Assessment of Ugandan's multilateral diplomatic relations with ideological blocs; Afrocentric relations and China: challenges and prospects

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Abstract

The research examined the challenges and prospects of Ugandan's multilateral diplomatic relations with the two ideological blocs namely USA and Russia (USSR) on one hand and with African continent and China on the other hand. The research observed that although there are significant benefits in these multilateral relations among the aforementioned state actors, there are by no means some challenges. These prospects and challenges in Ugandan multilateral diplomatic relations formed the focus of this research. The paper adopts descriptive approach as the methodology of analysis in the research. The work made useful recommendations and policy options for improved multilateral diplomacy in inter-state relations among the affected states.

Key words: Diplomacy, multilateral, state-actors, ideological blocs, Nigeria, South Africa, China

Introduction

The United States established Diplomatic relations with Uganda in 1962, following Uganda's formal Independence from the United Kingdom. In the post-independence period, the country endured despotism and near economic collapse. The Human Rights abuses of several Ugandan governments strained United States relations with Uganda.

President Museveni, came to power in 1986, after decades of internal strife. Under Museveni, Uganda experienced relative political stability and economic growth. Uganda faces numerous challenges, however, that could affect future stability, including explosive population growth, power and infrastructure constraints, corruption, underdeveloped democratic institutions, and human rights deficits.

There has been bilateral Foreign relations between the two countries that is, Russia and Uganda. Russia has an Embassy in Kampala and Uganda has an Embassy in Moscow. The links between the two countries are traditionally friendly.

Trade Ministers from Uganda and South Africa have reaffirmed their commitment towards facilitating trade and investment flows between the two countries.

The two Ministers Amelia Kyambadde, the Minister of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives and her counterpart Gratitude Bulelani Magwanishe, the South African Deputy Minister for Trade and Investment signed a declaration on Tuesday in Pretoria, South Africa recognizing the imperative to build a mutually beneficial trade and investment relationship that supports the industrialization imperatives of the two countries.

They have also seen movements of Nigerian people to and fro the two countries for Trade, Investment and Religious purposes. Furthermore, Uganda hosts a number of Nigerian Banks including the United Banks for Africa (UBA), ECO Bank, Orient Bank, Guaranty Trust Bank (GTB) and National Insurance Company (NIC). There are equally a number of Nigerian churches in the country ie. Mountain of Fire Ministries, Living Faith (Winners Chapel), Deep Life, Redeem Christian Church of God, Christ Embassy, Living Word and host of others. Let me also add that over the past two years, large numbers of Nigerian's students have been admitted in many Uganda Universities.

Relations between Uganda and the People's Republic of China were established in 1962. Trade between the two nations totaled over $1 billion in 2017. Additionally, Chinese companies have contributed significantly to the building of infrastructure in Uganda. China also owns about 20% of Uganda's debt, equivalent to about $1.6 billion. The Ugandan Ambassador to China is Chrispus Kyonga while Chinese Ambassador to Uganda is Zheng ZhuQiang.

Since Uganda's Independence in 1962, Diplomatic Relationships have existed between the two nations. China was one of the first nations to recognize the newly independent nation. In 1971, Uganda was one of 76 nations voting in favor of restoring UN membership to the Chinese government. Following President, Yoweri Museveni's rise to power in 1986, the two nations have developed closer ties and signed multiple Cultural Cooperation Agreements, exchanging Student and Medical teams. Relationships between the two nations have been strengthened by a

Policy of Non-interference in Political Affairs. On the issue of the passage of the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2014 Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2014, Western criticism of the Ugandan government and Museveni's Presidency increased. Many nations withdrew economic aid and support. China's policy of political non-involvement allowed them to take on the role of supplying aid and infrastructure to Uganda.

UGANDA'S FOREIGN POLICY WITH UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA)

The United States established Diplomatic relations with Uganda in 1962, following Uganda's formal Independence from the United Kingdom. In the post-independence period, the country endured despotism and near economic collapse. The Human Rights abuses of several Ugandan governments strained United States relations with Uganda.

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Uganda has been a reliable partner for the United States in promoting stability in the Horn and East/Central Africa and in combatting terror, particularly through its contribution to the African Union Mission in Somalia.

United States Assistance to Uganda

The United States provides significant Development and Security assistance to Uganda, with a total assistance budget exceeding $970 million per year. The United States government plays a key role in supporting the professionalization of the Military; providing anti-retroviral treatment for more than 990,000 HIV-positive Ugandans; and working to boost Economic growth and agricultural productivity, improve educational and health outcomes, and support democratic governance through inclusive, accountable institutions. The U.S. Mission is working with the Government of Uganda to

improve tax collection and Oil Revenue Management, and to increase Uganda's domestic funding for Public Services and the National Response to HIV/AIDS.

Bilateral Economic Relations

Uganda is eligible for preferential trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act. U.S. exports to Uganda include machinery, optical and medical instruments, wheat, and aircraft. United States imports from Uganda include coffee, cocoa, base metals, and fish. The United States has committed to signing trade and investment framework agreements with the East African Community and with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. Uganda is a member of both regional organizations.

Uganda's Membership in International Organizations

Uganda and the United States belong to a number of the same International Organizations, including the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization.

Bilateral Representation

The current U.S. Ambassador to Uganda is Deborah Malac. Other principal Embassy officials are listed in the Department's Key Officers List. Uganda maintains an Embassy in the United States.

UGANDA FOREIGN POLICY WITH USSR (RUSSIA)

Russia–Uganda Relations

Russia–Uganda relations: There has been bilateral Foreign relations between the two countries that is, Russia and Uganda. Russia has an Embassy in Kampala and Uganda has an Embassy in Moscow. The links between the two countries are traditionally friendly.

Bilateral Relations

The Soviet Union established Diplomatic Relations with Uganda on October 11–12, 1962. In 1964, the USSR and Uganda signed a Trade Agreement and an agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation, which provided for a loan of 14 million rubles to Uganda. Registered dynamic political dialogue in June 2004, Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni had a brief conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin at Sea Island, the Summit of the G8. In June 2008 - First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Andrey Denisov visited Kampala and signed a Memorandum of Consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Russia and Uganda. The most active bilateral relations began to develop in the last two years. In August 2009, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni was in Moscow on a private visit. He held talks with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, President Yevgeny Primakov. The Ugandan leader also visited the ((International Aviation and Space Salon MAKS-2009 in Zhukovsky, the Kubinka Tank Museum, the company-manufacturer of equipment for the Food Industry (FSUE "FSPC device." On June 6, 2011 the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev and the President of Uganda Yoweri Museveni had a telephone conversation. In 2010, the trade turnover, according to the Federal Customs Service of Russia totaled $49 million. Russia exported goods to Uganda worth 29.3 million (wheat, medicine, tires, metal, spare parts), imports - $19.7 million (cashew nuts, tea, coffee, spices, tobacco). The country has a representation of the Kazan Helicopter Plant, as group of Russian experts on operation and maintenance of helicopters. In February 2011, a group of observers from the Russian Central Election Commission worked in the general elections in Uganda. In the Ugandan hospitals under the "(Zdraveksport" opened with seven (7) Russian Doctors, 11 more - Private Contracts and four (4) thousand Ugandans have graduated in the country. Uganda in 2010, it was a seven (7) State scholarships for its citizens in the Russian Universities (5 had Full Course of Study, 2 had Graduate school). In 2010, to study the State line arrived in Russia one man and 19- on a Commercial basis.

UGANDA'S FOREIGN POLICY WITH AFRICA

AFRICA-UGANDA

Kampala, Uganda (GODFREY SSALI) Trade Ministers from Uganda and South Africa have reaffirmed their commitment towards facilitating trade and investment flows between the two countries.

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The Ministers met during the 2nd South Africa – Uganda Joint Trade Committee (JTC) Meeting in Pretoria. The meeting followed the 1st JTC held in November 2015 in Kampala, which was established to strengthen the Trade Relations between Uganda and South Africa.

In her remarks, Minister Kyambadde underscored the widening and imbalanced trade and investment flows between Uganda and South Africa.

By 2016, Uganda's trade imbalance with South Africa was estimated at $198 million, Uganda's imported from South Africa goods worth $215 million against Uganda's exports worth $17 million.

"Imports from South Africa are mainly processed and manufactured products that include flat rolled products of iron or non-alloy steel, transport goods vehicles, electricity meters, semi-finished products of iron and non-alloy steel, printed matters, apples and medicine, while Uganda's export was mainly coffee.

Kyambadde noted that there has been an increase in the South African Companies operating in the Ugandan economy yet the number of Ugandan Companies operating in the South African market was minimal.

Currently, there are over 60 South African companies in Uganda and they are broadly in the

areas of Financial, Telecommunications, Hospitality Industry, Power generation and Manufacturing. Some of the notable companies are Stanbic Bank, MTN Uganda, Shoprite, Game, Eskom and Woolworth.

Kyambadde said that “There is need to enhance Uganda’s market access and improve our Trade relations; which calls for flexibility, reciprocity and preferential access to their market”.

In response, Gratitude Magwanishe said South Africa was committed to maintaining and improving the already vibrant relations between both countries however, cautioning Uganda to work harder towards improving her exports to South Africa.

“The onus is on Uganda to work harder in improving exports to South Africa and thus should effectively utilize the Joint Trade Committee for the two countries to achieve this”, said Magwanishe. He also added that South Africa is committed to facilitating trade and investment flows between the two countries as contained in the Trade Agreement signed in 2002 and in keeping with the principles of the Tripartite Free Trade Area (T-FTA) negotiations.

Uganda under the auspices of the East African Community (EAC), is in negotiations with South African Customs Union (SACU), and on this issue Minister Kyambadde appealed for a more flexible approach on market access tariff negotiations at the SACU-EAC deliberations on products of specific interest to both parties in the TFTA negotiations.

The Permanent Secretary Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives Ambassador Julius Onen noted Uganda’s potential in the trading of fresh products like peppers, chilies, green bananas, and avocados in South Africa. He added that coffee is another key strategic product in Uganda’s export basket and appealed for structured negotiations for market access of these products in the South African market.

The two countries agreed to implement exchange programmes in various areas of cooperation so that product preferences could become known as opportunities are uncovered. In particular, the Ministers agreed that the two countries would exchange information on the Legal and Regulatory Framework in order to learn about each other’s requirements for a smooth flow of trade and investments.

"We agreed to exchange information on the implementation of Proudly South African Initiative and the Buy Uganda Build Uganda (BUBU) initiative so that we can learn from each other", explained Kyambadde.

Another area is the tourism sector where Uganda can learn from South Africa's expertise in Tourism Marketing and the two countries could exchange knowledge and best practice.

The two countries also agreed to strengthen collaboration between the trade investment agencies including Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI) and the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), South Africa Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), Uganda Development Corporation (UDC) and Uganda Development Bank Limited (UDBL), the South African Bureau of Standards and Uganda National Bureau of Standards, and the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) in South Africa and the MSME Directorate in Uganda.

(b) NIGERIA –UGANDA RELATION UNDER BILATERAL AGREEMENT

Federal Republic of Nigeria since 1987 established a Technical Aid Corps (TAC) scheme to streamline Nigeria's Technical Aid policy and assist States in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) regions in their social economic development effort through the participation of Nigeria experts in various fields of human endeavour has assisted Ugandans. TAC scheme is an alternative to direct Financial Aid to African by sharing knowledge and expertise with them on the basis of their assessed and perceived needs.

This has fostered meaningful contacts between Nigerian Volunteers and recipient countries, since inception, over 4000 volunteers have served in about 33 countries which Uganda is one. The TAC programme has been a success in Uganda, necessitating the renewal of the Bilateral TAC Agreement between Nigeria and Uganda on 17th October, 2013. This year alone the High Commission has received a number of requests from Universities in Uganda. About 78 lecturers were deployed to Uganda i.e Kampala International University (KIU), Mbarara University, Kabale University, and Islamic University In Uganda (IUIU).

The cordial relations have been reciprocated by the high profile visits between the top political, economic and religious leadership of both countries.

(c). **NIGERIA-UGANDA RELATIONSHIP ON IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION**

They have also seen movements of Nigerian people to and fro the two countries for Trade, Investment and Religious purposes. Furthermore, Uganda hosts a number of Nigerian Banks including the United Banks for Africa (UBA), ECO Bank, Orient Bank, Guaranty Trust Bank (GTB) and National Insurance Company (NIC). There are equally a number of Nigerian churches in the country ie. Mountain of Fire Ministries, Living Faith (Winners Chapel), Deep Life, Redeem Christian Church of God, Christ Embassy, Living Word and host of others. Let me also add that over the past two years, large numbers of Nigerian's students have been admitted in many Uganda Universities.

Bilateral Representation

Uganda High Commission is located in Abuja, Nigeria.

UGANDA'S FOREIGN POLICY WITH CHINA

China–Uganda Relations

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Economic Relations

Trade between China and Uganda has also increased under Museveni's Presidency. Even within the last 10 years, the amount of trade between the two nations has more than quadrupled, from around $230 million in 2008 to over $1 billion in 2018. The majority of this trade is Chinese exports to Uganda, which account for about $850 million in trade. China's largest exports are Machinery and Electrical equipment. Uganda's major exports to China include many raw goods such as Hides, Oils, and Seeds.

In fact, Uganda has emerged as a potential market for many Chinese businesses, both State-owned and Private. These businesses include oil and construction, as well as smaller stores and factories for electronics, clothes, and other consumer goods.

Infrastructure and Debt

China and Chinese companies have also contributed too many infrastructure projects in Uganda. Chinese construction companies have won contracts for many major infrastructure projects, such as (Mandela Stadium and the country's largest hydroelectric dam. More so recently, Chinese companies are in charge of the Construction of an Express Highway connecting the major city of Entebbe to the Capital, Kampala. The Ugandan government also utilizes Chinese technology for small and large-scale agri-business projects, with over 40 Chinese agricultural scientists having taken part in planning these projects in Uganda since 2012.

China also supports infrastructure within Uganda through loans and currently Uganda has $1.6 billion in loans to China. These loans largely finance major infrastructure projects, while Uganda typically pay for Chinese contracting work on these mega-projects.

Public Opinion in Uganda

Opinions vary in Uganda on the role China plays in the Local Economy. According to (Afro Barometer data, 57% of Ugandans believe China has a positive influence on Uganda, compared to only 7% saying negative. The largest positives of China's influence were China's investment in infrastructure, China's business investment, and the cost of Chinese products. By far the largest source of negative opinion was the quality of Chinese products. Public opinion of Chinese influence has improved in China since 2010.

Ugandan business owners have expressed opposition to Chinese influence in the country. Shopkeepers and creators of local goods have difficulty competing with the price of Chinese exports. In addition, local construction companies introduced a bill that would force the national government to prioritize local construction companies in the completion of government projects. This bill was vetoed, with MPs citing the inability of Ugandan construction companies to handle the scale of large infrastructure projects. [13] Some Chinese business, particularly smaller private businesses, have also felt the effect of increased regulation and scrutiny from local government officials.

Research on relations between the two nations and cultures found that the major sources of dislike between the two nations include China's State-capitalism model and Ugandans' experiences with Chinese shopkeepers and employers who may harbor racial bias.

Incidents

In 2014, China sentenced two Ugandans to death for drug trafficking in Guangdong province. Although the Ugandan government claimed that the incidents did not impact Diplomatic relationships between the two nations, many Ugandan citizens and MPs were angered by the perceived violation of sovereignty and Human Rights. In 2018, many Chinese businesses in Ugandan industrial parks were vandalized and robbed, prompting President Museveni to increase Security presence in these Regions.

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