virtually all levels of the force, maintaining a tight control over decision making. Senior officers are selected for assignments to strategic command posts on the basis of loyalty to Museveni rather than either strict seniority or merit.⁶¹ Many of the UPDF's top and middle officers belong to the Banyankole from Museveni's Bahima ethnic group of western Uganda.⁶² It is widely assumed that the 2013 appointment as chief of Defence Forces of the reportedly compliant General Wamala from the Buganda, the largest and most influential ethnic group in the country, was principally to counter this impression and appease regions outside western Uganda.⁶³ Even as it suffers from corruption and biased promotions, however, the UPDF is known to be one of the region's most capable militaries. UPDF deployments to regional peacekeeping missions have further strengthened the capacity of the force as troops receive specialized predeployment training that far exceeds the basic training for enlisted soldiers.

Uganda's intelligence agencies and the UPDF are mutually supporting elements of the post-1986 power structure. The UPDF is crucial in both projecting Uganda's influence internationally and projecting the authority of the state domestically. Because of this, maintaining the loyalty of the UPDF through the distribution of ranks, prestige, and economic opportunities is critical to Museveni's continued power and authority in the country, the region, and farther afield.

Somalia: Security Partner to the West

Uganda's military deployments to support AMISOM and to pursue the LRA in neighboring countries have asserted Uganda's role in the region. These deployments have also strengthened Uganda's relationships with key allies, primarily the United States, and to a lesser extent the United Kingdom and other European countries. Since the original UPDF deployment to AMISOM in 2007, the mission has become more closely intertwined with Uganda's domestic security following the July 2010 Kampala terrorist attack. In contrast, the deployments in pursuit of the LRA have become less relevant to security within Uganda because the LRA is no longer within Uganda or close to its borders. Although LRA deployment does not incur any additional salary, deployment to AMISOM does, and assignments to AMISOM over the past nine years have also provided desirable opportunities for economic advancement to the UPDF commanders and rank-and-file.

Working with meager resources, Uganda was the first country to venture into fragmented Somalia in 2007, in close collaboration with the United States and Ethiopia. Uganda contributed the most troops for AMISOM at the time and took the lead by acting as mission coordinator.⁶⁴ Parliament quickly authorized the intervention and public opposition was minimal; in fact, the UPDF is perceived by many Ugandans as a sympathetic actor offering free medical care and water to Somalis in dire need.⁶⁵ It was, according to interviewees, in part the desire to contribute to African stability and the ideology of Pan-Africanism that first compelled Uganda to intervene; after all, it has no common borders with Somalia and Somalia is not home to any anti-Uganda rebel movement.

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Gaining leverage and deepening its alliance with the United States has also motivated the continued deployments to AMISOM, in which the Ugandan troop contribution now stands over six thousand.

Uganda's commitment to participating in AMISOM was strengthened in July 2010 when terrorist attacks in Kampala killed more than seventy people.⁶⁶ After al-Shabaab claimed responsibility, the fear in Uganda was that, if not contained, al-Shabaab sponsored terrorism would only expand and again reach Uganda. One member of Parliament remarked in an interview, "Uganda cannot sit and watch on the sidelines this time bomb go[es] off." Preventing the spread of al-Shabaab to Kenya is another security imperative, an interviewee explained, in that Uganda relies on a stable Kenya for supply routes to the Mombasa port, which is the lifeline of Uganda's economy.

Beyond ideological and security concerns, several interviewees reported, Museveni benefits from the AMISOM deployments by keeping officers and troops busy and well paid, which in turn reduces the likelihood of frustration or anti-regime sentiments. A tour with AMISOM is seen as a gateway to personal enrichment.⁶⁷ The monthly allowance was \$1,012 but dropped to \$812 in April 2016. Given that regular UPDF monthly salaries range from approximately \$92 to approximately \$476, the AMISOM allowances are a significant economic gain to soldiers of all ranks.⁶⁸ Deployments also increase soldiers' prospects for economic advancement in providing access to future opportunities with U.S. defense contracting companies, as well as gains from corrupt practices such as selling weapons, fuel, and even soldiers' rations.⁶⁹

Gaining leverage and deepening its alliance with the United States has also motivated the continued deployments to AMISOM, in which the Ugandan troop contribution now stands over six thousand. Museveni, always interested in increasing Uganda's influence, was aware from the outset that its intervention in Somalia was of keen interest to key Western allies, primarily the United States, and to some extent the European Union. Indeed, by deploying its troops, Uganda was able to navigate past its weak checks and balances to be seen as a prominent and positive player in African affairs. Its ongoing willingness to contribute troops despite high losses has led to bilateral relationships, particularly with the United States, oriented around AMISOM. This has provided leverage with the international community; a striking example is when Ugandan officials threatened in 2012 to withdraw from AMISOM in response to a UN Group of Experts report that revealed Uganda's support to the March 23 Movement (M23) rebels in the Congo, a military group based in eastern areas of the DRC.

Uganda's participation in AMISOM has carried a price. In September 2015, for example, Uganda suffered significant losses in a gun battle on an AMISOM base in Lower Shabelle. Reported losses ranged from ten to fifty, but neither the UPDF nor the African Union publicly reports on casualties. In June 2016, citing waning international interest in the mission and delayed payments to troops, Uganda announced that the UPDF would withdraw from AMISOM in December 2017, earlier than planned. A month later, Museveni indicated that he might reconsider the pullout. UPDF's participation in AMISOM beyond 2017 remains unclear. Because AMISOM has been a key point of cooperation between Uganda and its allies in the West, a UPDF withdrawal could alter the nature of these bilateral relationships.

Uganda's anti-LRA military operations have also strengthened its relationships with the West and its reputation as a regional heavyweight.⁷⁰ During the 1990s and early 2000s, the Ugandan government pursued varying and sometimes conflicting strategies to end the LRA insurgency, including military operations, amnesties, and peace talks. Although Ugandan officials have blamed the LRA's continued strength on support from Sudan, the LRA's continued existence brings clear benefits to the government of Uganda, including the justification for requesting more foreign aid for the UPDF.⁷¹ As the LRA garnered worldwide renown for its exceedingly brutal attacks and destabilizing effect on the Great Lakes region, human rights

organizations and the international community began to coalesce around the idea of a multi-country effort to neutralize the LRA.

The UPDF succeeded in driving the LRA out of Uganda in the mid-2000s and has continued to pursue the insurgent group in neighboring South Sudan, Central African Republic (CAR), and the DRC, its incursions in the DRC in 2008 causing significant tension in the region. Since 2012, Uganda's efforts have been through the African Union Regional Task Force (AU-RTF) on the LRA, a loose coalition that designates each participating armed force as the lead in a particular LRA-affected country. A report by Conciliation Resources characterizes the AU-RTF as "a politically motivated exercise intended to legitimise and facilitate the UPDF ongoing 'capture or kill' mission against the LRA."⁷² As the largest and most capable force in the region, UPDF is the de facto lead in AU-RTF and interacts more with U.S. military advisers than any of the other forces do.

After a period of declining attacks, the LRA appears to be resurgent in the lawless southeastern corner of CAR. The superiority of the UPDF over the armed forces of South Sudan, CAR, and the DRC has justified Uganda's continued involvement in pursuit of the LRA, which in turn allows the UPDF to monitor other interests in these countries. In June 2016, Uganda announced that it would withdraw the UPDF from anti-LRA efforts by October, citing significant gains against the LRA as well as inadequate international support for the mission.⁷³

Although the United States briefly suspended military aid to Uganda in the early 2000s over Uganda's involvement in the DRC, significant military assistance resumed in 2003. Given strong interests among U.S. stakeholders in the defeat of both LRA and al-Shabaab, the push is strong for the United States to continue to support the UPDF to be able to engage in these missions. A Congressional Research Service report in September 2015 highlights key questions for U.S. policymakers on U.S. support to operations to counter the LRA. Among them are how other U.S. policy priorities, such as democracy promotion, are affected by ongoing U.S. support to the UPDF and whether this support has contributed to Uganda maintaining "an otherwise unsustainably large military."⁷⁴ To date, these concerns have been trumped by U.S. interests in continued UPDF participation in AMISOM and in counter-LRA missions.

In regard to the LRA, what originated as a Ugandan commitment to fighting an internal security threat was transformed into a cross-border initiative that both confirmed and strengthened perceptions of Uganda as a regional policeman and played to the priorities of key international partners. The reverse has been true of AMISOM; the threat of extremist violence in Uganda has somewhat increased following the initial deployments. To an even greater extent than the LRA deployments, Uganda's participation in AMISOM has cemented its key role in regional stability and as an essential security partner of the West. This has somewhat lessened other countries' ability to exert pressure on Uganda on human rights and democracy issues. Given the centrality of Uganda's military cooperation in its relationships with the U.S. and Europe, the prospective UPDF withdrawals are likely to alter bilateral relations.

South Sudan: Counterbalancing a Rival

Given Uganda's many interests and long history of involvement in South Sudan, Museveni was highly inclined and well positioned to intervene quickly by deploying the UPDF after the outbreak of civil conflict in December 2013. The most concrete and immediate drivers of the intervention were the protection of Ugandan citizens and Ugandan economic interests. Less immediate but equally—if not more—prominent motivating factors were Museveni's desire to counterbalance Sudan's influence and to assert his role as regional heavyweight. Although

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the deployment was successful in terms of limiting acts of violence against Ugandan citizens in South Sudan, its broader impact has been less clear. Museveni was criticized with prolonging and enlarging the conflict but at the same time secured himself a great deal of leverage during the negotiations given the Ugandan troops on the ground in South Sudan and Museveni's long relationship with South Sudanese President Salva Kiir.

Immediately after the outbreak of conflict, Uganda deployed some three thousand troops to South Sudan to rescue trapped Ugandan citizens and protect key installations. Uganda observers report that Museveni was also encouraged by the United States to deploy the UPDF to deter a mass killing of Dinka by Nuer seeking to avenge the December 2013 massacre of hundreds of Nuer citizens in Juba. The UPDF presence in South Sudan likely contributed to quelling violence within Juba and preventing further atrocities by blocking the movement toward Juba of the former Vice President Riek Machar's Sudan People's Liberation Army-In-Opposition and the majority Nuer White Army.⁷⁵

These initial deployments and those that followed went well beyond what was needed to protect Ugandan citizens and economic interests, reflecting that Museveni was heavily invested in preserving a regional geopolitical balance favorable to Uganda. The decision to go into South Sudan was taken by Museveni personally; he circumvented Parliament to quickly deploy the UPDF in South Sudan both to protect immediate Ugandan interests and to maintain a political status quo and counter the influence of Sudan.

Museveni preferred that South Sudanese President Salva Kiir, who was amenable to his guidance, remain in power because he profoundly feared the uncertainty that would follow Kiir's faltering authority. Museveni's and Machar's mutual mistrust is well documented and dates to the early 1990s. Museveni perceives Machar to be close to Sudanese President al-Bashir, several interviewees—a foreign diplomat, an opposition leader, and a presidential adviser—in Kampala agreed. Machar also vocally opposed extended UPDF presence in Southern Sudan in pursuit of the LRA in the mid-2000s, citing his discomfort with this “foreign invasion” in advocating for LRA peace talks that would remove the UPDF's justification for its presence in Southern Sudan.⁷⁶ Guaranteeing a buffer zone between Uganda and the Sudanese Islamist project has been a Museveni priority for nearly three decades; Museveni was determined to support Kiir's embattled regime for that reason. Uganda argued publicly that the UPDF intervention in 2013 was at the request of the South Sudanese government.

Although these regional geopolitical concerns came to dominate much of the discourse and analysis, economic interests and fear of spillover were justified. The South Sudanese refugee population in Uganda, for example, swelled from twenty-two thousand to two hundred thousand between December 2013 and May 2016.⁷⁷ South Sudan's stability is also critical to Uganda's economy: South Sudan is the fifth-largest recipient of Ugandan exports and an estimated one hundred fifty thousand to two hundred thousand Ugandan traders are in South Sudan.⁷⁸ At the same time, International Alert's statistics on the volume of informal trade between Uganda and South Sudan—which rose from \$9.1 million in 2005 to almost \$930 million in 2008—underscore that Uganda's economic interests went well beyond guaranteeing the safety of its traders.⁷⁹

Ugandan officials anticipated that UPDF presence in South Sudan would afford it a seat at the table as the regional body Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) sought to broker a peace between the conflict parties, but the opposite proved true. Although IGAD officials had initially praised Uganda for preventing further mass violence, regional players came to see its presence in South Sudan as prolonging the conflict. Uganda was therefore not permitted to send an envoy to the negotiating table. Nonetheless, Museveni held great influence over

the negotiations given his constant contact with Kiir and that negotiations could not proceed without the blessing of the IGAD heads of state.

Museveni and his advisers, according to an academic and an opposition leader interviewed in Kampala, underestimated the strength and durability of the SPLM-IO rebellion and deployed the UPDF to South Sudan without an exit strategy. Ultimately, an umbrella of IGAD plus several additional international partners (IGAD-PLUS) succeeded in brokering a peace agreement in August 2015. This agreement included provisions for the withdrawal of UPDF.

Museveni's close relationship with Kiir made him one of the few close interlocutors with the South Sudanese government during the crisis. As a result, many of the international community's interactions with Museveni during 2014 and 2015 were focused on South Sudan. Because this period largely coincided with the lead-up to the 2016 Ugandan elections, international pressure was less than it might have been for Museveni to permit political dissent and enable a fair election. The South Sudanese deployment therefore deflected criticism from government repression in Uganda. Leverage with the West did not motivate the South Sudan deployment the way that it may have driven deployments to AMISOM and against the LRA, however.

The UPDF presence in South Sudan did successfully bolster Salva Kiir and thus counterbalance the influence of Sudan. It also demonstrated Uganda's strength in the region and afforded Museveni enormous leverage in the negotiations. In this sense, Uganda achieved its primary objectives. However, Uganda misjudged the strength of Machar's rebel forces and failed to bring about a swift end to the conflict and a quick normalization of South Sudan–Uganda trade.

When violence flared in Juba in mid-July 2016, the UPDF was well positioned to quickly evacuate its citizens from the capital. As of late July, Uganda has expressed that the UPDF will not undertake another unilateral mission in support of Kiir. Its participation in a regional force intervention brigade, proposed by IGAD and endorsed by the African Union, is uncertain.

Museveni surprised observers by encouraging Kiir to accept the presence of the proposed force intervention brigade; he had been expected to stand by Kiir in his refusal to allow the force to enter the country. Uganda and Sudan have experienced a slight rapprochement over the past year, described by one observer as a "rapprochement of convenience." Uganda and Sudan's shared interest in preventing further economic decline and refugee spillover from South Sudan may be contributing to Uganda's desire to encourage a regional solution to the conflict.

Congo: Supporting Rwanda and Asserting Influence

Uganda has been involved militarily on a large scale in its western neighbor twice, in 1996 and 1997 and again from 1998 to 2002, and later on a smaller scale. Its motivations for becoming involved in Zaire, later the renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo, have included supporting Rwanda, increasing its own influence in the region, and pursuing material profit.

None of its military forays into its western neighbor were submitted to the Ugandan Parliament for approval prior to their commencement. All the interventions were unilaterally decided by Museveni and senior Ugandan military officials. Many assert that key Western countries such as the United States supported the 1996–1997 war to oust President Mobutu, which both Uganda and its ally Rwanda helped foment, and then essentially fought on behalf of the Congolese rebel alliance, the Alliance des forces démocratique pour le Congo (AFDL).⁸⁰ That thousands of Interahamwe—a Hutu paramilitary organization—were regrouping in the Rwandan Hutu refugee camps on the Zairian side of the border strengthened the international view that it was time for regime change. With Uganda's participation in the First Congo War, Museveni sought to demonstrate Uganda's military strength to the region and install a president who

would be more amendable to Uganda's influence and interests. He also sought both to support and to counterbalance ally Rwanda, whose president Paul Kagame had served in the NRM and had been Museveni's mentee before launching the Rwandan Patriotic Front from Uganda.

After the AFDL overthrew Mobutu in May 1997, Rwanda and Uganda remained involved in making key decisions about the Congo's security and continued to occupy large parts of the country. In August 1998, Laurent Kabila, the new president, ordered all foreign troops to leave Congolese territory. In response, Rwanda and Uganda launched a second rebellion, hoping to secure their future influence. This effort failed because Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, nominally under the aegis of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), deployed troops to defend the Congolese government.

The result was the Second Congo War. Uganda did not at first feature prominently but became heavily involved in 1998 alongside Jean-Pierre Bemba and his Mouvement Congolais pour la Liberation du Congo (MLC). Another ally then emerged: the Rally for Congolese Democracy–Kisangani/Mouvement de Liberation (RCD-K/ML), which had split from the Rwandan-backed Rally for Congolese Democracy. The RCD-K/ML and the MLC facilitated Uganda's ongoing presence and involvement in the northeastern DRC. At the behest of the Ugandan army, a new province—Kibali-Ituri—was created in the northeastern part of Orientale province. The selection of governor escalated tensions between the Hema and the Lendu, Ituri's largest ethnic groups, which had previously coexisted fairly peacefully. At different times in the conflict, Uganda supported both ethnic groups and other ethnic militias in surrounding areas, influencing the development of the conflict in Ituri in such a way that provided justification for its continuing involvement in the area. This allowed Uganda to exploit minerals and expand commercial opportunities.

Rwanda and Uganda's roles in the Second Congo War transformed them from allies to competitors as they each endeavored to secure control of mineral-rich territory. Their hostilities culminated in a gunfight in Kisangani, DRC, which thrust their relationship into the international spotlight and ended in an embarrassing defeat for Uganda. Uganda's stature and influence in the DRC receded as Rwanda began to assert a more commanding influence.

Rwanda's role in the DRC and its exploitation of mineral resources was widely known from 2000 onward. Uganda's, however, was not. The Ugandan government did react swiftly to accusations by the first UN Panel of Experts report in 2000, establishing the Porter Commission to investigate claims that senior military officials were involved in illegal exploitation of DRC resources. In 2002, the commission's report denied official governmental or army involvement but supported the UN findings on the involvement of senior Ugandan army officers.⁸¹ Despite these findings, no Ugandan officials have been held accountable, either by their government or by the international community. The involvement of senior UPDF in illegal economic activities brought them significant economic benefits, which helped keep the military elite content and loyal.

Rwanda and Uganda's involvement in the DRC waned somewhat after the 2002 Sun City accords that ended the Second Congo War. After the DRC's first democratic elections in 2006, progress toward consolidating security and democratic governance stalled, and President Joseph Kabila remained unable to secure peace in the eastern part of the country.⁸² In 2010, relations between Rwanda and Uganda began to warm again. This rapprochement coincided with Rwanda's and subsequently Uganda's encouragement of and support to the rebel group the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), an armed militia that had formed in late 2006.⁸³ Although Rwanda's support to the CNDP was far greater, Uganda supported Rwanda's involvement with the CNDP. In 2012, when members of the former CNDP regrouped as

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the M23 movement, Uganda stepped up its support, including hosting senior M23 leaders in Uganda and allegedly providing weapons and military advice.⁸⁴ Uganda's support to the M23 helped to recreate the Rwanda-Ugandan alliance.

In his capacity as president of the International Conference of the Great Lakes (ICGLR), Museveni convened and hosted the peace negotiations between the DRC government and the M23 throughout 2012 and 2013. Doing so enabled him to maintain control over the resolution of the conflict and attempt to keep the SADC and the UN removed from the process. The ICGLR proposed a neutral force along the DRC-Uganda-Rwanda border, but the idea was rejected given the partisan nature of Ugandan, Rwandan, and Congolese interests. Ultimately, the SADC succeeded in constituting a force intervention brigade, which was influential in the defeat of the M23 in late 2013. This rendered the Kampala negotiations between the government and the M23 less relevant.

After the defeat of the M23, the Congolese government was less inclined to make concessions. Hundreds of M23 had fled to Uganda and Rwanda where they awaited the conclusion of the talks and their eventual repatriation. To date, few M23 have voluntarily returned to the DRC, which has created tensions between the governments in Kampala and Kinshasa. While Kinshasa drags its feet on the issue, combatants in Rwanda and Uganda have deserted the camps.

Uganda's nearly two decades of interventions in Zaire and the DRC have tarnished UPDF's reputation and put Museveni on the defensive with both domestic and international stakeholders. When examined solely through the lens of its relationships with Rwanda, the interventions in the DRC have been perhaps more successful, allowing Uganda to counterbalance Rwanda at some points and strengthen their alliance at others.

Conclusion

Uganda's foreign policy is controlled by the president personally and buttressed by a strong military and loyal internal security organs. As in most countries, the drivers behind this policy are manifold—including economic interests, counterbalancing a longtime rival and promoting a favorable balance of power within the region, and asserting itself as a trusted security partner of its allies. President Museveni's particular philosophy and interests weigh heavily in the development of foreign policy. These include his pan-Africanist philosophy, his long-standing suspicions of Sudan, his complex relationship with Paul Kagame and Rwanda, and his aspirations to govern East Africa.

Uganda's regional leadership role, particularly its intervention in Somalia, has afforded President Museveni and the NRM significant latitude to pursue domestic policies that have weakened democracy and human rights. These policies have cemented Museveni's grip on power by silencing or intimidating those who oppose his thirty-year rule.

Domestically, the president now faces a host of challenges, including the possibility of decreased public legitimacy after a tumultuous six months, ongoing political polarization, and unrest in the southwest of the country.

Museveni's critics have highlighted the use of \$7 million of public resources for his campaign during a two-month period.⁸⁵ This is particularly unpopular at a time when poor service delivery (particularly in rural areas), corruption, and unemployment are pressing concerns for large sectors of society. Museveni's decision to reshuffle nearly half of his cabinet in favor of a "more agile" cabinet has been billed as a way to address serious deficits in public services, including the decaying health sector. At the same time, the proposed cabinet of eighty ministers is likely to be unpopular given persistent calls over the past several years for a reduction in cabinet size.

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In the early 2000s, Ugandan leaders were hopeful that oil from western Uganda could fuel development and provide for a larger government budget. Long delays in exploration and extraction have somewhat tempered this optimism. Nonetheless, Uganda continues to move forward with a pipeline through Tanzania, which is reported to be a point of frustration for Kenyan officials, who hoped that the pipeline would pass through Kenya. Low oil prices and the viscosity of Uganda's oil cast doubt on its ultimate profitability. In the meantime, members of the oil-rich Bunyoro Kingdom in western Uganda have expressed their desire for a greater share of future oil revenues and their frustration over poor infrastructure and land grabs in the area. Although it is unlikely that Ugandan oil will contribute significantly to the local or national economy, Museveni's administration will be faced with resolving tensions in western Uganda that have emerged around oil exploration to date.

Addressing violence in the southwestern Rwenzori region will be another pressing challenge for Museveni's new administration. The violence emerged over contentious local elections but stems from historical animosity between the Bakonzo and Bamba ethnic groups. Human Rights Watch reported that at least thirty people were killed in a retaliatory cycle of violence and that the police and army were responsible for seventeen civilian deaths during their efforts to stem the violence.⁸⁶ To restore peace to the region, the Ugandan government will not only need to investigate the recent killings, including those by security forces, but also further investigate the July 2014 violence in Rwenzori, which has remained largely unaddressed at the official level.

At the national level, political polarization remains high and the government's ongoing repression of Kizza Besigye and his supporters may gradually diminish Museveni's popular support. As of mid-August 2016, Besigye awaits the conclusion of his trial for treason following his mock inauguration in protest the day before Museveni's inauguration. The government has also rounded up more than twenty government officials accused of plotting a coup, including known FDC supporter Michael Kabaziguruka.⁸⁷ Although some civil society groups are encouraging reconciliation between Besigye and Museveni, tensions remain exceedingly high and reconciliation does not appear likely in the near term.

For his part, Besigye continues to encourage a spirit of defiance and activism within his supporters, which differs from the stance of FDC party president Mugisha Muntu, who believes that the FDC should continue to function as a party within government. If unresolved, these tensions within the FDC could distract from the party's efforts to promote its policy goals as articulated in the March 2015 "FDC Policy Agenda for Uganda's Leap Forward."⁸⁸ The FDC, which remains Uganda's most influential opposition party, has defined concrete domestic policy objectives but is less clear about its foreign policy vision. If the opposition works to articulate and advocate for a specific foreign policy vision, this could provide the necessary pressure on the NRM to strengthen civilian foreign policy institutions and seek approval from Parliament before making major decisions.

Uganda's prominent role in regional affairs has afforded Museveni a powerful position in the region and a special relationship with the United States and Europe. Although the democratic decay in the country over the past decade is antithetical to the stated values of many countries that financially and diplomatically support Uganda, these countries have had limited success pushing for democratic reforms. This is in large part because their leverage is limited: The UPDF has been an essential security partner of Europe and the United States within East Africa. Even when Uganda's foreign interventions have been perceived to be counterproductive or exploitative, rebuke has been muted.

Following the election, Uganda's external relations are in flux with respect to Western allies and the region. On the NRM side, the government initially took tepid steps to smooth relations with the international community after Museveni stridently dismissed international criticisms of the election. Museveni's disparaging remarks about the International Criminal Court (ICC) during his inaugural address, however, led to further tensions with U.S., Canadian, and European officials. In light of broad international condemnation of the elections and subsequent tensions, Uganda's relations with the United States and Europe may well continue to be strained. Museveni's defiance since his reelection coincides with the announcement of UPDF's withdrawal from anti-LRA missions later this year and its possible withdrawal from AMISOM next year. This does not imply a causal relationship but does highlight that areas of productive engagement between Uganda and its long-standing allies may be dwindling.

It is unclear whether the questionable execution of the February elections will have any impact on Uganda's relationships with its neighbors within the East Africa and Great Lakes subregions. EAC member states have largely allowed Museveni to drive the conversation about regional integration. They also nominated him in 2015 to mediate the crisis in Burundi over President Nkurunziza's controversial third term. Museveni made little progress during his first eight months in this role, and in March 2016 the EAC nominated former Tanzanian president Benjamin Mkapa to facilitate the mediation alongside Museveni. Museveni's long-standing influence in the region means that the EAC is unlikely to entirely shift the role away from him. His centrality in the EAC is reinforced by a recent rapprochement between Uganda and Tanzania under Tanzanian President Magufuli, who seeks to better connect Tanzania with its neighbors and overcome previous tensions with the coalition of Rwanda, Kenya, and Uganda. The slight rapprochement between Uganda and Sudan over the past ten months is another development to watch. Uganda and Sudan's shared disdain for the ICC and their mutual interest in preventing the escalation of the July 2016 violence in Juba could open the door for future cooperation.⁸⁹

Given that Museveni's policymaking has been highly personalized, his successor's foreign policy is likely to vary somewhat. It is possible that the next leader of Uganda would pursue a less assertive foreign policy. For example, Museveni's desire to achieve an integrated East Africa is a somewhat personal ambition that emerged early in his career; it could easily recede under a future president. Likewise, Uganda's involvement in South Sudan is motivated in part by a long-standing rivalry between Museveni and Bashir, and a future president of Uganda may thus play a less assertive role in South Sudan. If the next leader of Uganda is a longtime member of the NRM inner circle or member of Museveni's family, their foreign policy may more closely mirror Museveni's than that of a successor without a close affiliation to Museveni or the party. Regardless of who the successor ends up being, some foreign policy goals are likely to remain unchanged. These include protecting the country's economic interests, maintaining a favorable regional geopolitical balance, and ensuring positive relations with donor countries.

As a result of the past three decades of NRM rule, Uganda's government institutions are weak and intertwined with the president and his party. Museveni's succession plans remain unknown and pose a risk of increased tensions within the NRM, between the NRM and the opposition, or between the security sector and a non-NRM successor. It is likely that Museveni will either push Parliament to pass an amendment removing the presidential age limit or position a close family member as his successor within the NRM. Neither option bodes well for democracy in Uganda. Ugandan citizens and the international community now have the opportunity to advocate for stronger, nonpartisan government institutions and for a succession

At the leadership level, Museveni and his inner circle must choose whether to prioritize the preservation of their own power and influence or a democratic transition that would position Uganda to meet citizen demands and serve as an example within the region.

process that strengthens rather than weakens Uganda's democracy. At the leadership level, Museveni and his inner circle must choose whether to prioritize the preservation of their own power and influence or a democratic transition that would position Uganda to meet citizen demands and serve as an example within the region.

Recommendations

President Museveni should respect the upper age limit and leave power after this term of office. He should ensure that his successor within the NRM emerges through a transparent and democratic process.

He should also endeavor to strengthen policymaking institutions that will endure beyond his tenure and to encourage loyalty within the UPDF to the people of Uganda more broadly, rather than to himself and the NRM. This will be particularly important to ensure a fair election in 2021. Moreover, leaving Uganda with a strong armed force committed both to democracy and to the Ugandan citizenry would cement Uganda's leadership role in the region. It would also enable a democratic transition, perhaps the greatest legacy of all.

Uganda's political opposition should seek to engage more closely on issues of foreign policy. It has primarily defined itself as anti-Museveni and has understandably focused much of its rhetoric on domestic policy goals. The opposition needs not only to speak out against repression, but also to articulate the core tenets of its desired foreign policy as soon as possible. This need is critical and should be undertaken in the near future rather than the next election season.

Uganda's neighbors should also seize this opportune moment to encourage democratic reforms in Uganda, perhaps as regional standards applied through the East African integration process.

If and when relations ease between Uganda and its U.S. and European allies, these donor countries should encourage Museveni to make key reforms, including reining in the partisan security sector, taking steps to permit political dissent, and rolling back repressive laws.

Ugandan civil society leaders should continue to advocate for laws and policies that will allow the 2021 elections to be in keeping with international best practices and to encourage a democratic succession process.

Civil society organizations should continue to work to document the repression of opposition supporters and the crackdown on civil society, and to raise awareness of these patterns within Uganda and abroad.

Appendix. Research Methodology

The authors conducted semi-structured in-person interviews in Kampala in April and May 2015; in-person interviews and telephone interviews in Ethiopia, South Africa, and the United States from June 2015 to March 2016; and further interviews by telephone in Kampala from June 2015 to March 2016.

Interviewees in Uganda included

- government ministers,
- Ugandan diplomats,
- special advisers to the president,
- members of Parliament,
- opposition party members and leaders,
- members of the business community,
- university professors,
- Ugandan civil society leaders and international civil society, and
- youth leaders.

Interviewees outside of Uganda included

- diplomats,
- researchers and university professors, and
- members of civil society.

Specific interview questions were tailored to the different categories of actors interviewed. At the beginning of each interview, the authors introduced USIP and ISS and explained the purpose of the research. Sample interview questions included the following:

- What are the drivers of Uganda's foreign policy?
- What specific motivations have driven Uganda's interventions in Somalia, South Sudan, and the DRC?
- How are foreign policy decisions made in Uganda?
- How do Uganda's neighbors perceive its foreign policy?
- What major dynamics are at play in Uganda's domestic politics? How do these affect foreign policy?
- What is the perception of {different constituency groups} of Uganda's foreign policy?
- What are the specific foreign policy platforms of the NRM and the political opposition?
- How would foreign policy remain the same or change under a different president, from either the NRM or the opposition?

Notes

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In power since 1986, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and his political party—the National Resistance Movement—have had a strong role in the East African political landscape. Self-styled as a Pan-African leader, Museveni has relied on his reputation and on the nation’s armed forces to exert influence in neighboring countries. Now, as he begins his fifth term of office after the highly contentious 2016 presidential election, questions remain about whether his domestic and international legitimacy have been damaged by the many acts of repression in the lead-up to that election. Analysis of Uganda’s recent international interventions and the drivers behind them offers insight about the country’s future foreign policy, whether under Museveni or a successor.

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