



# IPSS

Institute for Peace  
& Security Studies  
Addis Ababa University

## PEACE & SECURITY REPORT

# UGANDA CONFLICT INSIGHTS



DECEMBER 2021

The purpose of this report is to provide analysis and recommendations to national, regional and continental decision makers in the implementation of peace and security-related instruments. The opinions expressed in this report are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies.

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# SITUATION ANALYSIS

**FIGURE 1. COUNTRY PROFILE AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

<b>POPULATION</b>	<b>HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (HDI)<sup>i</sup></b>	<b>GDP PER CAPITA</b>
<b>59.4M</b>	<b>INDEX: 0.544</b> <b>RANK: 159/189</b>	<b>\$2,181</b>
<b>NEIGHBOURS</b>	<b>LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (YRS)</b>	<b>RECS</b>
<b>THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO</b> <b>KENYA</b> <b>RWANDA</b> <b>SOUTH SUDAN</b> <b>TANZANIA</b>	<b>63.4</b>	<b>COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (COMESA)</b> <b>EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY (EAC)</b> <b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD)</b>

<sup>i</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/UGA>

The Republic of Uganda is a landlocked country located in the eastern part of Africa and home to various ethnic and linguistic groups. The official languages of Uganda are English and Swahili. The country is also religiously diverse, with Christianity being the most widely professed faith. Uganda has experienced intermittent violent conflicts since it achieved independence from the United Kingdom (UK) in 1962. Multiple military coups, violent regimes – including that of Idi Amin (1971-1979) - have resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths, displacement and the prolonged suffering of Ugandans. Fifty-nine years since independence, the country is yet to witness a democratic handover of power from one leader to another. President Yoweri Museveni, who took power 35 years ago in 1986, has faced opposition from different groups across the country. The government is contested and marked by recurrent political violence during and after elections. Corruption, economic stagnation, a youth bulge and an influx of refugees, mainly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, further intensify the ongoing political grievances. Instability in Uganda poses

a significant threat to national and regional stability, as Kampala is a key security and political actor, influential in countries ranging from South Sudan to Somalia, Burundi and the DRC.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/uganda/ugandas-museveni-clings-power-trouble-lies-ahead>

# CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

## Political factors

President Museveni took power in January 1986 after a six-year guerilla war against the Obote regime. He led the constitutional amendment in 2005<sup>2</sup> and 2017<sup>3</sup>, which enabled him to consolidate power and run for the presidency in the general elections of 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021. While the 2005 amended constitution eliminated the two-term limit of the president, the 2017 constitutional amendment eliminated the presidential age limit.

Democratic gains<sup>4</sup> made at the start of President Museveni's rule steadily eroded through repressive legislation, harassment of critics and opposition leaders, and impunity towards those in power.<sup>5</sup> While the ruling party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), enjoyed substantial advantages through state resources, political opposition leaders and independent media were harassed, including through the use of politically motivated criminal charges and the threat of violence<sup>6</sup>.

Uganda's 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 general elections were characterised by police and military intimidation, arrests of opposition politicians and supporters, with the incumbent President Museveni being the winner in all. However, in the 2021 general elections, President Museveni received his lowest vote percentage since multi-party elections were reintroduced in 1996.<sup>7</sup> Uganda has one of the world's youngest populations and pressed by unemployment, many of these young people are desperate for a change of government.<sup>8</sup>

Recurring constitutional amendments that extended presidential terms and removed the presidential age limit were important determinants for President Museveni's continued stay in power and one of the triggering factors for the country's ongoing political crisis and internal power struggles. In addition to the weakening of key public institutions and the current political impasse in

Uganda, conflict risks at the local level are rising due to uncertain political succession.<sup>9</sup>

## Socio-economic factors

Uganda's socio-economic challenges are one of the main causes of the current crisis in the country. Although a decline in poverty was evident before the COVID-19 pandemic, despite a slowdown in average economic growth after the last decade, the country is listed as least developed and about 21%<sup>10</sup> of Ugandans live in poverty. Economic activities declined due to the shock caused by COVID-19. There have been widespread firm closures, permanent layoffs in industry and services, a rapid slowdown of activity, particularly in the urban sector, and labour movement back to subsistence farming.<sup>11</sup> Household incomes also fell due to the pandemic, exacerbating already high levels of vulnerability.<sup>12</sup>

Uganda's economic growth barely keeps up with population growth, estimated at 3% per year, which is one of the highest growth rates in the world. The country has a young population with 78% of the population below 30 and a median age of 16 years. While the youth experience high unemployment, to date, women (51% of the population) also have limited economic assets.<sup>13</sup> With the rising cost of living, frustrated youth are easy recruits for crime, rebel militias, political gangs and extremist networks and ripe for political mobilisation.

Furthermore, the country has seen no significant progress in health and education provision. Maternal and newborn mortality rates remain high, despite the rapid increase in hospital deliveries.<sup>14</sup> According to a World Bank report, 5% of children born in Uganda did not make it to their fifth birthday and under-nutrition is high, as stunting affects 29% of children in Uganda aged five years and below.<sup>15</sup> The quality of education was also considered to be poor.<sup>16</sup>

2 The 2005 amended constitution eliminated the two-term limit for the presidency.

3 The 2017 amended constitution eliminated presidential age limit and allowed President Museveni, to run for a fifth term in 2021. *Furthermore, it extended the terms of office for MPS from five to seven years.*

4 After coming to power, President Yoweri Museveni was widely held for bringing stability, economic growth and effective responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

5 [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/85C0E269BAF5E780C12577B300447BAD-Full\\_Report.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/85C0E269BAF5E780C12577B300447BAD-Full_Report.pdf)

6 Ibid

7 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/uganda/ugandas-museveni-clings-power-trouble-lies-ahead>

8 <https://www.africanews.com/2021/01/14/pressed-by-unemployment-uganda-s-youth-are-desperate-for-change/>

9 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/uganda>,

10 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55550932>

11 Uganda Overview: Development news, research, data | World Bank

12 Ibid

13 <https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/presscenter/articles/2021/undp-uganda-share-insights-into-challenges-and-opportunities-wit.html>

14 <https://www.ghspjournal.org/content/9/2/365>

15 Uganda Overview: Development news, research, data | World Bank

16 Ibid

Due to COVID-19, the country experienced two years of school lockdown (the longest school lockdown in Africa). Limited access to basic services such as health care and education created resentment towards the government and negatively impacted the prospects of democratic consolidation in Uganda.

## Refugee influx

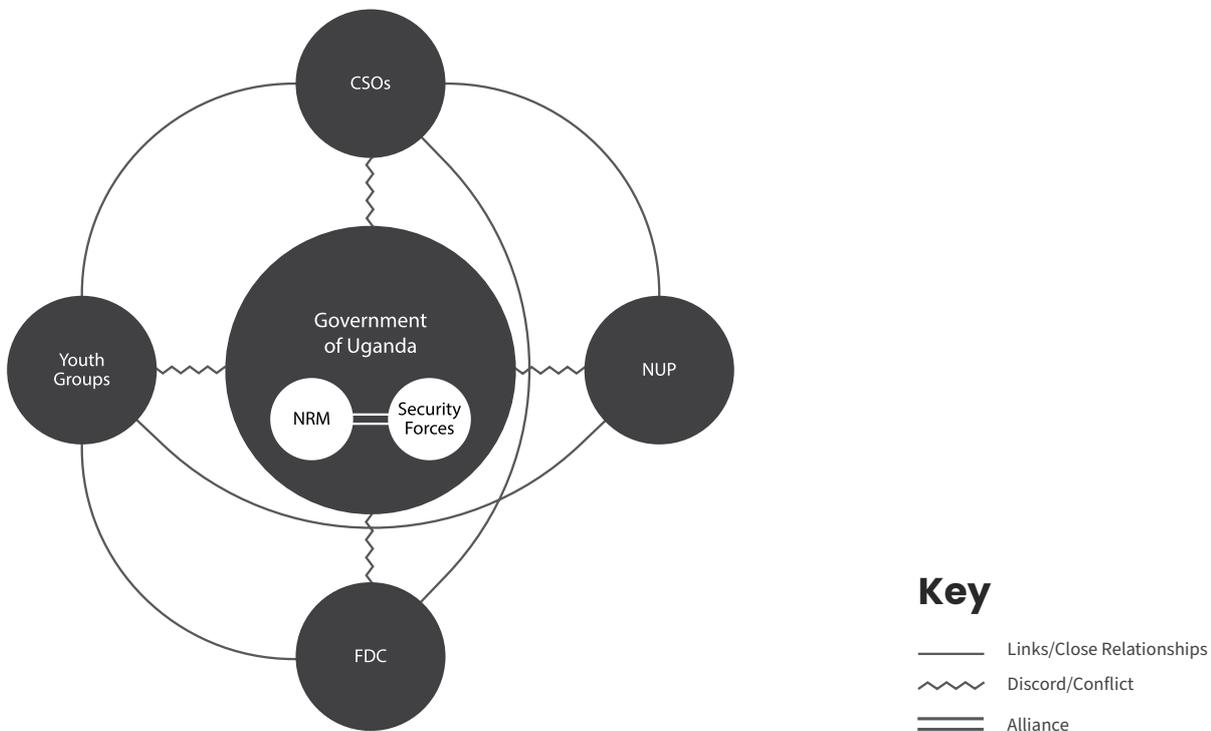
With more than 1.4 million refugees from more than ten countries, including Burundi, DRC, and South Sudan, Uganda is the largest refugee-hosting country in east Africa and the third-largest globally. The country has also experienced an increase in Somali, Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Rwandese refugees.<sup>17</sup> While Uganda's refugee policy is one of the most progressive in the world, with refugees enjoying access to social services, land and jobs, the continued influx—coupled with limited resources—is placing tremendous pressure on existing amenities and straining the delivery of services in host communities.<sup>18</sup>

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17 <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/local-integration-urban-refugees-uganda-nrcs-community-based-and-integrated>

18 Uganda Overview: Development news, research, data | World Bank

**FIGURE 2. ACTORS MAPPING**



## The Government

Uganda is a presidential republic with the president serving as the head of state, government and armed forces. The vice-president and a prime minister are appointed by the president and assist the president together with his cabinet. President Museveni’s party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), was founded as a liberation movement that waged a guerrilla war through its rebel wing, the National Resistance Army (NRA), which toppled Milton Obote’s regime in 1986. The NRM has a majority in the Ugandan parliament, with 336 out of 529 elected seats. While President Museveni maintains a large support base, especially in rural areas, he faces increasing opposition over rising inequality and long control of power.<sup>19</sup>

The Uganda People’s Defense Forces consist of the air force, marine, and army contingents as well as paramilitary forces.<sup>20</sup> The Ugandan troops supported United Nations-led peacekeeping missions, and as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Uganda has peacekeeping troops in Somalia. Historically, Uganda’s government relied on donor support. The country was also a US ally and a European Union partner in maintaining regional stability.<sup>21</sup> In the late-1980s and early-1990s, Uganda was considered a success story by the global donor community for its donor-financed economic growth after decades of conflict. It also provided a buffer against Sudan and a channel to support the southern Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) rebels. However, as elite corruption intensified, notably during the army’s excursions into eastern Congo<sup>22</sup> and in the armed conflict with the Lords’ Resistance Army, Uganda’s positive profile began to fade. Despite this, donors continued their engagement.<sup>23</sup>

19 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55573581>

20 <https://www.britannica.com/place/Uganda/Political-process>

21 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/02/16/after-violent-election-ugandas-government-faces-three-big-challenges/>

22 Ugandan army commanders in eastern DRC reportedly mobilised transborder economic networks and exploited economic opportunities in the area. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17531055.2012.664701>

23 <https://africanarguments.org/2021/01/museveni-and-the-west-relationship-status-its-complicated/>

The security forces have been deployed in response to political upheavals. According to a Human Rights Watch report, in the run-up to the 2021 general elections, security forces used COVID-19 restrictions as a pretext to beat, extort, and arbitrarily detain journalists, opposition leaders and supporters. As was also the case in the past, the police and army used lethal force to break up election-related riots.<sup>24</sup> Authorities dispersed opposition rallies, arrested government critics and opposition members, and placed restrictions on media.<sup>25</sup>

Uganda is a member of several intergovernmental bodies such as the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). It also maintains strong diplomatic and economic ties with China, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States of America (USA).

## Opposition political parties

In Uganda, opposition political parties operate openly and contest elections despite restricted political space. This followed almost 20 years of single-party rule by the NRM as the Movement System of Government. This was realised in 2005 following a constitutional referendum that marked a return to multi-party politics, which were banned in 1986 when the NRA took power. Until the 2005 referendum, only the ruling party was allowed to operate in Uganda, and other political parties could technically exist but were prohibited from sponsoring candidates and holding meetings. As of 2021, around 25 opposition political parties were registered under Uganda's Electoral Commission.<sup>26</sup> However, most of the significant registered political parties are rarely permitted to conduct public consultations and campaigns. The army and police are usually deployed to disperse their meetings and campaign rallies, and their leadership are often detained or placed under house arrest during elections.

## Forum for Democratic Change (FDC)

The FDC is the main opposition party in Uganda founded in 2004 as an umbrella body called Reform Agenda by disgruntled members and followers of President Museveni's NRM.

Kizza Besigye, who was president of FDC until 2012, was a

presidential candidate in Uganda's 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 elections but lost to the incumbent. Kizza Besigye was arrested several times and decided not to run for the presidency in 2021.

The FDC, which holds the second-largest number of parliamentary seats, has been one of the greatest challengers to the NRM in the 2006, 2011, and 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections. However, in the 2021 elections, the party and its presidential candidate came third, following the NRM and National Unity Platform (NUP), respectively. Despite its third place, the FDC won 32 parliamentary seats and unseated more than a dozen ministers from the ruling party.<sup>27</sup> FDC's strongholds were in the north, where the population has suffered almost two decades of war between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army.

## National Unity Platform (NUP)

The National Unity Platform (NUP), formerly the National Unity, Reconciliation and Development Party (NURP), is currently the largest opposition party with 57 parliamentary seats. Founded in 2004 as NURP, the NUP is a social-liberal and progressive political party led by Moses Kibalama until musician turned politician, Robert Kyagulyani Ssentamu, known popularly as Bobi Wine, assumed the leadership in July 2020.

The NUP was officially launched as a political wing of Kyagulyani's People Power Movement in July 2020. While running as an independent candidate in 2017, Kyagulyani adopted the people power slogan as his rallying call, leading to what is referred to as the People Power Movement in Uganda. Since then, several legislators, including members of the ruling NRM and opposition FDC, have allied with the Movement.<sup>28</sup> Following difficulties registering the People Power Movement as a political party, the movement joined a legally registered party, NURP, and the name was changed to NUP on 22 July 2020.

The NUP was one of the greatest challengers to the NRM in the 2021 presidential and parliamentary elections. Kyagulyani and his party, which came in second with 34%, took most of the parliamentary seats in Kampala and central Uganda, defeating several high-ranking ministers, albeit firmly rejected election results as fraudulent. Security forces also targeted Kyagulyani and his supporters. Originating from Kampala's "Ghetto", Kyagulyani symbolises this disenfranchised group of young and economically marginalised.<sup>29</sup>

24 <https://theconversation.com/the-roots-of-pre-election-carnage-by-uganda-security-forces-152774>

25 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/uganda>

26 <https://www.ec.or.ug/political-parties>

27 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/uganda/ugandas-museveni-clings-power-trouble-lies-ahead>

28 <https://lifestyleug.com/national-unity-platform-nup/>

29 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/02/16/after-violent-election-ugandas-government-faces-three-big-challenges/>

## Religious organisations and civil society organisations (CSOs)

Uganda's civic and religious organisations have played a pivotal role and have been essential in fostering political participation in a restricted political space since the 1980s. For example, the National Association of Women Organisations in Uganda and the Uganda Gender Resource Centre was actively involved in the constitution-making process that culminated in the 1995 Constitution.<sup>30</sup> In addition, in recent general elections, CSOs participated in election monitoring operations, and Uganda's Catholic bishops have called for a broad-based national dialogue following political unrest.<sup>31</sup>

However, repressive measures such as banning activities of CSOs, freezing of accounts, arrests and intimidation, have restricted their freedom, ability to challenge the authority and foster accountability of the government and effectively influence the legal and policy agenda. For example in 2019 and 2021, authorities banned the Citizens' Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda (CCEDU) from engaging in any election-related activity and Uganda's National Elections Watch from monitoring the 2021 general elections.<sup>32</sup> In August 2021, the Ugandan government suspended 54 civil society groups, including the country's most prominent rights organisation, Chapter Four, as well as charities, religious, environmental and electoral democracy groups.<sup>33</sup> Some of these organisations participated in an election monitoring operation on polling day in January 2021, which was raided by security forces. Several of their leaders were arrested on trumped up charges of financial impropriety. Some observers view this measure by the government as an escalation of the Ugandan government's efforts to tighten control over civil society.<sup>34</sup>

30 <http://interactions.eldis.org/unpaid-care-work/country-profiles/uganda/social-economic-and-political-context-uganda>

31 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/uganda/ugandas-museveni-clings-power-trouble-lies-ahead>

32 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/27/uganda-harassment-civil-society-groups>

33 <https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/ugandan-government-tightens-control-over-civil-society-suspends-54-ngos-including-rights-group-20210820>

34 Ibid.

# CONFLICT DYNAMICS

The Republic of Uganda has experienced recurring instability and periodic conflicts between the government and groups competing for political power. Although President Museveni was praised for creating peace, stability and economic growth in Uganda, in his early years in power, his government has recently been faced with criticism of authoritarianism, corruption, and oppression of political opponents and violation of human rights. This report focuses on the last two elections Uganda had that contributed to the recent phase of the country's political crisis.

In 2016, Uganda went into elections with the same contested electoral body over its credibility and partisanship.<sup>35</sup> In the 2016 general elections, the incumbent was declared the winner with 60.7% votes. The election environment was characterised by police intimidation, arrests of opposition politicians and supporters. In addition, limited campaign opportunities were given to opposition candidates, while state officials and resources were used to campaign for the incumbent.<sup>36</sup> Several irregularities were reported in the lead-up and aftermath of the elections. Most prominently, the main opposition leader, Kizza Besigye, was essentially submitted to house arrest for most of the year. On 20 January, the AU and EU criticised these oppressive tactics: detaining Kizza Besigye on Election Day, blocking social media access across the country and the police using force and arresting people arbitrarily in the run-up to the elections.<sup>37</sup>

In December 2017, the bill to remove the presidential age limit of 75 was passed with a majority in parliament, following three days of intense debates, invasion of the floor of parliament by Special Forces Commandos, fistfights and arrest of opposition parliamentarians. The bill allowed President Museveni to run for a sixth term in the 2021 presidential election. Furthermore, it extended the terms of office for MPs from five to seven years. This unconstitutional extension of parliamentary terms in office was later declared null and void by the Courts of Appeal and Supreme Court, which, however, upheld the removal of the age limit.

In the run-up to the 2021 general elections, several challengers, including the most prominent leader Kyagulyani of NUP, were threatened, arrested, and assaulted; hundreds of opposition supporters, human rights activists and journalists were detained.<sup>38</sup> On nominations day, one of the presidential candidates, Patrick Amuriat Oboi of FDC, was abducted by military police and delivered to the nomination ground barefooted.<sup>39</sup> Laws ostensibly aimed at controlling COVID-19 were used to curtail campaigning, tanks paraded through downtown Kampala, Special Forces Command, headed by President Museveni's son, were deployed against the incumbent's presidential rival Kyagulyani.<sup>40</sup> Just before the polling, authorities imposed an internet blackout throughout the country.<sup>41</sup> The violence escalated into the third week of November 2020 when protests erupted in many parts of the capital, Kampala, following one of Kyagulyani's many arrests. Police, Special Forces and Military, including Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence (CMI), responded with lethal force, and at least 54<sup>42</sup> were reportedly killed, mostly by the joint forces.

President Museveni was declared the winner of the 2021 presidential elections, which were conducted under a nationwide internet blackout. He was declared the winner for the sixth time with 58.6% of the vote compared to his young challenger, Kyagulyani's 34.8%. Kyagulyani and his NUP party rejected the results, citing evidence of rigging and voter intimidation. Although President Museveni's win was expected, given the uneven playing field, even by the low standards of recent Ugandan elections<sup>43</sup>, he received his lowest percentage of the vote since multi-party elections were reintroduced in 1996. Robert Kanguanyi's party, the NUP, completed a near-sweep of parliamentary seats, defeating several high-ranking ministers in Kampala and in much of central Uganda, also known as Buganda. FDC also unseated more than a dozen ministers from the incumbent government.<sup>44</sup>

While the internet shutdown during balloting and the presence of massive police and army on the streets made it difficult for the opposition to mobilise citizens, which

35 Attempts to reform the electoral commission in the period preceding 2016 elections were avoided by the government. IPI Global Observation, Uganda's 2016 Elections: Another Setback for Democracy in Africa, 24 Feb 2016.

36 <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2016/02/ugandas-2016-elections-another-setback-for-democracy-in-africa/>

37 Heidelberg conflict barometer 2016.

38 <https://www.cfr.org/blog/world-should-not-look-away-ugandas-undemocratic-elections>

39 <https://www.africanews.com/2020/12/08/ugandan-presidential-candidate-campaigns-without-shoes/>

40 <https://www.theafricareport.com/86794/uganda-calls-for-muhoozi-to-succeed-his-father-president-museveni-are-growing-louder/>

41 <https://www.cfr.org/blog/world-should-not-look-away-ugandas-undemocratic-elections>

42 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/uganda/ugandas-museveni-clings-power-trouble-lies-ahead>

43 The 2021 election cycle stood out for the brazenness of official attempts to intimidate the opposition and the ferocity of the police response to protests. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/uganda/ugandas-museveni-clings-power-trouble-lies-ahead>

44 Ibid.

possibly prevented post-electoral violence<sup>45</sup>, general discontent over the rule of a six-term president remained. President Museveni's scoring of the lowest percentage in the 2021 election since 1996 to a young challenger that represented a newly formed party also indicated deep frustration at the incumbent's rule, mainly among the youth. The issue of succession in Uganda also remained worrisome. There are suspicions among the society that President Museveni was grooming his son, Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, who has since been rapidly promoted through the Army ranks and positions to succeed him. This could intensify internal power struggle and public resentments.

General discontent over the country's economic crisis also remained. This was compounded by the worsening effects of COVID-19, which exacerbated weak governance and intensified the call for political change. Moreover, cross-border instability and conflict dynamics in neighbouring countries like Burundi, DRC, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, and South Sudan have resulted in the settlement of thousands of refugees in Uganda, increasing pressure on the country's limited social services and exacerbating tensions in the country.

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45 However, few sporadic protests reportedly took place in some districts of Kampala following election results announcement but protesters were quickly dispersed. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-uganda-election/ugandan-opposition-party-says-it-will-challenge-election-result-two-dead-in-protests-idUSKBN29M0BR>

# ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT RESPONSES

## Regional response

The AU, COMESA, EAC, and IGAD deployed their Election Observation Missions (EOMs) to monitor the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections in the Republic of Uganda.<sup>46</sup> The AU EOM's mandate was to observe the presidential election in line with relevant AU instruments, especially the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). However, despite their participation in observing the election processes, all of them failed to address the issues underlying the uneven electoral playing field, and violent incidents reported, particularly when it came to the multiple detentions of opposition leader, Kizza Besigye. Other international observer missions, like Commonwealth, United States (US) and European Union (EU), were more critical about the organisation and conduct of the elections.<sup>47</sup> Equally, the AU, IGAD and EAC deployed their EOMs to oversee the 2021 presidential and parliamentary elections in Uganda.<sup>48</sup> Unlike IGAD and the AU, EAC was more critical of the internet shutdown, actions taken against opposition parties, candidates' limited access to the media, and disproportionate use of forces by security forces. The respective missions released statements to present their conclusions on the polling and formulated recommendations, such as the need to review actions taken against opposition parties and candidates in accessing media houses; the need to review the performance of security forces and to investigate and hold accountable those who contributed to injuries and loss of life; and the need to adopt standard protocols on vote opening and voter verification.<sup>49</sup> However, the question remains whether recommendations from these regional actors would be implemented.

Moreover, the AU and other regional organisations are often silent on change of term limits even when the changes pose threats. The argument used usually are the principles of sovereignty, non-interference and territorial integrity. However, there are normative frameworks in place that provides the basis for developing a more robust

monitoring mechanism for scrutinising and assessing the way in which presidential term limits are imposed, altered or removed.<sup>50</sup> Equally, these frameworks commit AU's members to constitutionalism and the rule of law. These frameworks are the 2000 Lomé Declaration on the Framework for an Organisation of African Unity Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Governance (Lomé Declaration) and the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), also other policy frameworks and decisions from AU Institutions.<sup>51</sup>

## International response

Unlike in 2016, the European Union (EU) did not send observers to Uganda to monitor the 2021 presidential and parliamentary elections. The EU chose not to send observers reportedly because Ugandan officials ignored advice from past observers to make polling fairer.<sup>52</sup> As per the EU 2018 report, none of the 30 recommendations made by the EU EOM were implemented. These included reforms to make the electoral body more independent, elimination of excessive use of force by the armed forces and greater transparency in tallying.<sup>53</sup> Equally, the US cancelled its observation of Uganda's presidential election because most of its accreditation requests were denied and said the January 2021 vote would lack accountability and transparency.<sup>54</sup> In addition, the UK, a long-standing partner of Uganda, paused funding for three projects, totalling £40,909, which were working directly with the Ugandan security services, following the "disproportionate response" of Ugandan forces to protests in November 2020.<sup>55</sup>

46 [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36078-doc-report\\_of\\_the\\_african\\_union\\_election\\_observation\\_mission\\_to\\_the\\_18\\_february\\_2016\\_presidential\\_election\\_in\\_uganda.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36078-doc-report_of_the_african_union_election_observation_mission_to_the_18_february_2016_presidential_election_in_uganda.pdf); IGAD EOM Preliminary Report, 19 February 2016; EAC EOM Preliminary Report, 20 February 2016; COMESA EOM Preliminary Report, 20 February 2016

47 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14112446>

48 [https://igad.int/attachments/article/2606/01\\_16\\_21\\_EOM\\_Report%20.pdf](https://igad.int/attachments/article/2606/01_16_21_EOM_Report%20.pdf); <https://www.eac.int/press-releases/1925-eac-election-observation-mission-urges-electoral-commission-of-uganda-to-register-all-eligible-voters-in-future>

49 [https://igad.int/attachments/article/2606/01\\_16\\_21\\_EOM\\_Report%20.pdf](https://igad.int/attachments/article/2606/01_16_21_EOM_Report%20.pdf); <https://www.eac.int/press-releases/1925-eac-election-observation-mission-urges-electoral-commission-of-uganda-to-register-all-eligible-voters-in-future>

50 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-african-law/article/presidential-term-limits-and-the-african-union/1F134034E67D-93524560D31A06779B7>

51 Ibid

52 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-uganda-politics-idUSKBN27W1H1>

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-08/HL13053>

## Best-case scenario

The best-case scenario would be the peaceful and democratic transfer of power from the incumbent and long-serving presidency of Yoweri Museveni upon the termination of his presidential terms to a legitimately elected successor or through a negotiated inclusive transitional arrangement. A peaceful pathway to succession after a long period of monopoly power would result in the opening up of political space for increased democratisation in the Republic of Uganda. It will also mitigate electoral conflicts and the socio-economic situation that are all triggers of violence and conflicts in many parts of Africa.

## Worst-case scenario

The worst-case scenario for the Republic of Uganda would be the escalation of hostilities between the government and groups competing for political power. This scenario could also involve the mobilisation of the already frustrated urban youth against the incumbent in mass protests or armed rebellion or even inspire another type of opponent: the generals<sup>56</sup>, and result in a coup d'état, as in the cases of Mali and Sudan. Under these worst-case scenarios, conditions of poverty, unemployment and inequality will worsen, which would negatively impact investment, prompt further decline in the economy and may even instigate civil wars as different factions fight for power. These scenarios could also further deepen human rights violations across the country and negatively affect citizens and those who have sought refuge in Uganda. It could also imperil one of the most fragile regions in the world<sup>57</sup> and jeopardise the implementation of continental development frameworks such as the African Union Agenda 2063, 'the Africa We Want', and the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in Uganda.

## Most-likely scenario

The most likely scenario would be the entrenchment of autocratic leadership and, in turn, mass discontent, civic unrest, repressions and diplomatic isolation. Frustrations expressed by Uganda's youthful population are likely to continue throughout Yoweri Museveni's presidency. Under this scenario, Uganda will experience fragile peace and insecurity with a deleterious effect on the country's social fabric without necessarily escalating into a civil war. Furthermore, corruption and economic stagnation will continue to constrain the country's economic development.

56 In this scenario, this could occur also given heightened suspicion that President Museveni seeks to engineer a succession to his son. And if the youth are mobilized and are out on the streets, this could give generals the opportunity they need to seize power.

57 Destabilization in Uganda could highly affect the regional stability, as Kampala is a central security and political actor in the region.

# STRATEGIC OPTIONS

## To the government

- The government of Uganda should enhance democracy and good governance in the country by ensuring free and fair elections. The government should engage the youth, women, civil society organisations and opposition political parties in order to ensure meaningful political and socio-economic participation.
- The government should equally open up the civic space and organise an inclusive national dialogue with Ugandan citizens to discuss the pertinent issues, including presidential succession and presidential term limits.
- The government should respect the freedom of expression and the right to peaceful and safe assembly.
- The government should ensure that security forces are impartial, and their operations aimed at preserving national stability are conducted with full respect to international and regional laws to which Uganda is a signatory. This will not only be in line with Article 3 (f) of the PSC Protocol but will equally contribute to the improvement of the human rights situation in the country.
- In addition, the government should also hold accountable all who contributed to injuries and loss of human lives in the course of the 2021 election campaign.

## To the AU, EAC and IGAD

- In line with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), the AU, EAC, and IGAD should actively push for issues pertinent to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections to be addressed.
- In line with the 2000 Lomé Declaration on the Framework for an Organisation of African Unity Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government (Lomé Declaration) and the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), as well as other policy frameworks and decisions from AU institutions, the AU should commit

its members to constitutionalism and the rule of law. These normative frameworks provide the basis for developing a more robust monitoring mechanism for scrutinising and assessing the way in which presidential term limits are imposed, altered or removed.<sup>58</sup>

- Although the principles of sovereignty, non-interference and territorial integrity are enshrined in the statutes of the AU, EAC and IGAD, there is a need for these institutions to press for the respect of human rights in Uganda. They should equally press for the efficient implementation of continental laws to which the Republic of Uganda is a signatory. This will prevent the re-escalation of hostilities between the conflicting parties and the potential spillover of Uganda's internal crisis into the region.

## To the International Community

Donors, particularly the UK and US, should take advantage of their long-standing partnership with Uganda to critically engage and push for a robust action towards democratisation in Uganda. They should particularly push for issues pertinent to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections to be addressed.

58 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-african-law/article/presidential-term-limits-and-the-african-union/1F134034E67D-93524560D31A067779B7>

## 1962–2021

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**1962** – Uganda gains independence with Milton Obote as prime minister and with Buganda enjoying considerable autonomy.

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**1971** – Idi Amin topples Milton Obote in a coup.

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**1986** – National Resistance Army rebels take Kampala and appoint Museveni as president.

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**1996** – President Museveni wins Uganda’s first presidential election with 75.5% of the vote. All candidates were independents since political parties were banned at the time.

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**1998** – Uganda sends its troops to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to support rebels seeking to overthrow Kabila.

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**2001** – President Museveni wins another term in office, beating his rival Kizza Besigye.

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**2003 May** – Uganda withdraw its troops from eastern DRC. Tens of thousands of DRC civilians seek asylum in Uganda.

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**2004** – Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party is formed as an umbrella body called Reform Agenda by disgruntled members and followers of President Museveni’s National Resistance Movement (NRM). Kizza Besigye was the president of FDC until he was replaced by Mugisha Muntu in 2021.

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**2005 July** – Parliament approves a constitutional amendment that scraps presidential term limits and allows the return of multi-party politics.

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**2005 November** – Main opposition leader, Besigye, is imprisoned shortly after returning from exile. Supporters say the trial was politically motivated and take to the streets. Besigye is released on bail in January 2006, just ahead of the presidential elections.

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**2006 February** – President Museveni wins multi-party elections, taking 59% of the vote against the 37% share of his rival, Besigye. EU observers highlight the intimidation of Besigye and official media bias as problems.

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**2007 March** – Ugandan peacekeepers deploy in Somalia as part of an African Union mission to help stabilise the country.

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**2011 February** – President Museveni wins his fourth presidential election. Challenger, Besigye alleges vote-rigging and dismisses the result as a sham.

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**2011 April** – Besigye arrested several times over “walk-to-work” protests against rising prices.

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**2015** – President Museveni reshuffles his cabinet in a move seen as a bid to reward close allies in the run-up to the 2016 elections.

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**2016** – Ugandan government put opposition leader Besigye under house arrest for most of the year.

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**2016 January** – Both the EU and AU criticises President Museveni’s oppressive tactics: detaining Besigye for election day, blocking social media access across the country and the police using force and arresting people arbitrarily in the run-up to the elections.

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**2016 February** – President Museveni wins re-election against his opponent Besigye, despite several reported irregularities and concerns by oppositions, Commonwealth, United States (US) and European Union (EU) about fairness and transparency.

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**2017 January** - President Museveni appoints his son, General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, as a presidential advisor.

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**2017 20 December** - The bill to remove the presidential age limit passes with a majority in parliament. Three months before that, politicians ended up in a chair and fistfight in parliament, resulting in the arrest of 25 opposition members by the Special Forces Command. Throughout the year, a government crackdown on demonstrations resulted in the death of three people and at least 30 injured.

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**2018 January 2** – President Museveni signs the Age Limit Bill into law, allowing him to run for another term. Furthermore, it extended the terms of office for MPs from five to seven years.

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**2018 December 12** – President Museveni meet leaders of the opposition parties, Democratic Party (DP), Uganda People’s Congress (UPC), and Jeema at the Inter-Party Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD) near the capital. The FDC, the biggest opposition party, refused to participate, citing a lack of right to associate and doubting the effectiveness of electoral adaptations.

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**2020 July** – National Unity Platform (NUP) party was officially launched as a political wing of Kyagulyani’s People Power Movement. The movement joined a legally registered party, National Unity, Reconciliation and Development (NURP), and the name was changed to NUP on 22 July 2020.

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**2020 November** – Ugandan Police arrests Kyagulyani, and protests erupted in Kampala. Police responded with lethal force, and at least 54 were reportedly killed.

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**2021 January** - President Museveni wins the presidential election that was conducted under a nationwide internet blackout. Opposition parties rejected the results, citing evidence of rigging and voter intimidation.

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**2020 December** - President Museveni appoints his son, General Kainerugaba, as head of Security Forces Commander.

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**2021 January** - Kyagulyani, President Museveni’s presidential opponent, was under house arrest.

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**2021 June** - President Museveni appoints General Kainerugaba, as the commander of land forces in the army.

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## Peace and Security Reports

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Although key continental and regional institutions have their own early warning reporting systems, policy making within these institutions also benefit from a number of analytical and periodic reports generated by think tanks and research institutes. The Research Unit at IPSS provides brief and critical analyses of the state of peace and security in different African countries as well as critical appraisals of interventions by various African actors. The reports will cover African countries showing positive signs as well as those undergoing negative developments.



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