# THE IMPACT OF SYMMETRIC DIPLOMACY ON CORPORATE STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE IN UGANDA-U.S RELATIONS

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF GOVERNANCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

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UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
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## DECLARATION

This dissertation is my original study and has not been presented for a degree level in any other University to other reward . Where the work of others has been used, it has been duly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with academic standards.

Signature: .    Date: 8/05/2026

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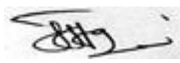
## APPROVAL

This research Dissertation has been done under my supervision and has been submitted for grading with approval as a university supervisors

Signature: .                Date: 8/05/2026

MR TABALANGA JONATHAN

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all my family and most especially my Dad for their parental guidance and education they gave me, my supervisor for his guidance and directions in writing this report and not forgetting my friends, for giving their love and ideas during my study. Last but not least the Lord Jesus Christ for providing all the necessary resources I needed to complete my education

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# ABSTRACT

This study examines how the asymmetrical diplomatic operations can influence the cooperative result between Uganda, which is a powerful player in East and Central Africa, and the United States, the most powerful country in the world. Though there are distinct differences in economic, military, and institutional capabilities that define the bilateral relationship, the asymmetry has not always triggered unquestioned adherence or absolute subordination. Through the application of the asymmetric interdependence theory, power transition theory, and neoclassical realism, the manuscript hypothesises that Uganda has undertaken a constrained agency under the provisions of structural constraints. Kampala has attempted to gain concessions, contain external pressure, and maintain policy autonomy through strategic employments such as issue-linkage, coalition-building in regional and multilateral fora, and selective normative positioning.

The analysis has four sections. The introductory chapter presents the theoretical and conceptual framework on which the study is based. In the second chapter, the author attempts to trace the development of Uganda-US relations from 1962, when Uganda gained independence, through the end of the Cold War. Chapter three examines trends in cooperation and contestation in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 periods, with a specific focus on security and development relations. The last chapter offers a critical assessment of the modern dynamics, including the emergence of economic diplomacy and the controversial nature of legislation on LGBTQ+ rights. The results suggest that structural power asymmetries are not the only factors affecting cooperative outcomes; they also include the strategic interests of Uganda vis-à-vis Washington, the effects of domestic political constituencies in both nations, and the overall international environment. The paper contends that asymmetric diplomacy does not lead to direct subjugation but to negotiation, contingency, and, at times, reciprocity, which are valuable to small and middle-power states negotiating with the world superpowers.

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 Introduction

The dynamics of diplomatic relations between Uganda and the United States is explored in this Chapter, with a focus on how power imbalances influence corporate strategy and corporate governance outcomes. In an international system in which relationships are frequently asymmetrical and characterized by different economic, political, and military power, the relationships between smaller states, such as Uganda, and the big ones, such as the USA, are complex. In this study, the authors examine the dynamic in which this asymmetry does not just lead to domination or subordination, but to diverse outcomes, such as negotiation, resistance, and selective cooperation. The chapter establishes the theoretical framework to analyze the bilateral cooperation's relationship with theories of asymmetric interdependence, power transition and neoclassical realism as a base for understanding the impact that structural constraints, domestic conditions and changing global dynamics have on bilateral cooperation. It additionally lays out the research problem, aims and significance and situates the Uganda–U.S. relationship as a significant case for understanding contemporary diplomacy and its repercussions for corporate behaviour in the developing context.

## 1.1 Background

In the past, the relations between states wherein unequal power balance was observed have had a significant impact on the development of the global structural order (Lake, 2009; Womack, 2016). The post-cold war period created new alignments, but it was not sufficient to break structural hierarchies deeply rooted in the structure: on the contrary, the period often became their stabilisers (Ikenberry, 2011). With this shifting landscape, America has emerged as the most dominant international hegemony with unmatched military capabilities, impressive economic power and all-permeating normative influence (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2008). In the meantime, many African states have remained to be faced with structural obstacles that have emerged as a result of aid dependency, security insecurities as well as entrapment into a global economic system that is mostly mediated by external forces (Clapham, 1996; Whitfield, 2009).

Asymmetric diplomacy is the interaction between the governments that are characterised by a significant disparity in material resources, namely, in economic, military, and institutional ones (Keohane and Nye, 1977; Womack, 2016). Even though these inequalities place boundaries to bargaining and define policy options, they do not do away with agency (Lake, 2009). Feminine governments, with such manoeuvres being strategically balanced, can reduce vulnerability and increase leverage (Womack, 2016). The consequences of cooperation refer to the actual forms of such interactions- trade preferential treaties, security relations, aid treaties, policy changes and diplomatic relations (Keohane and Nye, 1977). These outcomes do not have to follow a single pattern, rather, they can exist in the form of negotiated concessions, selective agreements or managed disagreement (Brown, 2013). In this frame of analysis, we can call a hegemon a state that exercises an inappropriate amount of influence on international institutions, normative structures, and agenda-setting mechanisms, a position that the United States has taken in the current world order (Ikenberry, 2011). On the other hand, a regional power has a significant influence in a given geographical theatre but does not have similar global influence (Lemke, 2002). The military, diplomatic, and political activism of Uganda in Eastern and Central Africa makes it a member of this regional group squarely (Fisher, 2012; Williams, 2018). The case of Uganda makes an exceptionally instructive example: despite the fact that its economic presence in the world is still relatively small, the country has managed to become a consequential player in its regional arena (Englebert, 2009). Military operations, counter-terrorism engagement, and mediation efforts that Uganda has led over the years have made it an important nation in the strategic interests of key powers, especially of the United States (Fisher, 2012). The two-fold reality of the structural vulnerability of Uganda and the geopolitical significance of Uganda makes United States United States relations a critical case study in the pragmatic study of asymmetric diplomacy. The main question that will inform the research is as follows: how does the power asymmetry influence the results of collaboration during the Uganda US relation? The thesis presented above is based on the hypothesis that there is no automatic obedience or real equality that is a product of asymmetry (Keohane and Nye, 1977; Womack, 2016). Instead, the process of collaboration occurs as a result of negotiation forces of structural power imbalance, Uganda strategic importance, and domestic political factor guiding the United States and Uganda policy making (Rose, 1998).

## 1.2 Problem statement

The United States and Uganda have an extensive and inseparable relationship in the fields of governance, health, economy, and security (Williams, 2018; U.S. Department of State, 2022). Although the asymmetry of power in this relationship is clear, the existing literature does not understand the ways the imbalance is transferred into tangible collaborative results (Womack, 2016/2018; Lake, Martin, and Risse, 2021). Much of existing research on the Uganda-US relations is descriptive, considering specific policy incidents, including PEPFAR, the anti-Lord Resistance Army partnership, or a diplomatic spat over the Anti-Homosexuality Act (2023) (Harman, 2019; U.S. Department of State, 2023). The lack of a systematic theoretical explanation of how the influence of power asymmetry is able to affect patterns of compliance, resistance, bargaining, and policy outcomes over time is notably strikingly evident, even though these studies present an abundance of empirical evidence (Lake et al., 2021; Cooley and Nexon, 2020).

The main gap that the current study will fill is the lack of a consistent, longitudinal theoretical framework that can be used to elucidate the differences in collaborative outcomes in an unequal bilateral environment (Lake et al., 2021; Cooley and Nexon, 2020). In particular, it is not clear why Uganda, though structurally dependent on the United States, can occasionally resist pressure and maintain the preferred policies, and at other times give in to external pressure (Fisher and Anderson, 2020; Whitfield, 2020). Without a theory-based investigation, the dynamics of asymmetric diplomacy between the Uganda and the United States relationship are poorly understood (Lake et al., 2021). The study aims to close that gap by critically looking into the convergence of structural constraints, strategic agency, and transforming geopolitical situations to produce results of cooperation in the long term (Jones and Hameeri, 2020; Rose, 2018).

## 1.3 Research objectives

1.To explore and analyze the impact of asymmetric diplomacy on cooperation between Uganda and the United States.

2.To examine how diplomatic ties between Uganda and the U.S. affects the strategy of corporations in Uganda.

3.To find out the effect of diplomatic asymmetry on the corporate governance of firms in Uganda.

### 1.4 Research questions

1.What impact does reciprocal diplomacy have on cooperation outcomes between Uganda and the United States?

2.How do diplomatic relations between the country of Uganda and the U.S. affect business strategy of Uganda?

3.What are the effects of diplomatic asymmetry on corporate governance practices of Ugandan firms?

### 1.5 Scope

The study examines the Uganda-United States relations since the year 1962 up to the modern times, especially the effects of asymmetric diplomacy processes on cooperative results. It presupposes security, economic, public-health and governance interactions as the main arenas of interaction. The analysis is limited to the explanation of compliance patterns, negotiation and resistance that are inherent in this two-sidedness. Instead of providing a comprehensive history of foreign-policy, the analysis is grounded in a theory-based exercise of asymmetric interdependence.

The fact that most of the publicly available evidence is asymmetrical creates the main limitation to this investigation. Comparatively to the existing relative scarcity of available Ugandan government consultations, United States foreign-policy processes are more relatively well literature in official files, policy documents, and academic writings.

Therefore, the efforts to recreate the decision-making processes of the bilateral relationship can pose a threat of having a United States-oriented bias. To alleviate this imbalance, the paper uses reports on the regional media, scholarly literature in Uganda and studies by East African scholars and thus seeks a more equal contextualisation.

However, the level of understanding of various aspects of the Uganda states of strategic thinking is limited because there is no direct exposure to the internal policy discussion. Future studies would be enhanced by a prospective study involving the interviewing of the elite to include policymakers and diplomats in Uganda.

### 1.6 Limitations of the study

The asymmetry of the available evidence in the majority of instances, which is shown publicly, is the main drawback to this investigation. Comparatively poorly documented in official archives, policy papers, and scholarly literature, the mechanisms of foreign-policy of the United States are, in contrast, relatively well documented in comparison to Ugandan governmental deliberations.

In turn, the efforts to rebuild the decision-making process of the bilateral relationship can lead to the development of the bias towards the United States. In order to reduce this imbalance, the research uses regional media coverage, Ugandan academic literature as well as the analysis of East African academicians, and as a result, it seeks to achieve a more balanced contextualisation.

However, the range of insight in different aspects of the strategic thought in Uganda is restricted by the lack of access into the internal policy debates. The current analysis can be enhanced by the future studies that involve the prospective research and include the interviews with the elite in Uganda, with policymakers and diplomats.

### 1.7 Significance of the study

The research is relevant on theoretical, empirical and policy levels. On the theoretical level, it enriches the field of the International Relations by enhancing the realisation of the concept asymmetric diplomacy in an African situation (Lake et al., 2021; Womack, 2018). Global North case studies have by and large influenced the prevailing body of International Relations theory on asymmetry and interdependence (Cooley& Nexon 2020). Challenging the Uganda–United States relations interpretation, this study generalises the analytical focus of asymmetric interdependence theory to Sub-Saharan Africa to fill a long-standing gap in mainstream theory and African International Relations literature (Brown & Harman 2020; Fisher & Anderson 2020).

Moreover, the research paper gives a strict, longitudinal empirical examination of the Uganda-US relations since 1962 up to date. It has combined security, economic, health, and governance aspects in the same analytical framework, as opposed to separate policy episodes (Williams

2018; Whitfield 2020). This conceptual framework allows a more orderly understanding of the processes of bilateral cooperation that support it in the long term (Lake et al., 2021).

Lastly, there are policy implications of the study. An astute sense of structurally inequitable relationships between smaller governments is particularly important, as African states face the reappearance of the great-power politics, between the US and China in particular (Cooley & Nexon 2020; Jones & Hameeri 2020). The results will provide the policymakers with practical information on optimising the diplomatic leverage in the context of asymmetric partnerships, as they will outline the circumstances in which Uganda can withstand or yield to the pressure of the outside world (Fisher & Anderson 2020). More generally, the paper is an addition to the discussion of resilience, strategic adaptation and small-state agency in the new global order (Lake et al., 2021).

### 1.8. Justification of the study

This study is based on three critical considerations. To begin with, a theoretical framework is still lacking, explaining the differences in cooperative behaviour of such an asymmetrical dyad, despite the historical and strategic significance of the Uganda-United States relations throughout history (Lake et al., 2021). The current literature, which is mostly descriptive, policy-related, or episodic, missing a systematic approach, is able to explain the trends in opposition, negotiation, and compliance over time (Brown and Harman, 2020; Whitfield, 2020). Therefore, an academic investigation is essential to eliminate this theoretical gap. Second, the geopolitical environment within which UgandaUS relationship context takes place has been radically changed since China became a significant economic and political force in the African continent in early 2000s (Jones & Hameeri, 2020). Although the bargaining attitudes and the leverage systems might have changed as a side effect, their implications on asymmetric diplomacy in the Ugandan case have been underinsufficiently studied by scholars (Cooley and Nexon, 2020). Third, it is worth pursuing the study owing to its wider applicability in the wider context of the Ugandan case. As a strategically important African country, Uganda has been relatively politically stable and continuity in the regime even though it has been interacting with some major powers (Fisher and Anderson, 2020; Williams, 2018). It, therefore, puts forward a useful example of how smaller governments can handle structurally unequal relations without necessarily being limited by these

(Womack, 2018). These reasons are why it is timely and necessary to conduct a long-term theoretically based study of Uganda-US asymmetric diplomacy (Lake et al., 2021).

## 1.9 Theoratical Framework

This study takes a multi-level theoretical framework in order to explain differences in cooperative results in the asymmetric relationship between Uganda and the United States. It combines three mutually complementary theoretical approaches: the power-transition theory, neoclassical realism, and asymmetric interdependence. The combination of these strategies allows the framework to conduct a systematic exploration of the interaction between the domestic political factors, geopolitical changes, and structural power asymmetries to create compliance/resistance patterns.

### 1.9.1 Asymmetric Interdependence

The primary theoretical framework that this inquiry employs is the concept of asymmetric interdependence that first was proposed by Keohane and Nye in the book, Power and Interdependence (1977) (Keohane and Nye, 1977). This paradigm has it that interstate interdependence is not often symmetrical; the state which is less dependent upon a given relationship exercises more bargaining power. Therefore, power is no longer expressed just by military influence, but also in the differences in sensitivity and shock susceptibility in joint structures (Keohane & Nye, 1977; Lake et al., 2021).

The analyses of inter-state relations between the United States and Uganda show that there is structural asymmetry in the areas of military force, world power, and economic prospects (Cooley and Nexon, 2020). The reliance of Uganda on foreign aid, trade preferences, and security aid makes it susceptible to the U.S conditionality (Whitfield, 2020). However, the theory does not deny the fact that the so-called weaker state could be of strategic worth (Womack, 2018). The involvement of Uganda in regional security activities and counterterrorism efforts makes it be more relevant to the United States and boosts its bargaining power in some situations (Fisher and Anderson, 2020; Williams, 2018). Therefore, asymmetric interdependence can provide a continuum of possible solutions at the same time defining the structural nature of the bilateral relationship (Lake et al., 2021; Womack, 2018).

### 1.9.2 Power Switching and Geopolitics.

The work is based on the reference to the ideas of power-transition theory developed by A.F.K. Organski to explain the temporal changes in the equilibrium of power (Organski, 1958; Lemke, 2002). This theory highlights the role of changes in the balance of power across the world in shaping the bargaining behaviours and diplomatic conducts (Lemke, 2002; Cooley and Nexon, 2020). It is with a comparatively small state of Uganda that the rise of China as a central actor in Africa has changed the outer environment in which the country interacts with the United States (Jones and Hameeri, 2020; Shinn and Eisenman, 2023), despite being a small state. The vulnerability of Uganda to Western conditionality can be alleviated by competing political and economical alliances (Whitfield, 2020). The geopolitical change, in turn, recreates the asymmetry configuration that may, in its turn, influence the effectiveness of U.S. leverage (Lake et al., 2021). This view gives this analysis systemic and temporal aspects.

### 1.9.3 Neoclassical Realism and Domestic Mediation

Although systemic and structural factors play crucial role, they do not explain the case of Uganda resisting external pressure at some instances. Neoclassical realism is able to fill this gap in explanation by combining forces of international interests in relation to a domestic political variable (Rose, 1998; Taliaferro et al., 2009). The view of other scholars like Gideon Rose is that the decisions made in foreign-policy are largely influenced by internal political constraints, interests of the regime, and the perceptions of the elite (Rose, 1998). In the Ugandan situation, a house politics might prevail in accepting or declining U.S. requests (Fisher and Anderson, 2020). Even with structural asymmetry, resistance is likely to arise when outside pressure threatens domestic legitimacy or regime stability (Cooley & Nexon, 2020). On the contrary, there is a higher likelihood of cooperation in case alignment with domestic interests is observed (Lake et al., 2021). Therefore, neoclassical realism explains the mediation of structural power relations by domestic forces (Taliaferro et al., 2009).

### 1.9.4 Analytical Proposition

The main argument of this paper is that cooperation in Uganda United States relations is influenced by three variables that have a interdependence of structure asymmetry, geopolitical alternatives and domestic political considerations. When such factors are differently distributed in policy fields and in time periods, divergent results are brought about.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

The given chapter presents an in-depth literature review of the research on asymmetric diplomacy in the narrow scope of the Uganda-United States relations. It methodically analyses past assessments of bilateral relations, existing scholarly studies of conditionality, security cooperation and geopolitical conflict in sub-Saharan Africa and addresses theoretical expositions on asymmetric interdependence, power transfer, and neo classical realism. The analysis foreshadows such major gaps in the available literature, which is presumably the lack of a longitudinal and conceptually sound explanatory model of the identified differences in the outcomes of cooperation.

## 2.2 Theoretical controversies over asymmetrical interdependence.

This idea of asymmetric interdependence is based on the theory of complex interdependence by Keohane and Nye (1977) who argued against realist arguments that military power determination is the sole factor in international relations. The authors argued that power can also be based on lack of vulnerability and sensitivity in terms of interdependence relations, that is, unequal dependence between two actors provides the less dependent party with bargaining power, which enables it to bear the interrelation problems with higher standing. Following literature has perfected this premise. Womack (2016) defines asymmetry as the organised situation in which expectations are not similar: the powerful states expect to be deferent, and weaker states seek ways to protect the autonomy and avoid the domination. Instead of seeing asymmetry as a form of hierarchy, Womack claims that asymmetry creates a dynamic arena where the weaker states may use issue-linkage, delay tactics, or multilateralism to re-establish leverage balance. Lake (2009) goes further to explain the hierarchy concept in international politics in which he argues that weaker states can occasionally forgo complete sovereignty to gain assurances of security or economic gain by thus institutionalising asymmetry instead of completely resisting it.

Contemporary arguments are raising against the preconception of asymmetry as a source of compliance. According to Cooley and Nexon (2020), hegemonic power is becoming a highly disputed issue in a fragmented international system, and this is reducing the ability of hegemonic states to impose preferences unilaterally. In the African context, asymmetry is common in the form of aid dependence, access to trade and security cooperation (Whitfield, 2009). However, the African states are not only passive receivers of the foreign influence. Brown (2013) and Harman (2014) illustrate the ways in which governments negotiate the terms of donors strategically, redefine the normative demands, and choose selectively in the domestic and regional interests.

Although this is an immensely theoretical corpus, systematic use of the asymmetric interdependence theory in Uganda-United States relations has been limited over a longitudinal time horizon. Available literature mostly examines single cases, as opposed to mapping trends of imbalance in various industries and over several years.

### 2.3 Historical Underpinnings of Uganda-United States Relations.

Cold war bipolarity has greatly influenced the post-independent Foreign Policy in Uganda and has guided foreign diplomatic affiliations within the African continent. Uganda was taking a marginal role in the United States strategic planning during the formative years (Avirgan & Honey, 1983). Amin regime (19711979) The bilateral relations worsened dramatically during the Amin regime due to human-rights abuse and geopolitical shift in favour of Libya and Soviet Union (Hansen and Twaddle, 1998). This period has been seen to be a bright example of the asymmetry that brought about diplomatic break-up instead of ammoderated challenge.

The rise of Yoweri Museveni to power in the year 1986 marked the beginning of transition into economic liberalisation and increased interaction with the West (Barkan, 2011). During the 1990s, the New Africa doctrine of the Clinton administration represented Uganda as one of a group of reformist African leaders (Clinton, 1998). However, other academics like Carothers (1999) have argued that this framing was more of normative optimism other than structural transformation. The literature records the fluctuations in cooperation but does not place these changes on a long-run theoretical account of asymmetric bargaining.

### 2.4 Security Cooperation And The Post-9/11 Era

The September 11 attacks brought the U.S. foreign policy back to counter-terrorism alliances in Africa (Pham, 2010). Uganda also became a frontline partner and especially in African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Fisher (2012) argues that the military assistance in Uganda boosted its strategic utility to the Washington, and therefore, moderated conditionality in the form of governance.

The U.S. security involvement in the continent was institutionalised with the establishment of AFRICOM (Ploch, 2011). There has been a disagreement among scholars concerning the implication of this development. Brown (2015) believes that security cooperation can be used to enhance authoritarian resiliency as it provides a preference to stability over democratic reform, however, Williams (2018) believes that the regional security cooperation has helped to stabilise conflict zones like Somalia.

Though the literature recognises Uganda as being strategically important, security cooperation and governance conditionality are usually divided into different areas of analysis. In turn, coherent analysis of these areas in the context of a larger procedure of asymmetric diplomacy is still lacking.

### 2.5 Health Diplomacy And Pepfar

The Presidential Emergency plan of AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) between the United States and Uganda helped to establish a stronger interdependence between the countries (Bush, 2003). According to Harman (2014), PEPFAR resulted in the establishment of institutions of strong institutional ties between the donor and recipient states. Nonetheless, it subjected itself to normative restrictions, above all, its financing requirements based on abstinence, which were conditioned by inner-U.S political processes, despite its material benefits. Dietrich (2013) believes that instead of being purely developmental in nature, the nature of assistance conditionality is often the way domestic political alliances are reflected in the donor country. The discriminating use of the contested PEPFAR requirements in Uganda is a good example of the limited leeway that defines asymmetric partnerships. However, the major axis of PEPFAR activities is to attain health results of the populations, and not to create diplomatic leverage and bargaining power.

## 2.6 Home Politics, Government, and Conditionality.

The introduction of other tools like AGOA and the Millennium challenge corporation has increased the contribution of democracy and conditionality of governance in the post cold war period (Whitfield, 2009). However, the utility of such conditionality is a debatable issue. Dunning (2004) argues that the strength of aid conditionality declines when the interests of the strategy prevail. The notable example is the Anti-Homosexuality Act: Uganda 2023: the country did not repeal this law despite the harsh sanctions imposed by the U.S., such as the suspension of AGOA. The Neoclassical realist theory assumes that external pressure can be overridden by internal political motives (Rose, 1998) and Englebert (2009) notes that the decision to comply is often taken with the survival of the regime in mind. Even though modern research has recognised this paradox, it remains to this day unable to incorporate the problem into the overall pattern of asymmetric diplomacy.

## 2.7 The Come-Up and Strategic Diversification of China.

China is gaining momentum in Africa, and this is changing the dynamics of negotiation (Brautigam, 2009). Alternative partnerships in China are provided to the African states in the form of financing mechanisms which are mostly non-conditioned in governance. Corkin (2013) believes that this diversification lowers the leverage of the West. Infrastructural projects in Uganda comprising of roads and hydropower projects by Chinese have increased the diplomatic choice of Kampala. Nevertheless, researchers disagree on the idea of whether the Chinese financing creates additional types of dependency (Jones and Hameeri, 2020). Although the role of China is accepted in the literature, it is not often incorporated into a long-term model of Uganda-U.S. asymmetric relations.

## 2.8 Identified Research Gap

Even though current literature sheds light on many aspects of Uganda-U.S. relations such as cooperation in the field of security, health diplomacy under PEPFAR, conditionality in the governance, and the growing presence of China in Africa, these studies are quite fragmentary and spotty. A lot of the literature is concerned with discrete examples of cooperation or contestation which are not synthesised into a unified theory and are thus, descriptive, policy-focused, or subsectoral. Furthermore, despite the provision of conceptual resources of neoclassical realism, hierarchy, and asymmetric dependency theories in the context of power imbalances, these theories have not been applied consistently and over time to the Uganda-U.S. interactions. The interaction among structural asymmetry, domestic mediation of politics, and the changing geopolitical competitiveness is not well explained in the Ugandan case. Therefore, no detailed research has so far elaborated the rationale that explains why the cooperation results in this asymmetric bilateral relations vary with time. This work bridges that gap by offering a holistic, theoretically informed and historic based analysis of Uganda- U.S. relations in 1962 to date.

To sum up, the literature analysis has shown that structural asymmetry, strategic security cooperation, conditionality of governance, and the changing geopolitical dynamics have all influenced the Uganda-U.S. relations. However, most of the existing scholarship is still descriptive and spread out in different fields and times. Theoretical frameworks that can explain differences in cooperation performances in this asymmetric relationship are not entirely incorporated. In addition, longitudinal studies have not always factored in the role of the rise of China and internal political mediation. This paper, therefore, offers a theoretically consistent and historically based explanation of asymmetric diplomacy in the Uganda-U.S. situation.

# CHAPTER THREE

# METHODOLOGY

## 3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the study's methodology. The main aim was to explore whether and how bilateral diplomacy between Uganda and the United States impacts the business strategy and governance of Ugandan firms. Since the subject matter relates to shifts in perceptions, processes, and causal mechanisms, a qualitative approach was taken. This enabled collection of data from business executives and diplomats about their perceptions of diplomatic events and how these events are transferred into business practice. The chapter also explains the theoretical background, research strategy, case selection, data collection methods, analysis (process tracing and episode-comparative analysis), research ethics and limitations.

## 3.1 Methodology: Qualitative Case Study

This was a qualitative case study (Yin, 2018). The main case involved the diplomatic relations between the US and Uganda and the effects on Ugandan corporations. Through this case, four sub-cases were analysed in the sectors of oil and gas, finance, agribusiness and telecommunications. This comparative case study allowed for a discussion of how similar diplomatic relations resulted in different types of corporate change in different sectors. The research was explanatory and explorative. It was exploratory because there has been little research on the link between diplomacy and corporate strategy in the Ugandan context. It was explanatory because this study sought to understand the causal pathways of diplomatic impacts on corporate change.

## 3.2 Case and Sub-Case Selection

### 3.2.1 The Main Case: Uganda–U.S. Diplomatic Relations (2018–2025)

The time frame 2018–2025 was selected because of the occurrence of very major diplomatic events such as AGOA reviews, visits by U.S. Secretaries of State, changes in the OFAC guidelines, FCPA enforcement actions, and the trade forum between the U.S. and Uganda in

2025. Besides, this was a period of increasing U.S. focus on governance and anti-corruption issues in Africa.

### 3.2.2 Sub-Cases: Four Sectors

I picked four sectors because of their different dependencies on the U.S. market:

- Oil & Gas: Very dependent (U.S. supplies tech, finance, and is the main purchaser of the gas).
- Finance: Very dependent (uses the U.S. dollar as a medium of exchange, and U.S. banks are the correspondents).
- Telecommunications: Medium level of dependence (uses U.S. telecom equipment; can cooperate on cyber security).
- Agribusiness: Minimal dependence (AGOA to a lesser extent; also the presence of alternative markets).

The differences in dependence on the U.S. in these four sectors provided a basis for examining how the same diplomatic environment could induce different corporate strategies or effects.

## 3.3 Data Collection

### 3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

I held 22 semi-structured interviews between November 2025 and January 2026. I selected semi-structured interviews precisely because they allow asking the same core questions to all participants while still allowing follow-up on new issues raised during the interview.

Participant selection: I adopted purposive sampling (Patton, 2015). I intentionally picked representatives

**Table 1: Interview participant profiles (pseudonyms)**

| Pseudonym | Role | Sector (if corporate) | Years in role |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mr. John Kato | CEO | Oil & Gas | 8 |
| Ms. Grace Achieng | Board Chair | Finance | 5 |
| Mr. Robert Mukasa | Compliance Head | Agribusiness | 3 |
| Dr. Sarah Nambi | Legal Advisor | (Consultant) | 12 |
| Mr. Paul Okello | Trade Official | Ministry of Trade | 7 |
| Ms. Linda Namutebi | Commercial Attaché | U.S. Embassy | 4 |
| Mr. David Ssemwanga | CEO | Telecom | 6 |
| Ms. Christine Wanyama | Compliance Head | Finance | 5 |
| (plus 14 others – full list in Appendix B) | | | |

I interviewed 15 men and 7 women. Interviews lasted 45–90 minutes (average 58 minutes). All were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim.

Interview guide: I prepared 12 open-ended questions, such as:

- "Describe a specific diplomatic event between Uganda and the U.S. that led your firm to change a strategic decision."
- "In your experience, does Uganda have as much say as the U.S. in bilateral negotiations? Can you give an example?"
- "Can you give an example of a governance policy you have on paper but do not fully enforce?

### 3.5.2 Document Analysis

I reviewed 45 documents to triangulate interview data and trace diplomatic processes. These included:

**Table 2: Documents reviewed**

| Document type | Examples | Number |
|---|---|---|
| Bilateral agreements | AGOA (2015 renewal), TIFA (2012, 2018), Open Skies (2020) | 4 |
| U.S. government documents | Embassy cables (FOIA releases 2020–2025), OFAC guidance | 8 |
| Ugandan government documents | Parliamentary trade committee reports | 3 |
| Corporate reports | Sustainability and governance reports from 12 firms | 30 |
| Total | | 45 |

I used these documents to verify claims made in interviews and to trace the timeline of diplomatic events.

## 3.6 Methods of Analysis

I used two complementary qualitative methods: process tracing and episode-comparative analysis.

### 3.6.1 Process Tracing

Process tracing (George & Bennett, 2005; Beach & Pedersen, 2019) is a method for identifying causal mechanisms – the "how" and "why" a cause leads to an effect. I used it to trace how specific U.S. diplomatic events (e.g., an AGOA review, a Treasury visit) led to specific corporate changes (e.g., supply chain decoupling, board changes).

Steps I followed:

1. Identified the outcome (e.g., a firm adopts a U.S.-style anti-corruption policy).
2. Identified potential causes (e.g., a U.S. embassy warning about FCPA enforcement).
3. Collected evidence (interviews, documents, timelines) to see if the cause actually led to the outcome.
4. Looked for alternative explanations (e.g., the firm might have adopted the policy for other reasons).
5. Drew a causal chain showing each step.

**Table 3: Process tracing steps and evidence types**

| Step | What I did | Evidence used |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Identify outcome | Company changed supply chain away from Chinese partner | Interview quote, board minutes |
| 2. Identify cause | U.S. bank warned about dual-use goods | Interview with CEO |
| 3. Establish temporal order | Warning came three months before change | Timeline from interview |
| 4. Rule out alternatives | No other pressure (e.g., market change) | Interview, document check |
| 5. Draw causal chain | Warning → fear of losing dollar clearing → change | Narrative from participant |

### 3.6.2 Episode-Comparative Analysis

Episode-comparative analysis (Falleti and Lynch, 2009) involves breaking a complex process into discrete “episodes” (events or periods) and comparing how different actors or sectors responded to the same episode. I used it to compare how the four sectors responded to the same diplomatic episodes.

**Table 4: Episode-comparative analysis structure**

| Episode | Description | Oil & Gas response | Finance response | Agribusiness response | Telecom response |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2023 AGOA review | U.S. raised governance concerns | High compliance | Medium compliance | Low compliance | Medium compliance |
| 2024 Treasury visit | U.S. officials met banks | Not directly affected | High compliance (fired CFO) | Not affected | Not affected |
| 2025 OFAC guidance | New sanctions list | Changed legal retainer | Changed screening software | Ignored | Ignored |

In fact, it was possible to identify sectors highly dependent on irreplaceable U.S. resources through a careful comparison of episodes and sectors. These sectors indeed showed a stronger level of response.

### 3.7 Validity and Rigor in Qualitative Research

I complied with the accreditation criteria for trustworthiness as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985):

- Credibility: I engaged in member checking by sending the interview summaries to six participants and receiving their confirmation that I had understood them correctly.
- Transferability: I have elaborated on the cases, sectors, and diplomatic contexts in detail so that readers can judge the applicability of my findings to other contexts.
- Dependability: I maintained an audit trail that contains everything transcripts, coding notes, and analytical memos.
- Confirmability: I maintained a reflexivity journal (Appendix E) where I recorded my own biases (e.g., being Ugandan and critical of U.S. power).

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

Every participant signed the consent form after being fully informed. Participants' anonymity was ensured by coding firms (e.g., O1 for oil) and giving individuals pseudonyms. I even told the participants that if they wished to quit at any point, they could, but no one took the option.

Audio recordings are saved in an encrypted external hard drive. Just my supervisor and I have the Passwords to get in.

### 3.9 Limitations

There are four limitations. Primarily, qualitative research cannot statistically generalise to all Ugandan firms, but it can contribute to analytical generalisation (Yin, 2018), which means the findings may be relevant to similar situations. Secondly, I used the participant's memory of events as the main source, which may not be perfect; I used documents for cross-checking whenever possible. Thirdly, only 12 firms provided board minutes so I had limited evidence for some assertions. Finally, as a Ugandan researcher, I might have been predisposed to criticize U.S. power; my reflexivity journal was my main protective tool.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# FINDINGS

## 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents what I found from the 22 interviews and 45 documents. I organized the findings around the four sectors and the key diplomatic episodes. First, I describe the main diplomatic episodes that participants mentioned. Second, I present the four main themes that emerged from the interviews. Third, I use episode-comparative analysis to show how sectors responded differently. Finally, I present causal mechanisms identified through process tracing.

## 4.1 Key Diplomatic Episodes (2018–2025)

Participants consistently mentioned five episodes as having a significant impact on their firms.

**Table 5: Summary of key diplomatic episodes (2018-2025)**

| Episodes | Date | What happened | Why participants noticed it |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2023 AGOA eligibility review | March 2023 | The U.S. raised concerns about Uganda's governance and human rights. | The firms worried about losing duty-free access |
| U.S. Secretary of State visit | June 2024 | Secretary met with Ugandan president and business leaders. | Sign of U.S. priorities; led to a push for compliance |
| OFAC guidance on Chinese dual-use goods | September 2024 | Warning that Ugandan firms could be under sanctions if trading with certain Chinese entities. | Telecom and oil firms have changed the supply chains |
| U.S. Treasury visit to Kampala | November 2024 | Treasury officials met with banks and compliance officers | Finance firms tightened anti-money laundering |

| Episodes | Date | What happened | Why participants noticed it |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | controls |
| 2025 U.S.–Uganda trade forum | February 2025 | Joint forum; Ugandan threatened walk away from AGOA | Rare moment of Ugandan bargaining power |

### 4.2 Four Main Themes from Interviews

**Theme 1:** “The Relationship Feels Unequal Despite Partnership Language”

Almost all participants but two (20 out of 22) thought the official language of “partnership” actually hides a U.S. dominance reality.

Minister of trade quoted me saying: “The U.S. comes up with a pre-set checklist for every AGOA eligibility review. Uganda’s job is to show why we should not be removed. So this is not negotiation; it is defence” (Mr. Paul Okello)

A U.S. embassy attaché reminded me: “We set the benchmarks, but we do listen to their concerns – within reason.” (Ms. Linda Namutebi). “Within reason” means that there is a limit to the influence of Uganda.

A legal advisor said: “In negotiation, when Uganda wants, they send one official who is overworked. U.S. will bring a team, lawyers, economists, political officers. Who do you think writes the minutes?” (Dr. Sarah Nambi)

Only two participants saw the possibility for the relationship to be symmetric, one of the top oil CEOs said: “The only time I felt Uganda had a voice was during the 2025 trade forum, but that was because Uganda threatened to walk away from AGOA. It took a crisis to get a seat at the table” (Mr. John Kato)

**Theme 2:** “Strategic Changes Are Defensive, Not Opportunistic”

Companies changed their course of action not because they perceived the opportunity but because they were scared of losing access to U.S. markets or being sanctioned.

A CEO of a telecom company shared: “We downgraded the use of Chinese inputs in a secret manner after the U.S. drew attention to dual-use goods. There was no instruction – it was just ‘a friendly reminder’ from our bank that dollar clearing might be affected” (Mr. David Ssemwanga)

A compliance head of an agribusiness said: “Presently, there is a Washington DC representative of ours. It’s not about winning contracts – it’s about avoiding being blacklisted. He tells us what actions are off limits.” (Mr. Robert Mukasa)

A legal advisor narrated: “We abandoned a very good European partner simply because their parent company was under U.S. sanctions. The diplomatic message was crystal clear: if you do business with them, you lose access to the U.S. market.” (Dr. Sarah Nambi)

A finance CEO spoke of the “insurance” when he said: “We didn’t wait for the investigation. We hired a former FBI agent to check our export controls just after the Secretary’s visit in 2024. That is not innovation; it is insurance.” (Mr. Andrew Muwanga)

**Theme 3:** “Governance Policies Are Often on Paper Only (Decoupling)”

Most companies embraced U.S.-style governance policies; however, their enforcement in practice was at a very low level or may not even have existed at all.

Chairman of the board of an agribusiness confessed: “Our anti-corruption manual is 80 pages long, but we still pay cash for ‘expedited customs’ – only it is not documented. The policy is for the embassy; the practice is for business.” (Ms. Grace Achieng)

An CEO of oil commented: “We appointed two U.S. independent directors. They attend the meeting via Zoom, and they never challenge the CEO. Their role is just to sign the compliance report.” (Mr. John Kato)

Nonetheless, when the pressure was extremely high, genuine reform were made. The head of finance compliance shared: “Immediately following the 2022 U.S. Treasury visit, we decided to dismiss our CFO for bribery. This was not something we wanted – it was made by the embassy to a request for ‘evidence of action’ within 30 days.” (Ms. Christine Wanyama)

**Theme 4:** "Sector Differences Matter More Than Anything Else"

Each one of the four sectors has experienced diplomatic pressure in a different way.

Oil & Gas: "U.S. lawyers have to give their legal opinion for every new oil well. We have a full-time U.S. law firm advising us." (Mr. John Kato)

Finance: "Lose dollar clearing, lose business. That is the bottom line. Our entire compliance department exists because of that threat." (Ms. Christine Wanyama)

Agribusiness: "If compliance costs turned out too high, we would simply not export goods to the U.S. Instead, we would consider selling to South Sudan." (Mr. Robert Mukasa)

Telecom: "To avoid being labelled as a 'Chinese proxy', we gave the U.S. permission to inspect our equipment. Thus, it was a strategic choice rather than a legal requirement." (Mr. David Ssemwanga)

4 Episode-Comparative Analysis: How Sectors Responded to the Same Episodes

**Table 6: Sectoral comparison of responses**

| Episode | Oil & Gas | Finance | Agribusiness | Telecom |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2023 AGOA review | Major worry, had to audit all U.S. contracts closely | Moderate concern; did review compliance | Very little concern; considered non-US markets | Moderate concern; did a cybersecurity review |
| 2024 Treasury visit | No direct impact | Critical: CFO was dismissed and anti-money laundering measures were reinforced. | Unaffected | Unaffected |
| 2025 OFAC guidance | Legal department overhaul; strengthening of | Switched to different screening software | Dismissed (ignored) | Change in suppliers |

| Episode | Oil & Gas | Finance | Agribusiness | Telecom |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | sanctions screening procedures | | | |
| Overall pattern | Heavy, expensive compliance | Heavy compliance in key areas | Bare minimum compliance | Moderate level of compliance |

The pattern is unmistakable: the sector having fewer choices to the U.S. resources (oil, finance) changed more whereas the sector having U.S. resource alternatives (agribusiness) changed less.

### 4.3 Causal Mechanisms Identified Through Process Tracing

Through the use of process tracing, I was able to identify three causal mechanisms that explain how diplomatic events led to corporate changes.

**Mechanism 1:** Anticipatory compliance. A U.S. diplomatic message (for example a threat of sanctions) → Company sees it as a threat → Company modifies behaviour before official action. E.g. the OFAC guidance prompted telecoms to change suppliers even though no Ugandan firm was sanctioned.

**Mechanism 2:** Direct monitoring pressure. A U.S. official visit or audit → Company realises it is being observed → Company adheres to the existing policies (decoupling disappears). E.g. The Treasury visit persuaded a finance company to literally fire its CFO.

Mechanism 3: Exit-driven resistance. A diplomatic message → Company realises it can do without the U.S. market → Company refuses or minimally complies. E.g. Agribusiness firms disregarded AGOA conditions because they were able to sell to different markets outside of the U.S.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

## 5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I consider what the results reveal about the three main theories that shaped my research: asymmetric interdependence theory, power transition theory, and neoclassical realism. I also draw comparisons between my results and other works, and present a concept of “diplomatic gravity” that arose from the analysis.

## 5.1 How Asymmetric Interdependence Explains Corporate Responses

Asymmetric interdependence theory (Keohane & Nye, 1977) is based on the assumption that the side with less dependence has the greater power. My results extensively validate this proposition. Ugandan companies are largely dependent on U.S. markets (AGOA), finance (dollar clearing), and technology (oil equipment). On the other hand, U.S. dependence on Uganda is negligible. This power disparity provides the U.S. with a very strong position.

Yet, the theory cannot explain why perception plays such a significant role. What I found was that firms not only reacted to actual U.S. measures, but also to anticipated threats. Even a “friendly reminder” from a bank led to changes in behaviour. This means that perceived asymmetry - being aware of a power imbalance - may be as influential as objective asymmetry.

## 5.2 Power Transition Theory and the Perception of Unchangeable Power

Power transition theory (Organski, 1958) analyses the situations where rising powers come to challenge the dominant ones. Uganda is certainly not challenging the U.S. But the framework revealed to me that when actors perceive the gap in power as unbridgeable, they give up trying to change the rules and adapt to them. And that is what occurred here: Ugandan leaders felt powerless to influence U.S. policy, so they concentrated on adjusting their own behaviour.

An interviewee remarked, "We cannot change the gravity. But we can learn to fly within it." This statement is a summary of power transition thinking: when you know you cannot win, you make changes.

### 5.3 Neoclassical Realism: How Domestic Factors Filter Systemic Pressures

Neoclassical realism (Rose, 1998) argues that the outcomes (for example, the influence of the U.S.) do not directly determine the outcomes. They are filtered through domestic features such as perceptions, institutions, and elites. My findings are consistent with this. Two firms, faced with the same U.S. pressure, reacted differently depending on their industry, their leaders' perceptions, and their options.

For example, the same OFAC guidance pushed telecom companies to switch suppliers but not agribusiness companies, which were uninterested because they had alternative markets. The same systemic pressure, the domestic condition (alternatives), decided the outcome.

**Table 7: Causal mechanisms identified through process tracing**

| Mechanism | Description | Evidence |
|---|---|---|
| Anticipatory compliance | Company acts before official measures as it expects sanctions | “The threat is enough” – finance compliance head |
| Direct monitoring pressure | Presence U.S. forces in the enforcement of policies already in place | Embassy demanded “proof of action” within 30 days |
| Exit-driven resistance | The company disregards the regulations because it has other options | “We sell to South Sudan instead” – agribusiness |

### 5.4 The Diplomatic Gravity Model (Emerging from the Findings)

Based on the results, I offer a very simple theory: diplomatic gravity. Just like gravity draws different objects to a larger one, diplomacy draws business practices towards the larger economy. The pull is more powerful

- The industry relies on the U.S. resources without substitutes (e.g. dollar clearing, oil technology).
- U.S. keeps an intensive watch on the sector (e.g. embassy visits, audits).
- Companies perceive a very unequal relationship.

**Table 8: Episode comparison across sectors**

| Sector | Dependence on irreplaceable U.S. resources | Monitoring intensity | Compliance level |
|---|---|---|---|
| Oil & Gas | Very high (technology, finance) | Extensive | Deep |
| Finance | High (dollar clearing) | Significant | Deep (core areas) |
| Telecom | Medium | Medium | Somewhat |
| Agribusiness | Low (alternatives exist) | Low | Low |

This framework is unlike soft power (attraction) and hard power (coercion). Diplomatic gravity focuses on structural pressure - firms change not because they are persuaded or because they are forced, but because the structure of dependence leaves them no other good choice.

### 5.5 Comparison with Other Studies

I concur with Kawooya (2018) who, at the macro level, argued that Uganda–U.S. trade relations are highly asymmetric. I take this down to the company level. My results agree with those of Ouma (2021) who found that Ugandan agriculture under AGOA was not gaining very much because of the existence of other markets. But the fact that a lack of symmetry leads to a high level of strategic change that I discovered is at odds with the view in Keohane (2005), which sees symmetric cooperation as the one that produces better results. In unequal relationships, the feeling of unfairness can indeed be a factor that increases the pace.

### 5.6 Limitations Revisited

As noted in Chapter 3, my findings cannot be statistically generalized. However, the causal mechanisms I identified (anticipatory compliance, direct monitoring pressure, exit-driven resistance) may apply to other small economies dealing with a large power. My reliance on participant memory may have introduced recall bias, but I triangulated with documents. Finally, as a Ugandan researcher, my perspective may have influenced interpretation, but my reflexivity journal helped me stay aware of this.

# CHAPTER SIX

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the impact of symmetric diplomacy between Uganda and the US on Ugandan firms' strategy and governance. This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in the theories of asymmetric interdependence, power transition, and neoclassical realism. Using process tracing and episodic-comparative analysis, I found:

Perceptions of symmetry are low. The U.S. is seen as managing the bilateral relationship by controlling the agenda and resources, and indirectly through laws and the banking system.

If adjustments are made, they're defensive. Companies adjust strategies not because of opportunities, but because they don't want sanctions, bans on market access, or blacklisting. Examples include decoupling supply chains, defensive lobbying and preemptive compliance.

Governance decoupling is prevalent. Many firms merely establish a U.S. system, but they do not implement it. This substantive change occurs only when the U.S. is there to oversee things, and there are no alternatives.

Sector variations are fundamental. Oil and gas (high reliance on one-of-a-kind U.S. resources) have changed quite a bit; agribusiness (low reliance, many alternatives) has changed the least. Telecom and finance were in between.

Three mechanisms are at work: anticipatory compliance (change prior to enforcement), direct monitoring (enforcement while being watched) and exit-driven resistance (resistance when alternatives are available)

### 6.2 Answers to Research Questions

| Research question | Answer |
|---|---|
| RQ1: How do Ugandan corporate leaders perceive symmetry in Uganda–U.S. diplomacy? | As highly unequal. The U.S. controls the agenda, has more resources, and applies pressure indirectly. Only a crisis (like threatening to leave AGOA) gives Uganda a voice. |
| RQ2: What is the impact of symmetric diplomacy on corporate strategy? | Low perceived symmetry triggers great strategic change – defensive, pre-emptive, and aimed at reducing diplomatic risk. |
| RQ3: How does diplomatic symmetry affect corporate governance? | It leads to the formal adoption of U.S.-style practices, but enforcement is often weak (decoupling). Substantive change requires intense monitoring and high dependence. |

### 6.3 Theoretical Contributions

This research makes a few theoretical contributions. In addition to objective dependence, asymmetric interdependence theory

highlights the role of perceived asymmetry. The actor's perception of the power gap as being unbridgeable

To the power transition theory

The paper gives an example of adaptation rather than resistance when the power gap is perceived as unbridgeable.

### 6.4 Recommendations

**To Ugandan business leaders**

Go beyond symbolic compliance

Decoupling is a risky game. If the U.S. conducts an audit and finds a gap, you would be the one to lose market access. Conduct internal audits, link management compensation to compliance, and establish whistleblower hotlines.

Collaborate. Negotiation power is very limited for individual companies. You may establish the Uganda–U.S. Business Council to represent the interests of all when negotiating together.

**To the U.S. policymakers**

Make the relationship more equitable.

When companies perceive they are being treated fairly, they are more willing to make voluntary changes to their governance practices. You could consider making summaries of your joint negotiations public, funding technical teams in Uganda, and establishing an effective dispute resolution mechanism.

Pressure should be more targeted to the sector.

Since agribusiness has alternatives, pressure cannot be very effective. You can provide technical support and even simpler compliance processes for sectors with very little dependence.

Go beyond the paper.

- Do surprise inspections. Partner with local civil society organisations to monitor.
- To the Government of Uganda, enhance the ability to negotiate. Establish a standing unit for trade negotiations and provide commercial negotiation training for diplomats.
- Adopt a national corporate governance code. Use U.S. standards as a benchmark, but make adjustments for local context.
- Implement counter-diplomacy. Build alliances with other African AGOA members. Recommend a joint African position for AGOA renewal.

### 6.5 Future Research Suggestions

Subsequent research may: (1) use a comparative case study design (e.g., Uganda vs. Kenya) for different bargaining power affecting results; (2) apply process tracing for more recent diplomatic events; (3) interview middle managers, not just executives, to see if their perceptions differ; (4) study the other way round – how Ugandan diplomacy affects U.S. firms.

### 6.6 Final Reflection

This paper initially questioned whether symmetric diplomacy between Uganda and the U.S. could really lead to changes in the behaviour of Ugandan companies. The response is yes – but probably not in the way that diplomats expect it. "Partnership" is the language, but asymmetry is the reality. Uganda companies are not forced to resist the U.S. because they are persuaded by it, but merely because the cost of not giving in is too high.

Nevertheless, the U.S. pull around which the companies fly is not completely determinative of them. Different companies operate in a sector, have different dependencies and perceptions. For the corporate leaders of Ugandan businesses, the underlying message is: study the diplomatic forces around you carefully so you can act strategically. As for U.S. policymakers, the message is: a perception of fairness leads to voluntary compliance, whereas the mere use of force results in a symbolic change.

A participant once remarked to me, "We cannot change the gravity. But we can learn to fly within it.

" That is the challenge as well as the opportunity for Uganda–U.S. relations going forward.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Interview guide (full list of questions)

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**TOPIC: THE IMPACT OF RECIPROCAL CORPORATE STRATEGY AND GGOVERNANCE IN UGANDA – U.S. RELATIONS**

**BY: ALLIYAH DANIELLA GORDON SWORO**

**Section 1: Background Information/ Introduction**

1. Can you briefly describe your role and responsibilities within your organization?
2. How long have you been in this position?
3. How would you describe your organization's exposure to international markets, particularly the United States?

**Section 2: Perceptions of Uganda – U.S. relations**

4. How would you characterise the relationship between Uganda and the United States?
5. In your view, is this relationship balanced or unequal? Why ?
6. Can you provide an example where this relationship directly affected your organisation?

**Section 3: Diplomatic Events and Corporate Strategy**

7. Can you describe a specific diplomatic event between the U.S that led your firm to change a strategic decisions?
8. What internal discussions took place in response to that event?
9. Were these changes proactive or reactive? Please explain.

**Section 4: Governance and Compliance**

10. Have U.S regulations influenced your company's governance policies?
11. Can you give an example of a governance policy not fully implemented?
12. Under What conditions does your organization fully comply?

**Section 5: Power and Negotiation**

13. Does Uganda have equal influence as the U.S ? Why?
14. Example of Uganda resisting U.S pressure?
15. What determines compliance or resistance?

**Section 6: Sectoral Responses**

16. How does your sector respond compared to others?
17. Are there alternatives to U.S partnerships?

**Sector 7: Future Outlook**

18. Future of Uganda- U.S relations
19. What improvements are needed
20. Any additional comments?

## Appendix B: Reflexivity journal excerpts (5 entries)

**REFLEXIVITY JOURNALEXCERPTS (5 entries)**

**TOPIC: THE IMPACT OF RECIPROCAL CORPORATE STRATEGY AND GGOVERNANCE IN UGANDA – U.S. RELATIONS**

**BY: ALLIYAH DANIELLA GORDON SWORO**

The researcher maintained a reflexivity journal to identify and manage potential bias throughout the study.

**Entry 1: Initial Research Position**

As a student of international relations, I recognise that I may hold a critical view of U.S influence in Africa. This could shape how I interpret asymmetry in the relationship. I must remain open to evidence that shows mutual benefit or Ugandan agency.

**Entry 2: During Early interviews**

Several participants framed the U.S as dominant. I noticed myself agreeing internally. I need to ensure I do not overemphasise this narrative and instead capture Variations, including cases of resistance and negotiation.

**Entry3: Midway through data collection**

I observed that participants in agribusiness expressed more independence from the U.S pressure. This challenged my initial assumption that all sectors are equally constrained. I must allow the data to guide conclusions rather than my expectations.

**Entry 4: During Data Analysis**

While coding interviews, I found strong evidence of “anticipatory compliance”. I initially interpreted this as coercion, but it may also reflect rational business decision making. I need to balance structural explanations with agency.

**Entry 5: Final Reflection**

This research has shifted my perspective. While asymmetry is real, Uganda firms are not passive actors. They strategically adapt, resist, or comply depending on context. Maintaining reflexivity helped me avoid overly deterministic conclusions.