

**AN ANALYSIS OF UGANDA'S MILITARY ALLIANCES IN AFRICA: A
STRATEGIC STEP TOWARDS ENHANCING FOREIGN RELATIONS**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF LAW IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
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This mini-dissertation by **Nyangire Charles** under the title '*An analysis of Uganda's Military Alliance in Africa: A strategic step towards enhancing Foreign Relations*' has been under my supervision and is approved for submission to the examining authority.

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DEDICATION.

My cherished family, whose constant encouragement, tolerance, and support have served as the cornerstone of my academic career, is honored in my dissertation. To my parents, whose efforts and leadership have enabled me to achieve this, thank you for teaching me the virtues of self-control, perseverance, and the quest of knowledge. This study is also dedicated to my mentors and those who have encouraged me to critically analyze how Uganda's presence on the world scene has been shaped by the convergence of military strategy and diplomacy.

And lastly, to the courageous men and women who work for our country in the diplomatic and defense fields—may this study help advance our knowledge of the intricate alliances and decisions that influence Uganda's foreign policy in some tiny manner.

ABSTRACT.

The nature, development, and effects of Uganda's military alliances on its international relations are all thoroughly examined in this research. Uganda has been more involved in regional and international military alliances throughout the last 20 years, especially with the African Union (AU), the East African Community (EAC), and through bilateral relations with superpowers. This paper examines the ways in which Uganda's strategic objectives, regional impact, and diplomatic stance have been influenced by these partnerships.

The study uses a qualitative research design and consults secondary literature, regional policy documents, official government reports, and interviews with foreign policy and security specialists. It looks at important case studies such as Uganda's involvement in regional security initiatives, military collaboration with China and the United States, and participation in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The results show that Uganda's military alliances have been used to secure national interests, such as economic leverage, regime security, and regional peace, as well as to exercise soft power.

Nevertheless, the report also points out drawbacks, such as reliance on foreign military assistance, opinions on foreign policy becoming more militarized, and the possibility of becoming involved in regional conflicts. Although military alliances have improved Uganda's reputation in the area, the dissertation finds that they must be carefully managed to make sure they support long-term development and diplomatic objectives.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.

AU - AFRICAN UNION.

UN - UNITED NATIONS.

AMISOM – AFRICAN UNION MISSION IN SOMALIA.

DRC - DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO.

UPDF - UGANDA PEOPLE’S DEFENCE FORCES.

LRA - LORD’S RESISTANCE ARMY.

EASF - EASTERN AFRICA STANDBY FORCE.

APSA - AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE.

EAC - EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY.

IGAD. – INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

DECLARATION.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
APPROVAL.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	4
DEDICATION.....	5
ABSTRACT.....	6
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	7
CHAPTER ONE.....	11
INTRODUCTION.....	11
1.0. INTRODUCTION;.....	11
1.1. BACKGROUND;.....	11
1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT;.....	12
1.3. OBJECTIVES;.....	13
1.3.1. GENERAL OBJECTIVE;.....	13
1.3.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES;.....	13
1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS;.....	13
1.5 JUSTIFICATION;.....	14
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE;.....	14
1.7. LITERATURE REVIEW;.....	14
1.8. METHODOLOGY;.....	17

1.9. SCOPE OF STUDY;	18
1.9.1 GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE;.....	18
1.9.2. Time scope;	19
1.11. CHAPTER OUTLINES;	19
CHAPTER 2.....	20
2.0. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK GOVERNING MILITARY ALLIANCES IN UGANDA. 20	
2.1. INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK	20
2.1.1. United Nations Charter (1945);	20
2.1.2. Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols of 1949 and 1977;	22
2.1.3. Customary International Law;	22
2.2.0. REGIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK.....	24
2.2.1. African Union (AU)	24
a) AU Constitutive Act (2000)	24
b) AU Peace and Security Council Protocol (2002)	25
East African Community (EAC).....	25
a) Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC (1999)	28
c) EAC Mutual Defence Pact (2014)	29
Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)	30
2.3. NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK;	31
The Uganda People's Defence Forces Act, 2005	31

Ratification of Treaties Act, 1998	32
2.4. REGULATORY FRAME WORK OF MILITARY ALLIANCES IN UGANDA.	32
CHAPTER THREE	37
3.1.0. UGANDA'S MILITARY INVOLVEMENTS, CASE STUDIES, AND MOTIVATING FACTORS BEHIND MILITARY ALLIANCES: IMPACTS ON FOREIGN RELATIONS..	37
3.2. Notable military engagements of Uganda.	38
3.3. Case Studies of Uganda's Military Interventions	39
3.4. Motivations for Uganda's Military Alliances;	41
3.4. IMPACTS ON UGANDA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS	43
3.5. CASE STUDY OF THE CASE OF DRC V UGANDA.	44
CHAPTER FOUR	Error! Bookmark not defined.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	Error!
Bookmark not defined.	
4.1. Summary of Findings	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Conclusion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2. Recommendations	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Final Thought	Error! Bookmark not defined.
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	51

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTIONS.

1.0. Introduction

Uganda has become a significant military player on the African continent, involving itself in various regional security initiatives and peacekeeping missions. Uganda's foreign policy in the last twenty years has followed a path of "aggressive military diplomacy" and active involvement in regional exercises, including the African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) missions. It's military involvements particularly in Somalia under AMISOM, South Sudan and DRC have elevated Uganda in terms of regional security.

As Williams notes, the Ugandan military has allowed the country to garner the potential of both regional pride and leverage in the domain of African geopolitics. This article examines the relationship between Uganda's military alliances and foreign policy goals, providing a more purposed explanation of how military engagement has come to be a means by which Uganda's "foreign policy agenda is advanced."¹ Throughout the years, Uganda's military cooperation's with the United States (U.S.), United Kingdom, and Israel, among other countries, have facilitated, albeit, been a function of achieving Uganda's foreign policy goals.

1.1. Background

Uganda's engagement in regional security goes as far back as the early 1990s², for example in interventions in both Rwanda (1990-1994) and DR Congo (1997-2003). Uganda moved from the victim to participant in foreign interventions, through militarized foreign advocacy.³

Since then, the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) has become one of the most professional mobile forces on the continent⁴, enhancing Uganda's capacity to engage in

¹ Williams, P. D. (2018). *Fighting for Peace in Somalia: A History and Analysis of AMISOM, 2007–2017*. Oxford University Press.

² Mutibwa, P. (1992). *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*. Africa World Press.

³ Fisher, J. (2013). "Managing Donor Perceptions: Contextualizing Uganda's 2007 Intervention in Somalia." *African Affairs*, 112(446), 404-423.

⁴ Omach, P. (2000). "The African Crisis Response Initiative: Domestic Politics and Convergence of National Interests." *African Affairs*, 99(394), 73-95.

external operations. As a result, Uganda's military diplomacy has become a central pillar of its foreign policy, aligning with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) framework⁵.

1.2. Problem statement

Over the past three decades, Uganda increasingly has become a regional security key player in the East and Central African region. Its involvement in various regional combat operations, from peace enforcement mandates in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to bilateral military cooperation with neighboring states, evidently signals an intentional policy beyond issues of traditional defense. These steps suggest a broader foreign relations strategy in which security arrangements and military cooperation hold central but often overlooked importance.

Scholars such as Jonathan Fisher⁶ and Tusiime⁷ have made significant contributions toward comprehension of Uganda's foreign policy, but in their work, they concern themselves with broader matters such as regime security, donor diplomacy, and peacekeeping as a soft power strategy. Nevertheless, there remains abundant literature missing on Uganda's military alliances specifically created and utilized as foreign policy tools. Current scholarship is prone to interpret Uganda's military ventures as unilateral, spontaneous responses to neighborhood instability or domestic politics concerns, and not as foresighted operations inserted within an effective diplomatic and geopolitical framework.

This gap is especially important in light of the changing security environment of the region, where military diplomacy is increasingly shaping the character of interstate relations. Uganda's groupings with the global powers (for example, the United States), regional blocs (for example, the East African Community and the African Union), and individual

⁵ African Union Commission. (2015). African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) Roadmap 2016–2020. Addis Ababa: AU Commission.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Tusiime, A. (2021). Uganda's Foreign Policy: Strategies, Challenges, and Prospects. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

states (for example, South Sudan, DRC, and Somalia) are not just responses to security threats but also channels through which Uganda advances its strategic interests, advances its regional leadership ambitions, and accumulates political capital in the international arena. Therefore, this research seeks to narrow this gap through a comprehensive exploration of how Uganda has utilized military alliances as a tool of diplomacy, political engagement, and foreign policy for regional security. It looks at the institutional, historical, and geopolitical contexts under which these alliances have come into existence and analyzes their impact on the foreign policy aspirations of Uganda. By doing so, the study will contribute to broader debates on African international relations and security studies and highlight the more strategic role of military cooperation in shaping state behavior and foreign policy in the Global South.

1.3. Objectives

1.3.1. General objective

1. To examine how Uganda's military alliances have influenced her foreign relations, regional posture and influence.

1.3.2. Specific objectives

2. To identify Uganda's significant military alliances and interventions in Africa.
3. To examine the political, economic and security imperatives that drive Uganda's military involvements.
4. To critically assess the 'reality checks' for Uganda's military diplomacy.
5. To suggest policy guidelines for the efficiency of military alliances for long-lasting foreign relations.

1.4. Research questions

1. What is Uganda's key military allies and interventions in Africa?
2. What are the political, economic and security interests that push for military alliances between Uganda and various other states?

3. What impact have Uganda's military interventions had on its bilateral and multilateral relationships in Africa?
4. What are the dangers and advantages of Uganda have militarized foreign policy?

1.5 Justification

Several studies have been pegged on establishing the impact of Uganda's military alliances to her foreign policy in Africa and the rest of the World. My study will not be aimed only at discussing Uganda's military alliances, but also to assess the effects its impact on her foreign policy; that is, to say whether it is actually worth it or we have been blinded by its few positivity and are probably oblivious to the fact that its negative effects could carry more weight than its positive impacts, thereby affecting our foreign policy more positively than negatively. The study will also try to establish whether these military alliances can be decentralized by bestowing the powers to the parliament from the executive.

1.6 Significance

This research will initially establish the effects of Uganda's military alliances on her foreign policy. This study will weigh both the positive and negative effects of Uganda's military alliances on her foreign policy and come up with certain recommendations for what can be done about the same. This study will serve as a reference for future researchers. It shall also guide the parliament in as far as the promulgation of laws dealing with the adverse effects of military alliances are concerned, the research would assist parliament in realizing that indeed these military alliances, as wonderful as it may be, does have adverse impacts. The judiciary would ensure that it does not interpret the law on military alliances in a way that increases the negative impacts of military alliances but that it deals with them and fosters the positive ones.

1.7. Literature review

In the contemporary international order, military diplomacy has grown in importance as a crucial foreign policy instrument. States now strategically use military action to forge

alliances, establish regional orders, and protect national interests rather than depending just on conventional diplomacy or open combat to exert influence. Significant adoption of this blending of military and diplomatic tactics has occurred in Africa, especially in nations like Uganda, whose regional involvement and military operations are frequently situated within larger foreign policy goals. This survey of the literature looks at academic debates about military diplomacy and foreign policy, with an emphasis on Uganda's regional activities. It contextualizes the function of military diplomacy in Uganda's foreign policy approach, examines diverse viewpoints, and points out gaps in the body of current research.

Military diplomacy and foreign policy;

The fundamental definition of military diplomacy given by Cottey⁸ and Forster⁹ is the utilization of defense-related activities as instruments of foreign policy, such as joint exercises, military training, and peacekeeping missions. They contend that military diplomacy is a purposeful and strategic component of international relations rather than just an extension of military power. States exert influence without directly waging war through initiatives like multilateral peacekeeping and bilateral defense cooperation. Expanding on this, Nye¹⁰ presents the idea of "smart power," which combines soft power (such as diplomacy and cultural influence) with hard power (such as military force). Nye's theory is essential for comprehending how nations like Uganda use their military might to forge alliances, improve their status internationally, and repel threats. Therefore, Uganda's participation in regional peacekeeping operations serves as both a security necessity and a diplomatic instrument to raise its geopolitical image.

With the concept of "security as diplomacy," Sending expands on this discussion by arguing that modern military actions are a component of a larger political plan. He emphasizes how diplomatic goals like agenda-setting, alliance-building, and norm-promoting may be achieved through security deployments. Sending's viewpoint is especially pertinent to Uganda's military engagements in the region, as defense

⁸ Cottey, A., & Forster, A. (2004). *Reshaping defence diplomacy: New roles for military cooperation and assistance*. Oxford University Press.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. PublicAffairs.

measures are directly linked to diplomatic goals including establishing regional leadership and influencing security policy.¹¹

Uganda's Foreign Policy Military Activities

According to Williams, Uganda has been a major troop contributor to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Williams points out that Uganda's dedication to AMISOM is a reflection of its efforts to establish itself as a regional security actor as well as its counterterrorism goal. Uganda's status with the African Union and with Western allies like the United States, which view AMISOM as essential to regional peace, has improved as a result of this engagement.¹²

Uganda's involvement in the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF), a crucial aspect of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), is discussed by the African Union Commission¹³. Uganda's participation in EASF demonstrates its adherence to continental security norms and multilateral security frameworks. By taking part in these processes, Uganda may demonstrate its military prowess and have a say in regional security strategy.

Uganda's military actions in neighboring countries like South Sudan, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are examined by Fisher¹⁴. He contends that a variety of strategic goals, such as preserving regional hegemony, managing transnational rebel groups like the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and obtaining access to natural resources, frequently motivate these actions. This viewpoint highlights the intricacy of Uganda's military diplomacy, which is driven by both practical and idealistic factors.

By highlighting the political economics of Uganda's overseas actions, Tripp¹⁵ enhances Fisher's argument. She argues that military operations overseas frequently serve the

¹¹ Sending, O. J. (2015). *The politics of expertise: Competing for authority in global governance*. University of Michigan Press.

¹² Williams, P. D. (2018). *Fighting for peace in Somalia: A history and analysis of the African Union Mission (AMISOM), 2007–2017*. Oxford University Press.

¹³ African Union Commission. (2015). *African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) assessment study 2015*. Addis Ababa: AU Peace and Security Department.

¹⁴ Fisher, J. (2015). East Africa after the Cold War: State building and state formation in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Ethiopia. In M. Newell & K. De Vries (Eds.), *African interventions: State, military and regional responses* (pp. 61–85). Routledge.

¹⁵ Tripp, A. M. (2010). *Museveni's Uganda: Paradoxes of power in a hybrid regime*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

purposes of the regime at home, including power consolidation, upholding networks of elite patronage, and diverting attention from problems at home. According to Tripp's research, Uganda's domestic political survival measures are intricately linked to its foreign strategy.

Research gap

Although there is good analysis of Uganda's military incursions in the neighborhood and military diplomacy in available books, very little is known about how Uganda's military diplomacy fits into its long-term foreign policy agenda. Most research targets individual missions or programs without questioning how such activities serve Uganda's larger global interests. The institutional and normative foundations that underpin Uganda's military diplomacy such as its adherence to international law, regional integration agenda, and civil-military relations—have also been relatively neglected. By comparatively analyzing Uganda's use of military diplomacy as a strategic tool of its foreign policy, this study aims to fill this lacuna by investigating both its short-term tactical objectives and far-term strategic horizon. In addition, the study seeks to examine Uganda's military operations based on diplomatic, economic, and political interests both within and outside East Africa.

Countries, particularly those from the African continent, are progressively including defense capacities to their diplomatic arsenals according to research in foreign policy and military diplomacy, reports that study. Although empirics like Williams, Fisher, and Tripp present Uganda's unique context through empirical work, academics like Cottey, Nye, and Sending provide theoretical underpinnings which help in analyzing this trend. However, up to now, there is no thorough examination of the type of role military diplomacy plays in Uganda's foreign policy. By closing this knowledge gap, this current study adds to a fuller and more detailed insight into military diplomacy as a form of statecraft and manifestation of higher-order geopolitical intentions.

1.8. Methodology

This research paper was largely desk-to-review conducted through legal analysis based on primary sources, that is to say; the constitution of the Republic of Uganda and other

relevant statute. Secondary sources shall be drawn from decided cases, published articles publications, and internet sources

1.9. Scope of study

Although there are strong studies on Uganda's military interventions in the region and military diplomacy in the existing literature, little is known about how Uganda's military diplomacy serves its long-term foreign policy agenda. Most of the studies concentrate on particular missions or initiatives without critically analyzing how these activities promote Uganda's general global goals. The institutional and normative foundations on which Uganda's military diplomacy rests, such as its adherence to international law, regional integration ambitions, and civil-military relations, have also not received much scholarly attention. Through a systematic analysis of Uganda's use of military diplomacy as a strategic instrument of its foreign policy, the study aims at bridging this gap by analyzing both its immediate tactical objectives and long-term strategic aspirations. In addition, the study attempts to evaluate Uganda's military actions in relation to diplomatic, economic, and political interests both within and beyond East Africa.

Drawing from research on military diplomacy and foreign policy, states particularly African states are now incorporating defense assets into their diplomatic arsenals. While scholars like Williams, Fisher, and Tripp offer empirical insights on Uganda's unique environment, scholars like Cottey, Nye, and Sending offer explanatory theories that serve to explain this phenomenon. There is still a gap in detailed examination of the position that military diplomacy holds in the foreign policy of Uganda. By filling this knowledge gap, the current study adds to a more complete and detailed understanding of military diplomacy both as a tool of statecraft and as a manifestation of wider geopolitical aspirations.

The subject scope of the study was "An Analysis of Uganda's Military Alliances in Africa: A Strategic Step towards Enhancing Foreign Relations." I chose this content because I believe there is a gap in the different studies on Uganda's military alliances in Africa on her foreign policy.

1.9.1 Geographical scope

This research was carried out using sample experiences covering Uganda as a whole. I chose to conduct this research in samples African countries because Uganda has had diverse alliances in different African countries, affected the parts differently and therefore, the choice of one region may have been discriminatory to the other regions and also compromised the research findings given the board and different effects of these military alliances.

1.9.2. Time scope

The study will examine Uganda's military relationships in Africa from 2000 to 2025, including Somalia, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Limitations: Challenges may include limited access to confidential military data and political concerns around security activities.

1.11. Chapter outlines;

The study shall consist of four chapters. Chapter one shall be the introduction, showing the background to the study, problem statement, objectives, particular objectives, research questions, justification, significance literature review, research design and methodology, scope of the study, geographical scope, time scope, and the chapter synopsis. Chapter two discusses the legal frame work governing Uganda's military alliances while Chapter three will discuss Uganda's Military Engagements: Case Studies, Motivations Behind Uganda's Military Alliance and Impacts on Uganda's Foreign Relations. Lastly, the fourth chapter will reflect the Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations. This will discuss the relationship between Uganda's military alliances and her foreign policy. It will also give the conclusion and suggest the recommendations to the fore mentioned challenges. This research paper will be composed of four chapters flowing as discussed above.

CHAPTER TWO: THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK GOVERNING MILITARY ALLIANCES IN UGANDA.

2.1. Introduction.

Military alliances are a fundamental factor in deciding the defense policy and foreign affairs of a country. In Uganda, the legal framework for military alliances is primarily grounded on the national Constitution, the statutory law, and regional and international agreements to which Uganda is a signatory. The military alliances are created to promote collective security, enhance regional stability, and improve Uganda's capacity to respond to both internal and external threats. The power to make these alliances is derived from key national institutions, most notably the Parliament and the Executive, which also provide a check and balance to ensure that these agreements are aligned with national interests and the law. In addition, Uganda's activity in regional collectivities such as the African Union (AU), East African Community (EAC), and worldwide alliances such as the United Nations (UN) and its peace missions equally reveals the diplomatic and juridical context around which these military deployments are made. This introduction addresses the domestic and external legal frameworks managing military alliances within Uganda, citing the processes, limitations, and strategic considerations inculcated in the national legal framework.

2.2. International legal framework

Uganda's military alliances are shaped by a nuanced interplay of regional security interests, international alliances, and peacekeeping responsibilities. Being a member of the African Union (AU), East African Community (EAC), and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Uganda is engaged actively in regional security initiatives towards stabilizing troubled areas such as Somalia and South Sudan. Globally, Uganda has built defense cooperation accords with countries like the United States, China, and Russia, focusing on counterterrorism, training, and defense capacity building. Such alliance affirms Uganda's strategic role in regional security as well as its alignment within global security frameworks in general.

2.2.1. United Nations Charter (1945)

Uganda, as a member state of the UN (admitted in 1962), is bound by the Charter, which forms the foundation of the legal framework for collective security and military alliances on the international front. For example; Article 2(4)¹⁶ Prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. For instance, is the case of Nicaragua v. United States of America:¹⁷ Nicaragua filed a case against the United States in 1984, alleging that the U.S. had violated international law by its aid to rebel groups (the Contras) in their efforts to overthrow Nicaragua's Sandinista regime, mining Nicaraguan ports, and other military activity within the territory of Nicaragua. The ICJ ruled that the U.S. had indeed broken customary international law when it used force against Nicaragua, including mining ports and training and funding rebel groups. The Court noted that these actions were not consistent with the prohibition on the use of force, a rule that had become customary international law even before the United Nations Charter was signed

Equally Article 51¹⁸ provides for self-defense (individual or collective) in the event of an armed attack. Among the recent significant international law cases is the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling on Sudan's attempt to make United Arab Emirates (UAE) accountable for alleged acts of genocide in West Darfur. On May 5, 2025, the ICJ rejected Sudan's case due to lack of jurisdiction owing to the UAE's reservation excluding ICJ jurisdiction under Article IX of the Genocide Convention. The court's 14-to-2 ruling emphasized its inability to scrutinize the merits of Sudan's arguments. The decision has been controversial on the effectiveness of international judicial mechanisms to address atrocious humanitarian abuses.¹⁹

In terms of historical context, the 2007 Bosnian Genocide Case was a significant case. The ICJ decided Serbia had not acted to stop the 1995 Srebrenica genocide and had thereby failed in its responsibilities under the Genocide Convention. The court didn't

¹⁶ UN CHARTER, 1945.

¹⁷ Nicaragua v. United States of America: Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua, International Court of Justice, Judgment of June 27, 1986, ICJ Reports 1986, p. 14.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Sudan fails in attempt to make UAE accountable for acts of genocide <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2025/may/05/sudan-fails-in-attempt-to-make-uae-accountable-for-acts-of-genocide?> (accessed on 5th May, 2025).

declare Serbia directly liable for genocide but emphasized the complexity of state responsibility within international law.²⁰

Articles 39–42 (Chapter VII)²¹ provides for action by the UN Security Council to maintain or restore international peace and security using force. It is prudent to note that Uganda has contributed troops to UNAMID (Darfur) and MONUSCO (DR Congo). These missions require Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) to regulate the legal status and conduct of Ugandan forces serving under the UN command.

2.2.2. Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols of 1949 and 1977

Uganda is a signatory to the four Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, which govern the conduct of warfare and protect civilians, wounded soldiers, and prisoners of war. They are applicable to Uganda's forces in any multilateral action. Adherence is mandatory under law enforceable by the International Criminal Court (ICC), where Uganda is a state party by virtue of the Rome Statute (1998).

2.2.3. Customary International Law

The North Sea Continental Shelf Cases (Federal Republic of Germany v. Denmark; Federal Republic of Germany v. Netherlands²²), decided by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1969, are a landmark in the development and construction of customary international law. The Court's ruling not only interpreted the conditions under which a treaty rule can become customary law but also defined the now-well-known two-factor test in determining rules of customary international law: state practice and *opinio juris*.²³ The dispute concerned the delimitation of sections of the North Sea continental shelf. Germany was not a signatory to the 1958 Geneva Convention on the Continental Shelf, which featured the equidistance rule of delimiting boundaries. Denmark and the

²⁰Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro) [2007] ICJ 2, commonly known as the Bosnian Genocide Case,
²¹ Ibid.

²²Federal Republic of Germany v. Denmark and Federal Republic of Germany v. Netherlands, North Sea Continental Shelf, Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 1969, p. 3.

²³ *ibid*

Netherlands argued that despite Germany's treaty status, the equidistance rule had gained the status of customary international law and was binding on Germany. The central issue was whether Article 6 of the 1958 Convention—requiring equidistance—embraced a customary norm of international law.²⁴

The Court, in its ruling, rejected the contention that the equidistance principle had been transformed into customary international law. According to it, a term of a treaty, even if it is widely practiced, does not ipso facto constitute customary law. Rather, there must be two conditions: state Practice: The practice must be "extensive and virtually uniform." *Opinio Juris*: The practice must be followed in such a way so that it becomes "evidence of a belief that this practice is made obligatory by the existence of a rule of law requiring it." The Court held: in addition, not only must the acts in question aggregate into an established practice, but must also be such, or must be carried out in such form, as to be expressive of a belief that this practice becomes obligatory because there is a rule of law requiring it."²⁵

In his separate opinion, Judge Atsushi Tanaka illustrated the philosophical underpinning of customary law and its emphasis on *opinio juris*: Customary law, although based on practice, is of a normative character, and the aforesaid normative character has its origin in the belief of States that such practice is obligatory.²⁶ Concurring Opinion of Judge Tanaka, ICJ Reports 1969). Tanaka's opinion emphasized that repetition of actions alone—even if universal—was not enough unless it was backed by a conviction in law. Judge Sørensen, speaking for Denmark, agreed with the majority's opinion on the requirement of *opinio juris*, but he regretted that the Court may have lost a chance to reinforce the precision of customary evolution in contexts of treaty law.

Uganda is also bound by customary international norms where there are no treaties, and these include Non-aggression, Sovereign equality of states, Non-intervention and

²⁴ibid

²⁵ Ibid ICJ Reports 1969, para. 77.

²⁶ Concurring Opinion of Judge Tanaka, ICJ Reports 1969)

Respect for territorial integrity. They guide Uganda's behavior in making alliances and sending troops militarily.

2.3. Regional legal framework

Uganda's defense alliances under the regional platform are inherently based on its membership in strategic regional organizations and cooperative security arrangements. Through membership in the African Union (AU), East African Community (EAC), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Uganda is actively involved in the advancement of regional peace and security. The country has contributed soldiers to AU-led peace missions such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which shows that it actively backs collective regional defense. Uganda is also engaged in joint exercises and intelligence sharing schemes through the EAC aimed at combating cross-border threats such as terrorism, insurgency, and trafficking in persons. These local coalitions add strength to Uganda's security profile and increase its role in spearheading peace and stability efforts across East and Horn of Africa.

2.3.1. African Union (AU)

In the context of the African Union (AU), Uganda has become a central military partner, particularly in peacekeeping and counterterrorism missions. As a faithful AU member state, Uganda has been a key contributor to the African Standby Force (ASF) as well as to AU-led missions such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)—subsequently replaced by ATMIS (African Union Transition Mission in Somalia). These initiatives have placed Uganda at the forefront of pursuit of continental stability and peace. Uganda also collaborates with the AU in the areas of disarmament, countering violent extremism, and post-conflict reconstruction. The AU system supplements Uganda's military diplomacy, enabling it to define regional security policy and gain mutual training, logistics, support, and operational coordination with other African states.

a) AU Constitutive Act (2000)

The AU Constitutive Act of 2000 is the constitutive legal document that established the African Union (AU) to supersede the moribund Organization of African Unity (OAU). It was adopted in 2000 and came into effect in 2001, giving the principles,

objectives, and organizational structure of the AU. Its pivotal function is unity, peace, security, and development in African states, albeit through cooperation in hardship. Two of the articles most appropriate for a study on military cooperation and alliances are: Article 4(h) which grants the AU the authority to intervene in a member state where there are war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity.

It's an unusual provision of international law since it authorizes military intrusion into sovereign countries for humanitarian reasons, not even requiring the consent of the state and Article 4(j) which allows a member state to invite the AU to intervene in a military fashion to help bring peace and stability.

These articles are a break from non-interference (one of the cardinal principles of the OAU) to non-indifference, where the AU gets involved in securing peace and security on the continent. The AU Constitutive Act also serves as the legal framework for forming military alliances in the overall framework of the AU. It grants legitimacy to collective interventions through the military for resolving issues in Africa.

b) AU Peace and Security Council Protocol (2002)

The AU Peace and Security Council Protocol (2002) established the Peace and Security Council (PSC) as the African Union's permanent decision-making organ responsible for preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. It makes provision for peace support operations (PSOs), e.g., the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which later was reorganized as the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). Uganda was the initial nation to send troops to AMISOM in 2007, under the mandate of the AU and UN Security Council approval through Resolutions 1744 and 1772, thus meeting international and regional legal requirements. Uganda's participation in AMISOM under the AU Peace and Security Council Protocol demonstrates the way in which military alliances can be employed as tools for foreign relations promotion. Through the provision of troops to a peace support mission authorized by both the African Union and the United Nations, Uganda positioned itself at the hub of regional security, thereby promoting

its diplomatic relations with Somalia, the AU, and the global community in general. This engagement not only enhanced Uganda's regional influence but also consolidated its bilateral ties with mission-supporting countries, such as the world's major powers, thus using military cooperation as a strategic vehicle to consolidate foreign relations and global influence.

- c) The **African Standby Force (ASF) Framework** arose from the AU's vision for a continent-based rapid deployment peace support force institutionally founded during the early 2000s and operationalized through a series of policy papers, doctrines, and roadmaps. As a contributing troop country to the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF), Uganda's military participation within regional coalitions is determined quite significantly by this structure, which prescribes interoperability guidelines, joint operations, and collective defense missions under the command of the AU.
- d) Underpinning this is the **Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP)** adopted in 2004 in order to consolidate member states in a shared vision of security and collective defense. CADSP justifies Uganda's participation in multinational military interventions, that is say, African Union missions in Somalia (AMISOM and its successor ATMIS), by situating them within a broader continental strategy to counter threats like terrorism, civil war, and foreign intervention. In the context of internal change and regional professionalism, the AU Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform (2013) provides a policy and legal basis for Uganda to align its military structure with AU standards of accountability, civilian oversight, and operational norms. This is particularly significant for joint military operations where coordination and AU principal compliance are essential.
- e) Further, Uganda's regional military actions, especially counter-terrorism-related ones, are significantly influenced by the **AU Counter-Terrorism legal regime**, including the 1999 OAU Convention and its 2004 Protocol. These instruments not only define terrorism and criminalize terrorism-related acts among member states but also facilitate the formation of AU-endorsed counter-terrorism alliances, which support Uganda's legal stance in operations against groups like Al-Shabaab.

- f) The **African Union Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (Niamey Convention) of 2014** offers another legal basis for Uganda's defense cooperation with neighboring countries, allowing for military coordination, joint patrols, and intelligence sharing along border regions. The convention supports Uganda's bilateral and trilateral military operations under the AU umbrella, particularly along insecure borders with the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and Kenya. All these frameworks function under the auspices of the greater African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), a constitutive framework uniting all the AU peace and security institutions. APSA conditions Uganda's participation in AU-led missions by formalizing military planning, prevention of conflict, and use of force, thus reinforcing the legal coherence of its regional military alliances.

East African Community (EAC)

Uganda is a founding member of the EAC, which is a regional block with legal frameworks encouraging defense and security collaboration. The East African Community (EAC) is an intergovernmental organization comprising Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), aiming at economic, political, and social integration. Uganda maintains regular military cooperation with members of the EAC, often playing a leading or supporting role in joint operations to counter threats in the region. Relations with Rwanda have been strained, particularly between 2018 and 2021, on issues of spying and support for rebel movements, to the point of closing Gatuna/Katuna border but have since normalized with a diplomatic rapprochement. Relations with South Sudan have witnessed Uganda deploying troops to stabilize Juba in its civil war and continues to coordinate for border security as well as being responsible for the management of the refugee influx.

Uganda's most significant recent military campaign was against the DRC aimed at targeting the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an insurgent group initially Uganda-based but active in eastern Congo; Uganda and the DRC have been conducting joint military operations (Operation Shujaa) since 2021 to eliminate the ADF bases. The ADF's cross-border raids have made it a regional security concern, especially since the DRC joined

the EAC in 2022, and in so doing, talks within the community about regional military interventions are being debated more and more. Overall, Uganda is leading EAC military cooperation with its army frequently engaged in peacekeeping, intelligence sharing, and joint security operations across the region.

a) Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC (1999)

Article 124²⁷ requires partner states to promote peace, security, and defense collaboration through shared policies. Under the provisions of this study, Article 124 expressly validates Uganda's military interventions in Rwanda, South Sudan, and the DRC as not individual national ventures, but obligations in conformity with regional commitments. Uganda's bilateral efforts with the DRC to defeat the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), for instance, resonate with the article's call to jointly address cross-border insurgency and terrorism. The ADF is not only a security risk to Uganda and the DRC but to the whole EAC region, especially since its attacks have regional implications like refugee influx, instability, and disruption of cross-border trade. By acting through Operation Shujaa in joint operations with Congolese forces, Uganda is fulfilling its responsibility under Article 124²⁸ to foster regional peace and security. Similarly, Uganda's earlier military intervention in South Sudan during its civil war was in line with conflict prevention and resolution objectives—securing the region and averting spillover onto Ugandan territory. Even in the case of Rwanda, where there has been bilateral strain, the spirit of Article 124 requires that Uganda pursue peaceful resolution and refrain from provocative conduct. The subsequent reopening of the border and movement toward diplomatic normalization illustrate a turn toward respect for EAC principles, notably mutual respect, dialogue, and regional stability.

In that case, Uganda is not only bound to protect its own national interests but also to align its security policies with EAC partners, share intelligence, conduct joint military interventions where necessary, and work towards the establishment of regional security mechanisms. Failure to do so would not only undermine Uganda's own security but also

²⁷ Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC (1999)

²⁸ Ibid.

frustrate the broader goals of the EAC as envisioned under Article 124. Uganda's military and diplomatic interventions within the region are therefore not only strategic options but legal and political necessities by virtue of its membership in the EAC.

b) Protocol on Cooperation in Defence Affairs (2001)

The Protocol on Cooperation in Defence Affairs (2001) is a regional treaty among member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) aimed at strengthening defense cooperation and fostering peace, security, and stability within the region. Agreed upon in Blantyre, Malawi, the protocol sets the institutional base for collective military training, exchange of intelligence, and concerted action against threats, including collective self-defense and peacekeeping. It operates under the SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation and reaffirms the region's faith in non-aggression, mutual assistance, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This protocol enables Joint military training exercises, Counter-terrorist operations, sharing of intelligence and Help one another in a moment of necessity.

c) EAC Mutual Defence Pact (2014).

East African Community (EAC) Mutual Defence Pact, or officially the Protocol on Cooperation in Defence Affairs, is a regional defence pact to advance military cooperation between EAC member states. Signed on 28 April 2012, it aims to provide a model for collective military operations, disaster response, and peace support operations in the region. Article 17 of the protocol requires particularly the negotiation and signature of a Mutual Defence Pact by the partner states²⁹. During the 4th Northern Corridor Integration Projects Summit in Kampala, the presidents of Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda, in January 2014, signed the Mutual Defence Pact. The pact was driven by shared interests in security, primarily the South Sudan insecurity that exposed the three nations equally to security threats. The pact provides for collective defence, wherein an armed attack on one member state is considered an attack against all, with resultant mutual defense

²⁹ <https://africanlii.org/akn/aa-eac/act/protocol/2012/co-operation-in-defence-affairs/eng%402012-04-28?>

obligations³⁰. However, the enforcement of the pact was not without a hitch. Kenya did not at first sign the agreement, expressing an objection to the route planned for an oil pipeline that would not traverse Kenyan territory. Despite this, Uganda and Rwanda proceeded with the pact, which includes provisions for joint military exercises, naval patrols, and harmonized regional response to threats³¹.

The EAC Mutual Defence Pact is a key step toward regional armed cooperation in the form of enhancing stability and regional security of the East African states. However, its true potential remains to be worked with by all the EAC member states. For instance, Involvement of Uganda in "Ushirikiano Imara" joint military training under this agreement. Ugandan forces under the EAC Regional Force were deployed in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2022³².

d) Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

Uganda is also part of IGAD, which creates mechanisms for peace and security in the Horn of Africa. IGAD Protocol on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (1996), IGAD Security Sector Program (ISSP) and IGAD Peace and Security Strategy (2016-2020). Uganda has backed IGAD intervention in South Sudan, such as IGAD led mediation and deployment of monitoring and verification mechanisms. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has promoted Uganda's military relations through the establishment of a framework that promotes regional cooperation, peacekeeping, and collective security hence enhancing the foreign relations of Uganda³³. Through the venues of IGAD, for example the Protocol on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and the Security Sector Program (ISSP), Uganda has been involved in collective security initiatives and conflict resolution mechanisms for example in South Sudan and Somalia. These efforts have put Uganda at the region's center of influence, fostering trust and strategic partnership building among regional countries.

³⁰ <https://chimpreports.com/kenya-refuses-to-sign-east-africa-defence-pact/>

³¹ <https://chimpreports.com/kenya-refuses-to-sign-east-africa-defence-pact/>

³² <https://nilepost.co.ug/security/202521/uganda-sends-293-troops-to-rwanda-for-joint-regional-military-training-exercise>

³³ <https://igadssp.org/index.php/news-events/206-uganda-national-training-on-the-role-of-technology-and-social-media-platforms-to-counter-terrorism-conducted?>

IGAD's pursuit of multilateralism has also secured Uganda's status as a stable regional player, boosting its diplomatic capital and enabling it to form closer alliances within the Horn of Africa bloc as well as with the global community interested in peace and security in the region.

2.4. National Legal Framework

2.4.1. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995, as amended)

The Constitution is Uganda's highest law and this has been enshrined under Article 2³⁴ and enshrines the country's national principles of guiding defense and international cooperation. Key provisions of the constitution have established military operations including alliances for instance Article 208³⁵ Establishes the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) as a professional, patriotic, and disciplined force which is used in these alliances, Article 209³⁶ defines the role of the UPDF, which include Defence of Uganda's sovereignty, Working with civilian authorities including the police in ensuring peace and security and lastly, Regional and international peacekeeping missions participation, Article 123(1)³⁷ stipulates that The President can conclude agreements and treaties with foreign nations, Article 123(2)³⁸ provides that Treaties that impact the legal or financial responsibilities of Uganda are ratified by Parliament and lastly, Article 119(4)(a)³⁹ lastly Advice is given by the Attorney General regarding the legal implications of international treaties.

The Uganda People's Defence Forces Act, 2005

The Act implements constitutional provisions and governs the behavior of Uganda's military. For instance, Section 4:⁴⁰ UPDF shall work together with other forces in regional

³⁴ Supra.

³⁵ 1995 constitution of Uganda as amended.

³⁶ *ibid*

³⁷ *ibid*

³⁸ *ibid*

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ UPDF ACT.

peacekeeping or defense operations. Section 42⁴¹: UPDF can engage in peacekeeping or security operations in the region or outside. Section 197–198⁴²: Legislative authority for the execution of Status of Forces Agreements with regional organizations or foreign governments.

Ratification of Treaties Act, 1998

This Act implements Article 123(2) of the Constitution⁴³. The need for this act is diverse for instance Defense or military alliance treaties need to be laid before Parliament for ratification and The Parliament can accept, reject, or suggest amendments. it also Permits legislative oversight of binding defense pacts.

2.5. Institutional Frame work of Military Alliances in Uganda.

In Uganda, there are institutions and mechanisms that regulate military organizations to ensure appropriate structure, legality, and accountability. Constitutional provisions, special defense-related laws, and other regulatory agencies mainly regulate the military in Uganda to offer civilian control, transparency, and discipline. Below is an overview of the principal regulatory agencies:

The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF). The Uganda People's Defence Forces is Uganda's national army and is tasked with the defence of Uganda's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The UPDF is regulated by a range of legal instruments, most importantly the Constitution of Uganda and special laws like the UPDF Act of 2005.

The Constitution of 1995⁴⁴ gives the UPDF its general legal foundation. It sets out the mission, role, and accountability structures of the military. Article 218 of the Constitution establishes the UPDF as a national force with the mandate to defend Uganda's sovereignty, foster national unity, and defend the Constitution⁴⁵.

⁴¹ IBID

⁴² IBID

⁴³ SUPRA(CONSTITUTION OF UGANDA).

⁴⁴ Supra

⁴⁵ ibid

UPDF Act (2005)⁴⁶: This act provides for the constitution of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), the organization and discipline of the military, and the legal rights and responsibilities of members of the military. The UPDF Act also governs the military justice system, such as courts martial, military offenses, and punishments for violations of military law.

Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs (MODVA); The Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs provides overall policy direction, coordination, and management of Uganda's defense policy. It coordinates with the UPDF in determining the activities of the military and the defense interests of Uganda on the national level. The ministry is led by the Minister of Defence, and it acts as an interface between the government, the military, and other governmental agencies responsible for defense and national security. The Uganda Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs (MODVA) plays a crucial role in securing and maintaining Uganda's military alliances and defense cooperation. The following are key ways MODVA secures military alliances in Uganda for instance MODVA engages with other countries and international organizations through defense diplomacy with a view to forming and sustaining military alliances. This includes: Signing bilateral and multilateral defense agreements.

The Defence and Internal Affairs Committee of Parliament

Parliament also plays a key role in the oversight of the UPDF. The Defence and Internal Affairs Committee has the mandate to scrutinize and discuss defense issues, including the defense budget, military policy, and any future reforms or bills in the defense sector. This committee plays a big role in Uganda's military alliances for instance it assists in making sure that the military is accountable to the people and the Constitution, and that the defense industry is run openly.

The National Security Council (NSC)

⁴⁶ Supra

The National Security Council is an institution established to provide advice to the President on national security and defense matters. It is involved in formulating Uganda's defense and military policy, as well as overseeing the adherence of the military to the nation's national security objectives. The President of Uganda, being the Commander-in-Chief of the UPDF, presides over the NSC. The other principal members are the Minister of Defence, Chief of Defence Forces, and senior representatives of the other security organs.

The Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and the UPDF High Command

The Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) is the highest-ranking officer in the Uganda People's Defence Forces and has overall command and leadership of the forces. The CDF reports to the President (also Commander-in-Chief of the UPDF). The **UPDF High Command** is composed of the most senior military officers. It makes strategic decisions and advises the President on military matters.

These two offices have equally played a big role in Uganda's military alliances by overseeing military actions are aligned with national security policy and constitutional requirements.

The Court Martial

This is controlled under the UPDF Act, and there is a hierarchy of courts martial and military tribunals that try issues relating to the military. The courts martial have jurisdiction over military offenses by soldiers, ranging from minor discipline to major criminal matters. The Uganda General Court Martial (GCM), under the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) Act, is primarily in charge of offenses by soldiers. Its verdicts and enforcement especially in multinational military cooperation cases or cross-border crimes may, however, have foreign consequences. Likewise, foreign military courts' verdicts can affect Uganda. The following is how the reciprocal effect is achieved If Uganda Court Martial prosecutes and punishes UPDF soldiers who have committed cross-border crimes for example illegal operations across neighboring countries, arms trading, or human rights abuses, then it demonstrates responsibility and assuages the affected states and When

Uganda accepts or cooperates with foreign countries' court martial rulings such as extraditing suspects or respecting verdicts, it enhances mutual confidence in the discipline of the army and improves interoperability in combined operations.

International Oversight Bodies

Uganda's military is also subject to various international legal frameworks that regulate military conduct, especially in areas of conflict. Key international bodies include:

International Criminal Court (ICC): Uganda is a signatory to the Rome Statute and thus its forces fall under the jurisdiction of the ICC for any war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide they may commit as enshrined under Article 5⁴⁷.

African Union (AU) and East African Community (EAC): Regional bodies that have treaties and conventions on defense cooperation and peacekeeping. Uganda's army participates in peacekeeping under the AU and EAC, and is governed by regional regulations and standards that is East African Protocol on cooperation on defence affairs(2001) for East African Community especially provisions of Article 3⁴⁸ Seeks cooperation in military exercises, combined operations, technical co-operation, and peace support operations and Article 5⁴⁹ which encourages the making of common defense policy and strategy for example prevention and resolution of conflicts.

In conclusion, the legal regime for military alliances in Uganda is determined by a combination of constitutional provisions, regional and international agreements, and domestic defense policy. The Constitution of Uganda, as well as its commitment to international peace and security, offers a general legal framework for Uganda's participation in military alliances. While the Constitution requires the establishment of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and honors norms of sovereignty and non-interference, it also allows for the pursuit of foreign policy interests in pursuit of regional stability, for example., by way of peacekeeping operations or bilateral defense

⁴⁷ Rome statute.

⁴⁸ East African Protocol on cooperation on defence affairs

⁴⁹ Ibid.

agreements. Uganda's active membership in regional and global security partnerships such as the African Union (AU), East African Community (EAC) and International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) has played a key role in promoting peace and security in the region. However, the constitutional structure managing military alliances also has to provide for Uganda to fulfill its international law commitments, including enforcing human rights, excluding the threat or use of force except in self-defense and conforming to the laws of armed conflict.

There remains a need for an effective integrated national legal framework to be able to effectively regulate Uganda's military alliances so that all international operations and agreements are in harmony with both international principles of law as well as national interests. Increased legal clarity on the limits and boundaries of such alliances, with transparency, accountability, and regulatory mechanisms, will be necessary for risk avoidance arising from military participation abroad.

CHAPTER THREE

UGANDA'S MILITARY INVOLVEMENTS, CASE STUDIES, AND MOTIVATING FACTORS BEHIND MILITARY ALLIANCES: IMPACTS ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines Uganda's military forays into local and international issues. It presents detailed case studies of major military interventions and partnerships, examines the strategic interests motivating Uganda's military partnerships, and assesses the implications of such partnerships on Uganda's foreign affairs. The examination is placed in both historical and contemporary geopolitical realities within the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa.

3.2. Overview of Uganda's Military Engagements

Uganda, led by President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, has, since 2006, pursued an assertive and strategic-driven military policy aimed at promoting regional stability and defending national interests. The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) have been at the center of various regional interventions, which has made Uganda a lead security actor in East and Central Africa. Notably, Uganda led the way in deploying troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007, taking a leading role in counterinsurgency efforts against al-Shabaab, supporting the Somali government, and providing security for United Nations personnel under the Uganda Guard Unit until 2023. In South Sudan, the UPDF deployed at the outbreak of civil war in 2013 to evacuate citizens and support President Salva Kiir's government, before redeploying in 2025 with special forces after renewed tensions. Uganda has also conducted joint operations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), launching Operation Shujaa in 2021 against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel group with Islamic State affiliations, with thousands of troops still deployed as of 2025. Uganda also participated in the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) from 2011 to 2018, in cooperation with neighboring states to defeat Joseph Kony's militia. Between 2017 and 2022, the UPDF also trained Equatorial Guinea's armed forces under official military missions. Domestically, the UPDF has

conducted internal security operations, such as disarmament exercises in regions like Karamoja, which, while aimed at reducing violence, have been accused of exposing communities to retaliatory attacks. These sophisticated operations demonstrate Uganda's growth from a historically inward-looking force into a regional power committed to peace enforcement, counterterrorism, and multilateral military cooperation across Africa. These engagements include direct interventions, joint military operations, and peacekeeping deployments under international frameworks⁵⁰.

3.3. Notable military engagements of Uganda.

African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM/ATMIS) deployment

AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia) was a regional peacekeeping mission operated by the African Union under a United Nations mandate. It was established in 2007 to support Somalia's transitional government, stabilize Somalia, and combat the militant group al-Shabaab. AMISOM assisted in recapturing major cities from insurgents and in training Somali security forces. It was made up largely of troops from African nations including Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti. In 2022, AMISOM was replaced by the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) as part of a transition process towards transferring security responsibilities to Somali forces.

Uganda has been a leading troop contributor to AMISOM (now ATMIS), the African Union peace enforcement mission in Somalia. The Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) has helped combat al-Shabaab rebels, stabilize the Somali government, and secure main cities, including Mogadishu, since 2007.

Military intervention in South Sudan (2013–2016)⁵¹

Following the outbreak of civil war in South Sudan in 2013, Uganda deployed troops to bolster President Salva Kiir's regime against the rebels. The action was justified in

⁵⁰ Tamm, H. (2012). UPC and the DRC conflict: Uganda's policy toward Congo. *International Peacekeeping*, 19(2), 202-216.

⁵¹ Uganda says it has deployed troops in South Sudan capital <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/uganda-says-special-forces-deploy-south-sudan-capital-amid-tensions-2025-03-11/> (accessed on 5th May, 2025).

humanitarian and regional stability terms, although it attracted mixed feelings over alleged bias. In March 2025, Uganda deployed special forces in Juba as tensions escalated between Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar. This was carried out in order to secure the capital and prevent a resurgence of civil war. Reuters

Counter-Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) Operations in the Central Africa Region⁵².

Uganda has conducted extensive operations to destroy the LRA and capture its leader, Joseph Kony. These operations, sometimes in concert with the United States and regional forces, extended into the Central African Republic and South Sudan as part of broader counter-insurgency operations. In 2013, a former LRA commander was sentenced to 40 years in prison for atrocities committed during the group's insurgency.

Joint Counter-Operations with the DRC against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)⁵³

Uganda and the DRC in recent years increased joint military operations against the ADF, an extremist group that has conducted attacks in both countries. The operations, Operation Shujaa, have included air and ground raids, intelligence exchange, and synchronized border security to dismantle the group's bases in eastern DRC. The operations have been commanded by Ugandan military officers with coordination from their DRC counterparts.

3.4. Case Studies of Uganda's Military Interventions

The Congo Wars (1997–2003)

Uganda's intervention in the Congo Wars began in 1997 in the First Congo War and accelerated in the Second Congo War (1998–2003). Uganda, along with Rwanda, was in alliance with the rebel groups against Laurent-Désiré Kabila's and later Joseph Kabila's government. The official pretext was national security—ridding the country of anti-

⁵²Ex-commander of a Ugandan rebel group has been sentenced to 40 years in prison
<https://apnews.com/article/thomas-kwoyelo-ugandan-rebel-commander-8a4dc9d8a15f805bbb6620bc495e6e24>

⁵³ Operation Shujaa https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Shujaa?(accessed on 5th May,2025)

Ugandan insurgent groups like the ADF and LRA that had strongholds in eastern Congo⁵⁴.

Yet, Ugandan military presence led to charges of economic exploitation and illegal extraction of resources. The International Court of Justice in *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda)* (2005) held that Uganda intruded on the sovereignty of the DRC and committed human rights abuses and resource plundering.

Uganda and AMISOM (2007–Present)

Uganda was the initial country to contribute troops under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007. The mission aimed at stabilizing the Somali government against the rebel group Al-Shabaab⁵⁵. Uganda has remained a front-run troop-contributing country. This arrangement has had a great effect on Uganda for instance it has enhanced relations with the African Union and Western allies, such as the United States and European Union⁵⁶, it has also enhanced UPDF capacity and regional reputation.

Operation in South Sudan (2013–2016).

In response to the December 2013 South Sudan civil war, Uganda deployed troops to support President Salva Kiir against rebels led by Riek Machar. Uganda justified its action as defense of nationals and investments and regional stability (Lomo, 2014).

This operation has had a great Impact on Uganda for instance there has been a decline in relations with Sudan and diplomatic prudence by IGAD, Affirmation of Uganda's

⁵⁴ Prunier, G. (2009). *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe*. Oxford University Press.

⁵⁵ Williams, P. D. (2015). Fighting for Peace in Somalia: AMISOM's Seven Strategic Challenges. *Journal of International Affairs*, 68(2), 147–162.

⁵⁶ • Fisher, J. (2012). Managing donor perceptions: Contextualizing Uganda's 2011 elections. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 6(2), 227–245.

strategic interest in the South Sudan peace process and lastly Uganda's dual role as peace broker and military actor raised ethical issues.⁵⁷

3.5. Motivations for Uganda's Military Alliances

Uganda's participation in military blocs across the East and Central African regions is fueled by a complex bundle of motivations that extend beyond current national security. The motivations can be categorized into four interrelated themes: national security imperatives, regional power, economic and strategic interests, and an aspiration for international legitimacy and assistance.

National Security Interests

At its core, one of the primary forces motivating Uganda's security alignments is the enduring threat posed by non-state armed groups operating within and along its borders. Foremost are the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an Islamist rebel group once based in western Uganda but now heavily established in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which has operated until recently in northern Uganda. Both have called for an energetic and regional security strategy. These nations have historically made use of permeable borders, requiring coordinated cross-border military incursions and intelligence-sharing pacts with neighboring countries. Uganda's interactions with the DRC, South Sudan, and even the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) illustrate this focus on preventive and multilateral security arrangements⁵⁸.

Regional Hegemony and Influence

Besides defense, Uganda also seeks to be a regional powerbroker in East and Central Africa. The Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) has also been used as a tool of foreign policy, particularly in politically unstable states like South Sudan, where Uganda has pursued military intervention to protect allied governments and influence post-conflict

⁵⁷ Rolandsen, Ø.H. (2015). *Guerrilla Government: Political Changes in the Southern Sudan during the 1990s*. Nordic Africa Institute.

⁵⁸ Schomerus, M. (2007). *The Lord's Resistance Army in Sudan: A History and Overview*. Small Arms Survey.

state-building⁵⁹. Through the forceful military role, Uganda attempts to shape political developments and present itself as a regional security guarantor. This regional hegemony ambition is further seen in Uganda's membership in regional organizations such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Standby Force (EASF)⁶⁰.

Economic and Strategic Interests

Uganda's military deployments further seek to protect its economic interests, notably access to infrastructure and natural resources in conflict-affected areas. The DRC, for instance, has had its military ventures traced to securing trade routes and access to minerals, particularly during the late 1990s and early 2000s when the Congo wars were waged. In South Sudan too, the UPDF has been dispatched to secure oil fields and trade routes crucial for Uganda's export-driven economy. These activities are often conducted under the cover of peacekeeping or counter-insurgency but for dual ends of economic gain and strategic access.⁶¹

International Legitimacy and Aid

International missions of regional peacekeeping, especially in Somalia under AMISOM, by Uganda have helped enhance its global legitimacy and earn bilateral and multilateral military assistance. Its collaboration with U.S.-led counter-terrorism operations in Africa has positioned Uganda as a focal security ally, and it has been compensated with increased military appropriations, training, and hardware under the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and related anti-terrorism programs. Such achievements not only enhance the UPDF's capacities but also increase Uganda's diplomatic status in global and regional meetings⁶².

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⁶⁰ Branch, A. (2011). *Displacing Human Rights: War and Intervention in Northern Uganda*. Oxford University Press.

⁶¹Mwenda, A. (2010). Uganda's Politics and Regional Security. *The Independent (Uganda)*.

⁶² Boswell, A. (2014). Counter-terrorism and military cooperation in Africa: The case of Uganda. *African Security Review*, 23(2), 120-131.

3.6. Impacts on Uganda's Foreign Relations

Foreign military memberships and regional interventions by Uganda have had significant implications on its diplomatic relationships on both positive and negative fronts. As much as nation has been elevated on the global scene and formed strategic relationships, it has also come under criticism and tension, mainly with neighboring countries.

Positive Impacts

Enhanced Bilateral Relations

Uganda's active participation in peacekeeping missions and its strategic position in the Great Lakes region have earned it stronger relations with major world powers such as the United States, United Kingdom, and China. Such relations have attracted increased military assistance, technical assistance, and development aid, particularly in exchange for Uganda's contribution to regional security and counter-terrorism efforts⁶³.

Regional Leadership Role

Through conflict mediation, in this case, in Somalia under AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia), Uganda has positioned itself as an East African stabilizing force. Its assertive military diplomacy has enhanced its regional profile in bodies like the African Union and IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development), giving Uganda a voice regarding setting peace and security policies.⁶⁴

Prestige and Military Diplomacy

Uganda's deployment of the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) in multinational peacekeeping operations has enhanced its military reputation. This has been manifested in greater influence in regional security circles and greater training cooperation with foreign military institutions. The professionalism exhibited by Ugandan soldiers in missions such as AMISOM has led to greater diplomatic influence and visibility on the global stage.

⁶³ Fisher, 2013(supra).

⁶⁴ Williams, 2015(supra).

Negative Implications

Worsened Border Relations with Neighbors:

Ugandan military forays into countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan have sometimes generated diplomatic tensions. Allegations of interference in internal conflicts and unauthorized military intervention heightened suspicion and border tensions. These actions have sometimes been perceived as Uganda pursuing national interests in the guise of regional peacekeeping.

International Reputation and Human Rights Issues:

Uganda has been condemned by international bodies for its conduct in foreign military interventions. The 2005 ICJ judgment accused Uganda of human rights violations and illegal resource exploitation in its involvement in the war in the DRC. Such accusations have tarnished Uganda's image and left it open to legal and diplomatic criticism.

Aid Dependency and Policy Autonomy:

Uganda's diplomatic realignment with Western donors, even if economically beneficial, has helped to raise concerns regarding lost foreign policy autonomy. Excessive dependence on aid, particularly from countries with vested geopolitical interests, has the potential to compel Uganda to conform to foreign agendas, sometimes at the expense of its national interests or regional solidarity⁶⁵.

3.7. Case study of the case of DRC v Uganda⁶⁶.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) v. Uganda, or Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda), is a landmark international legal case tried by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). It involves Uganda's armed intervention in the DRC during the late 1990s and early 2000s. This case has had colossal implications for Uganda's foreign relations and military affiliations, particularly in the Great Lakes region and global organizations.

⁶⁵Fisher, 2012(supra).

⁶⁶ DRC V UGANDA(2005).

Background of the case

The dispute traces its origin from the First Congo War (1996–1997) and the Second Congo War (1998–2003) and the subsequent intervention of Uganda, Rwanda, and other regional players in Congolese domestic affairs. Uganda supported rebels such as the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) and Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) to counter against aggressive forces such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Ugandan rebel group in eastern Congo. Uganda deployed its military into eastern DRC, ostensibly to defend national security, but also engaged in military occupation and allegedly benefited from Congolese natural resources.

Some of the findings were crucial for the ICJ:

Against Uganda:

Violations of sovereignty: Uganda was found to have violated the territorial integrity of the DRC by its military intrusion.

Use of force not in accordance with international law: Uganda's intervention in eastern Congo was deemed an act of aggression.

Violations of international humanitarian law: Ugandan troops were involved in looting, killing, and exploitation of natural resources.

Occupation of Ituri: Uganda was occupying in some parts as an occupying power.

Against DRC

The Court further ruled that the DRC had also breached diplomatic norms by attacking the Ugandan Embassy in Kinshasa and humiliating Ugandan diplomats.

Reparation:

In 2022, the ICJ awarded the DRC \$325 million damages against Uganda for:

Loss of life (\$225 million)

Property damage (\$40 million)

Exploitation of natural resources (\$60 million)

Effect of the case of DRC v Uganda on Uganda's military alliances & foreign relations.

Regional Relations and Alliances

Strained Relationship with the DRC: Though both countries have been cooperating in recent years (notably against the ADF rebels), trust remains fragile. The ruling highlighted the risks of unilateral military intervention.

Change of Approach: Uganda moved from acting unilaterally to cooperative military operations like the "Operation Shujaa" (2021)⁶⁷, a joint operation with DRC against the ADF.

Tensions with Rwanda: Not a direct party in the ICJ case, Rwanda was nevertheless also active in eastern Congo. Uganda's conflict with Rwanda regarding rebel alliances (e.g., RNC) complicated its strategic positioning in the Great Lakes region.

International Image and Diplomacy

Human Rights Concerns: The case damaged Uganda's international image regarding human rights and commitment to international law.

Diplomatic Pressure: Western nations and international organizations increased pressure on Uganda's foreign interventions and domestic governance.

Financial Implications: The \$325 million judgment is a heavy burden, especially given Uganda's developing economy.

Foreign Policy Realignment

Increased Prudence in Military Interventions: Since the ruling, Uganda has chosen diplomatic and multilateral avenues, engaging more through African Union, ICGLR (International Conference on the Great Lakes Region), and UN mechanisms.

⁶⁷ SUPRA.

Prioritizing Security Cooperation: Uganda sets a positive emphasis on joint anti-terrorism and anti-insurgency missions to advance international counter-terrorism necessities and justify the foreign deployment of its military.

Pan-African and Multilateral Diplomacy

Uganda has promoted African-led solutions to African problems at times also serving as a regional peace broker. Its reputation has been marred by its controversial past track record of conflict engagement in the context of the DRC.

In a nutshell, the ICJ case of DRC v. Uganda remains a landmark in international law and African geopolitics. For Uganda, the incident resulted in a reorientation of its foreign policy and defense strategy, compelling it to become more collaborative with neighbors and international organizations, even as it maintains asserting strategic interests in regional security.

Conclusion

The Ugandan interventions are a realist blend of national security needs, economic interests, and aspirations for regional influence. While interventions and alliances have yielded strategic rewards, they expose Uganda to legal, ethical, and diplomatic exposures. A strategy that looks forward should give paramountcy to multilateralism, regional consensus, and sovereignty in order to assure diplomatic balance and legitimacy.

CHAPTER 4.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

4.1. Summary of Findings.

The study examined the roles of Uganda's military alliances in its foreign relations and how they influence and make them stronger, particularly in regional security collaboration, peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and defense pacts. The findings are summarized as follows:

Strengthening Regional Security Ties.

Uganda's participation in regional security blocs such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF), has significantly improved relations with other regional countries. These blocs have facilitated confidence-building and common security interests, especially in addressing transnational threats.

Peacekeeping as a Diplomatic Tool.

Uganda's active participation in international peace support operations has elevated its status in the international community. Its contribution of troops to AMISOM and UN missions has rendered the country a viable security partner, attracting diplomatic attention from important international actors like the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union.

Strategic Bilateral Military Partnerships.

Uganda has entered into bilateral military cooperation agreements with several countries, including the United States, China, Russia, and Israel. These partnerships have led to military aid, training, and joint exercises, which have also fostered closer diplomatic and economic ties.

Counterterrorism and Foreign Aid.

Uganda's status as a frontline state in leading counterterror operations in East Africa has earned it foreign military and development assistance. The country's cooperation with the United States under the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund and related initiatives has reasserted its geopolitical relevance.

Challenges and Criticisms.

Despite these gains, Uganda's military alignments have been faulted, such as allegations of human rights abuses by its troops abroad for instance in DRC in 2005⁶⁸ and concerns over the militarization of its foreign policy. Its actions have also periodically created tensions with non-aligned neighbors or with domestic opposition.

Conclusions

Uganda's military partnerships have become a central instrument of its foreign policy, both serving strategic and diplomatic interests. Uganda has improved its international image and secured important bilateral and multilateral backing by undertaking peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and regional defense coalitions. The partnerships have not only increased security in the region but also strengthened Uganda's ties to powerful nations and institutions.

Nevertheless, the excessive focus on military cooperation as a tool of diplomacy is risky, particularly where governance and accountability are not aligned with international standards. Uganda must balance her military endeavors with stronger civilian diplomacy and institutional reforms to render her foreign policy holistic and sustainable.

⁶⁸ Supra.

4.2. Recommendations.

Based on the above findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

Strengthen Civilian Oversight and Transparency.

Uganda should strengthen democratic oversight of its military alliances for more transparency, accountability, and alignment with international human rights standards. This would diminish criticism and enhance credibility in international forums.

Diversify Foreign Policy Instruments.

Although military diplomacy has served Uganda well, Uganda must invest in economic, cultural, and environmental diplomacy to diversify foreign policy instruments and forge more diverse and strong international relationships.

Strengthen Regional Institutions

Uganda should actively promote the institutional capacity of regional bodies such as the EASF and IGAD so that military collaboration is synchronized with broader regional integration and development goals.

Review and Update Military Agreements.

There should be periodic review of existing bilateral and multilateral military agreements to ensure that they remain mutually beneficial and aligned with Uganda's long-term national interests.

Promote Inclusive National Debate of Foreign Commitments.

Greater domestic participation and transparency in Uganda's foreign military adventures would increase national consensus and constrain domestic opposition to its international military actions.

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