# 'Some more reliable than others': Image management, Western perceptions and the Global War on Terror in East African diplomacy

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## Abstract

To what extent can African governments manage how they are perceived by Western audiences, particularly major donors? What strategies have they employed to achieve this? Why have some regimes been more skilled at controlling their international 'image' than others?

This paper seeks to address these important questions by comparing Ugandan and Kenyan diplomatic responses to the Global War on Terror. Both states have fallen victim to acts of domestic and international terrorism since 1998 and the governments of both Museveni and Kibaki have cooperated, to varying degrees, with the US on a regular basis in initiatives to apprehend and neutralise suspected terrorists. Both have also played a major role, both unilaterally and as part of IGAD, in regional efforts to stabilise the situation in Somalia – a key terrorism 'trouble spot' for Western policy-makers for over a decade.

Nevertheless, while Uganda has long been perceived in Washington and London as a 'steadfast' and 'trustworthy' donor ally in the fight against terrorism Kenya, in contrast, has not. Indeed, Nairobi's commitment herein has often been questioned, both publicly and privately, by frustrated Western envoys and politicians. Moreover, while donor narratives on Uganda have often stressed, first and foremost, the regime's reliability in the War on Terror, those on Kenya, even before the electoral violence of 2007-8, have usually dwelt on more pejorative characterisations relating to 'ethnic tribalism' and corruption.

This paper will assess how far the governments of Uganda and Kenya themselves have been responsible for managing, or failing to manage, these differing donor perspectives. It will explore their private and public diplomacy, use of lobbying firms and engagement with Western media and non-governmental organisations and then attempt to evaluate the degree to which these governments' successful and unsuccessful employment of image management strategies can be held responsible for the contrasting views donors have of them. In so doing, broader questions can be posed about the role of 'image' in foreign and development policy.

## Introduction

Since, George W Bush's famous post-9/11 assertion that 'either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists', being seen to be 'joining' the US and other Western states in prosecuting the 'Global War on Terror' has been an important, if not critical, part of gaining or retaining Western support, both financial and military, for many developing states.[2] Understanding which foreign governments are indeed 'with us' in the fight against international terrorism, however, has not always been a clear-cut exercise for the US and other donors. Pakistan, for example, has been both praised and condemned by policy-makers since 2001 for seemingly

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[2] *BBC* (21/09/01)

both supporting and frustrating regional efforts to stamp out terrorism. Indeed, the current posing of questions by US legislators over 'what Pakistan knew' in the aftermath of Osama bin Laden's May 2011 killing by US Marines is simply the most recent example of donors reassessing the 'reliability' of presumed allies in the Global War.[3]

In Africa, where donor aid is not only useful but - in many cases – vital for regime maintenance purposes, few governments have been seen internationally as having such a complicated relationship with counter-terrorism as Islamabad. Instead, and perhaps owing to the limited priority given to the continent in Western foreign policy-making structures, the reliability of African states has tended to be conceptualised in a more one-dimensional manner. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the Horn of Africa where being 'with us' - or being perceived as 'with us' - in the fight against terrorism has been the *sine qua non* for donor engagement with governments in almost every area of dialogue.

The Ugandan government of Yoweri Museveni has benefited considerably from this dispensation, being seen as a key and steadfast ally in the Global War since 9/11 and receiving plentiful international assistance as a result. The Kenyan administration of Mwai Kibaki (in power since 2002), however, has not and has been frequently criticised for its 'inadequate' commitment in this regard and 'punished' with aid cuts and travel bans. Indeed, donor perceptions of reliability in the fight against terrorism have perhaps been more enduringly contrasting in relation to Uganda and Kenya than with any other two African neighbours since 2001.[4] The stark differentiation made by donors herein, however, is surprising considering that Kenya, like Uganda, has repeatedly cooperated with Washington in its regional counter-terrorism agenda, albeit not always in such an enthusiastic or public manner. There appears to have been something of a 'perception gap' therefore in donor views of the two governments' reliability.

This paper will attempt to explain how this 'gap' has come about, and remained so durable, by analysing how the two governments have, or have not, presented themselves to donors in the context of the counter-terrorism narrative. In focusing on public and private 'image management' strategies employed by the two regimes, it will be argued that Kampala has been seen as more reliable than Nairobi primarily because it has been more skilled and successful in convincing donors that this is the case. Donor perceptions of African governments, ultimately, are not formed purely within Western foreign ministries, embassies and development agencies, nor are Western sources of 'knowledge' on such administrations (such as media articles or think tank reports) immune from African influence, both intended and inadvertent. The paper contends, therefore, that African states play a major role in managing their 'image' in the donor community and that this can have real consequences for the way in which this community behaves towards them.

In making this argument, the paper will be divided into three sections. The first will compare and contrast Ugandan and Kenyan counter-terrorism cooperation with donors since 2001 while the second will outline the different ways in which donors have responded to these efforts, both practically and diplomatically. The final section will explore the concept of 'image management' in greater depth and explain, with reference to both governments'

[3] Bokhari and Dombey, *Financial Times* (16/05/11); Barker, Lamont and Bokhari, *Financial Times* (28/07/10); *BBC* (05/04/11)

[4] Eritrea, however, has since c.2006-2007 be seen by donors as wholly uncooperative in the Global War in contrast to neighbouring Ethiopia (*Associated Press* (AP) (17/08/07).

foreign policy strategies, how its usage (or lack thereof) by Uganda and Kenya has contributed to these differing donor perceptions.

## Cooperation in the War on Terror: Ugandan and Kenyan 'compliance' with the 'counter-terrorism regime' since 9/11

Both Kenya and Uganda have been the victims of a number of terrorist attacks since 9/11, indeed the 1998 bombing of the US Embassy in Nairobi by al-Qaeda pre-dates the declaration of a Global War on Terror.[5] In Uganda's case, though the US Embassy in Kampala was also unsuccessfully, targeted in 1998[6], the primary terror threats to the country have come from domestic rebel groups with-at best-tenuous links to global terror networks. The most prominent of these have been the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a millenarian organisation which carried out a sustained campaign of violence in northern Uganda between 1987-2006, and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a mainly Muslim union of anti-Museveni groups who were held responsible for a number of bombings in Kampala between 1998-2001.[7] In July 2010, however, 76 people were killed in Kampala after al-Shabaab, a Somali terrorist group, carried out several suicide bombings in the city in protest at Uganda's supplying of troops to the AU peacekeeping mission in Mogadishu.[8]

Terrorist attacks in Kenya have been more directly connected to al-Qaeda. In 2002, the organisation was involved in two attacks: the first involving the firing of SAM-7 missiles at an Israeli passenger plane leaving Mombasa, the second the detonation of a truck bomb in the lobby of an Israeli-owned hotel north of the city. Though the missiles overshot their target, fifteen people were killed in the hotel bombing.[9] In addition, in 2003 a further al-Qaeda plot to bomb the US Embassy in Nairobi was foiled by Kenyan authorities and in 2006 'Kenya's first entirely domestic case of Muslim-based terrorism' occurred with the fire-bombing of a Nairobi radio station.[10]

With their own diplomatic missions becoming targets, Western donors, particularly the US, have placed considerable emphasis in their post-9/11 relations with Nairobi and Kampala upon the latters' cooperation in what Whitaker has called the 'international counter-terrorism regime'.[11] For Whitaker, who includes regime adoption of domestic legislation, sharing of intelligence with donor security agencies and 'cracking down on target groups' in her definition of cooperation (which she terms 'compliance'), Uganda has 'embraced the global struggle against terrorism and adopted many of its strategies domestically' while Kenya has been a 'reluctant partner...cooperating strongly in some areas and resisting compliance in others'.[12] Other commentators, such as Stiles and Thayne who look at international 'compliance' with the UN Security Council's Resolution 1373 on combating international terrorism, place both governments in the same 'low compliance' category.[13] This paper is interested more in understanding donor *perceptions* of cooperation rather than cooperation itself. In order to set this issue on context, however, it is necessary to outline what the Kenyan and Ugandan governments have (and have not) done to cooperate with donors in the counter-

[5] Harmony Project (2007), p.48
[6] ibid; Interview with US official, November 2009 (Washington DC)
[7] Interview with Tom Butime, Ugandan Minister for Internal Affairs (1996-2001), February 2010 (Kampala)
[8] Dagne (2011), p.2
[9] Harmony Project (2007), pp.48-49
[10] ibid
[11] Whitaker (2010)
[12] Whitaker (2010), p.651, 657
[13] Stiles and Thayne (2006), pp.170-171

terrorism arena. This will be undertaken under three headings: domestic cooperation, regional cooperation and international cooperation.

## Domestic cooperation

*Security Cooperation:* Both governments have cooperated quite extensively with the US in the security sector during the 2000s, actively participating in the US-funded Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program, Safe Skies Initiative and the Terrorist Interdiction Program.[14] Both have established, with US support, Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Forces (Uganda in 1999 and Kenya in 2003) to coordinate domestic security services in their counter-terrorism activities although Kenya's commitment herein was called into question in 2004 when it disbanded its version of this body.[15] In addition, in 2004, the US funded a National Counter-Terrorism Centre in Nairobi which, according to some commentators, 'is rumoured to be under the direct operational guidance of Washington'.[16]

Furthermore, both Kampala and Nairobi have frequently allowed FBI personnel to undertake counter-terrorism activities in their countries and both state's armies have held joint training exercises with their US counterparts within their borders since the early 2000s.[17] Indeed, Kenya is the only state in East Africa which still has a formal agreement with US personnel, allowing the latter to use sea ports and airfields for security exercises, reconnaissance missions and military manoeuvres at their discretion.[18]

*Apprehension of terrorists:* Both governments have also taken frequently strong measures in attempts to apprehend and arrest suspected terrorists; often attracting strong criticism from human rights groups for seemingly indiscriminate targeting of Muslims and foreigners. In 2003, for example, the Ugandan government arrested over 200 people who were believed to be planning a terrorist attack on Kampala and, in 2010, within days of the al-Shabaab bombings, arrested over twenty suspects with the assistance of the Kenyan intelligence services.[19]

Likewise, in 2001 the Kenyan government arrested over 40 individuals thought to be linked to al-Qaeda and, in 2002, carried out 'police swoops on [domestic] Muslim communities' in the aftermath of the Mombasa hotel bombing. In 2007, the government also oversaw the arrest of a number of terror suspects from among Somali refugees fleeing across the Kenyan border.[20] Furthermore, since the mid-1990s a considerable number of Kenyan and Ugandan Islamic NGOs suspected of having links to extremist groups have been forced to close down by Nairobi and Kampala, sometimes, as Lind and Howell note, 'at the behest of foreign governments'.[21] It is important to note, however, that the Kibaki government has had far less success in prosecuting terror suspects than in arresting them. In 2005, for example, it was

[14] Khadiagala (2004), pp.2-4; Whitaker (2010), pp.651-652, 657-658
[15] ibid; Muhula (2007), pp.48-56; Lind and Howell (2008), p.21
[16] ibid
[17] Okanya (2003), pp.40-46; Heilman and Ndumbaro (2004), pp.147-148; Harmony Project (2007), p.57; Muhula (2007), p.55; Vasagar, *Guardian* (06/01/04); Butagira and Okello, *Daily Monitor* (18/07/10)
[18] Muhula (2007), p.49
[19] Haynes (2006), p.503; Candia and Ssempogo, *New Vision* (27/07/10); Ssempogo, *New Vision* (12/08/10)
[20] Khadiagala (2004), pp.2-4; Harmony Project (2007), p.58; Lind and Howell (2008), pp.21-22; Whitaker (2010), pp.657-658
[21] Naluswa (2004), pp.44-46; Lind and Howell (2008), p.28; Khadiagala (2004), pp.2-4

heavily criticised internationally after seven men suspected of involvement in the 2002 bombings were acquitted and released owing to a 'legal loophole'.[22]

*Legislation:* A significant difference between Ugandan and Kenyan domestic 'compliance, however, has been in the legislative sphere. While both countries introduced draconian anti-terror bills into their parliaments between 2002-2003, only in Uganda's case did the bill pass. In Kenya, the government was forced to withdraw its Suppression of Terrorism bill after a number of media groups, human rights organisations, Muslim NGOs and a parliamentary committee mounted a forceful campaign against it, targeting in particular its overly-broad definition of 'terrorism'.[23] A second push by Nairobi to pass a re-drafted version of the bill in 2006 was again blocked by these actors and, as of 2011, Kenya remains without a comprehensive anti-terror bill on its statute books.[24] This contrasts strongly to Uganda where the 2002 Prevention of Terrorism Act, which also contained a broad definition of 'terrorism', was passed 'quickly' and without controversy by lawmakers.[25] It is worth noting, nonetheless, that while Kampala has tried in vain since the late 2000s to pass anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing legislation, Nairobi successfully passed the Proceeds of Crime and Anti-Money Laundering bill in 2009.[26]

## Regional cooperation

*Security Cooperation:* Just as in the domestic sphere, both the Kenyan and Ugandan governments have cooperated with the US and other donors in the building of regional security frameworks. Most notably, both have taken part in the US-funded Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa which aims, according to Muhula, 'to detect, disrupt and defeat transnational terrorist groups in the region'.[27] They have also both been involved, since 2003, in the East African Counterterrorism Initiative, a regional military training programme aimed at shoring-up security along state borders and coastlines.[28]

*Somalia:* Both have also been heavily-involved in attempting to resolve the ongoing crisis in Somalia. The lack of governance in this pseudo-state has been an ongoing security concern for donor policy-makers since 9/11 but became particularly worrying for the Bush administration from 2006 when the Islamist 'Union of Islamic Courts gained control of southern Somalia.[29] Since the Courts' overthrow by invading Ethiopian troops in December 2006, an extremist off-shoot of the movement with alleged links to al-Qaeda (al-Shabaab) has continued to operate in the region to the dismay of Washington and to destabilise the Western-backed Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Mogadishu through carrying out frequent terrorist attacks.[30]

Prior to 2006, both Kampala and Nairobi were deeply engaged, via IGAD, in regional processes aimed at restoring security and stable government to Somalia. Indeed, throughout 2004, Kenya facilitated the holding of elections for the Somali Transitional Federal Parliament on its own soil and continues to play host to the vast majority of aid agencies

[22] Whitaker (2008), p.259
[23] Lind and Howell (2008), pp.23-24
[24] Whitaker (2008), p.260
[25] Mukwaya (2004), pp.51-52; Pinkney (2005), p.122
[26] Whitaker (2010), p.652; Nyabiage, *Daily Nation* (24/06/10)
[27] Muhula (2007), p.49
[28] Davis (2007), p.148
[29] Interview with US official, November 2009 (Washington DC)
[30] *BBC* (24/08/10)

dealing with Somalia.[31] Since Somalia's emergence in 2006, however, as a central battlefield in the War on Terror, Uganda has increasingly played a more prominent role in responding to the issue. Thus in February 2007, with strong backing from the US and UK, it became the first state to send troops to Somalia as part of the AU mission in the country (AMISOM) and, since then, has committed over 3,000 soldiers to the peacekeeping operation.[32]

Kenya's role has been more ambiguous, however. Though it has not involved itself in AMISOM and reportedly remained publicly 'neutral' during Ethiopia's intervention, it has nevertheless apparently cooperated closely with Washington behind-the-scenes.[33] Thus a number of commentators noted in 2007 how US and Kenyan troops 'set up [joint] positions [along the Kenya-Somalia border] to capture militants trying to flee [Somalia]' and how 'American military planners...worked directly with Ethiopian and Kenyan military officials' during the intervention.[34] One has even suggested that a joint US-Kenyan operation in Somalia itself had been considered.[35]

## International cooperation

In the international sphere, however, the apparent contrast between Ugandan and Kenyan cooperation with donors in the War on Terror has been considerable, albeit limited to the early 2000s. In 2003, for example, the Ugandan government announced its support for the US-led invasion of Iraq (presented by Washington as necessary in order to, among other things, break 'the...sinister nexus between Iraq and the Al Qaeda network'[36]), with Kampala's foreign minister declaring that 'the potential link between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction [in Iraq] poses a very serious threat...Uganda will be ready to assist [during the invasion] in any way possible'.[37] This followed a Cabinet meeting Uganda where, according to one minister, Museveni had stressed an apparent link between the Iraqi regime, al-Qaeda and ADF bombings in Kampala in 2001 while making his case for supporting the war.[38]

Kenya, by contrast, refused to support the venture and a number of senior officials in Nairobi criticised the legality of the invasion with Nairobi's national security minister arguing in March 2003 that 'the conflict should have been prosecuted within the UN' and, consequently, his government was 'unhappy' about planned Western military action in the Gulf.[39] The two governments also took different stances on the issue of signing Article 98 agreements with the US, insisted upon by Washington from its allies to prevent the possibility of US personnel abroad being extradited to the International Criminal Court (ICC). As with Iraq, Uganda supported the US in this regard, willingly signing an agreement in 2003, while Kenya did not and pointedly emphasised its aversion to doing so.[40] While not linked to the prosecution of the Global War in a direct sense, failing to secure Article 98 agreements with allies was

[31] Mulama, *Inter Press News* (23/10/04); *Reuters* (09/08/10)
[32] Dagne (2011), p.12
[33] Davis (2007), p.148
[34] Gordon and Mazzetti, *New York Times* (23/02/07); Kelley, *Daily Nation* (25/02/07)
[35] Davis (2007), p.148
[36] Powell (2003)
[37] *IOL News* (23/03/03)
[38] Interview with Tom Butime, Ugandan State Minister for International Cooperation (2001-2005), February 2010 (Kampala)
[39] Njeru and Mathenge, *Daily Nation* (23/03/03)
[40] Pinkney (2005), p.126; Whitaker (2007), p.262

nevertheless seen in the US, as Whitaker notes, as having significant 'implications for its implementation'.[41]

## Donor responses to Uganda and Kenyan cooperation: perceptions of reliability and their consequences

On balance, therefore, while Uganda has certainly been a more unequivocal supporter of the US and UK agenda in the War on Terror than its neighbour, Kenya has nevertheless cooperated with Washington in most areas, particularly in domestic and regional security cooperation. Indeed, commentators such as Whitaker have concluded that 'Kenyan reluctance to cooperate fully with the United States in the 'war on terror' may be more rhetorical than substantive'.[42]

It is clear, however, that donors (particularly the US and UK - the primary bilateral partners of both Kenya and Uganda) have drawn much starker distinctions when considering the reliability of the two governments. These differing perceptions have led them, in turn, to treat Uganda and Kenya in different ways, both in relation to security and more generally. Donors, for example, have consistently characterised the Museveni regime, both publicly and privately, as 'a strong ally in the war on terror' with one donor official in 2007 thanking Kampala 'for [its] support and partnership' in this endeavour and another in 2010 noting that 'they've stepped up [in the War on Terror] and done more than anyone else [in the region]'.[43] In his frequent visits to Washington, Museveni has often be personally lauded by senior policy-makers for his government's level of cooperation including by President Bush himself who, in 2007, noted that 'the President [Museveni]...has got good judgement when it comes to issues like Somalia'.[44]

Similar sentiments have rarely been expressed by donors in relation to Kenya. Indeed, during Kibaki's only visit to the White House as president in 2003, Bush suggested-against the backdrop of Kenyan parliamentary opposition to Nairobi's anti-terror bill-that Kenya was still 'finding what America has [already] found' in balancing the 'challenges of freedom' and that it should resolve to be 'persistent and courageous...in the fight against terror'.[45] Furthermore, diplomats have been openly critical of Kenya's failure to pass counter-terrorism legislation with one British official making clear in 2005 that the country's level of conformity to international anti-terror norms was 'less than adequate'.[46]

Likewise, donor foreign ministries have demonstrated their contrasting views of the two governments' commitment through the issuing of travel advisories since 2003. Following the 2002 Mombasa attacks, for example, both the UK and US halted flights to the country and issued harsh travel advisories warning their citizens to 'defer non-essential travel to Kenya' until further notice as a result of 'terrorist threats...aimed at American and Western targets' and the likelihood of attacks which 'the government of Kenya might not be able to prevent'.[47]

[41] ibid
[42] Whitaker (2007), p.266
[43] USAID (2005a); *New Vision* (03/03/07); Interview with donor official, 2010 (Kampala)
[44] White House (2007)
[45] White House (2003)
[46] Mulama, *IOL News* (07/09/05)
[47] Department of State (DoS) (2003a and 2003b); Kelley, *East African* (02/06/03)

In July 2010, however, after Somali terrorists thought to have links to al-Qaeda successfully attacked Kampala, specifically targeting venues frequented by Western tourists and expatriates, the State Department simply advised its citizens in Uganda to 'maintain a high level of vigilance and take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness'.[48] Indeed, less than a week after the bombings, a number of senior donor officials including the US attorney-general and German foreign minister attended an international conference in the city, underscoring their faith in the Museveni regime's competence regarding security.[49]

Perhaps the clearest example of differing donor perceptions, however, can be seen in the contrasting profiles of Kenya and Uganda presented in the State Department's annual *Country Reports on Terrorism* publication.[50] In these Uganda is consistently praised for its 'firm stance against local and international terrorism'[51], for having 'a strong regional voice in opposing international terrorism and support [ing] US counterterrorism initiatives'[52] and for its 'efforts to track, capture and hold individuals with suspected links to terrorist organizations'.[53] Kenya, however, is criticised for making 'slow' or '...no progress towards the overall strengthening of its capabilities to combat terrorism'.[54] It is also lambasted for failing to 'engage in a national discussion to sensitize the public to terrorism issues'[55], for being reluctant to combat 'political and bureaucratic resistance' to counter-terrorism reforms[56] and generally for its 'uneven' cooperation with the US as a 'partner' in the War on Terror.[57] In addition, every report since 2005 has underlined the country's lack of 'counterterrorism legislation'.[58]

That donors see Uganda as more reliable than Kenya in the War on Terror has had real consequences for these two African states in the foreign policy arena. Between 2002-2006, for example, the US suspended a number of its military assistance programmes in Kenya and, between 2005-2006, refused to disburse as much as US$17 million of aid as a result of Nairobi's failure to sign an Article 98 Agreement.[59] Furthermore, in 2004 the Kenya Tourist Federation estimated that, as a result of the travel advisories of the previous year, the country's tourism industry (its second largest source of foreign exchange) had lost out on an estimated US$2 million per week for months on end.[60]

Kenya has also suffered in the diplomatic sphere as a result of its poor reputation for fighting terrorism. In 2003, for example, the country was struck off President Bush's travel itinerary for his first multi-destination Africa trip. According to Kenya's foreign minister, the country was considered by the White House to be 'not safe enough' for a presidential visit in the wake of the Mombasa bombings and Uganda was chosen instead to host the US leader.[61] This has caused one Ugandan scholar to argue that Kampala's inclusion 'was linked to Uganda's

[48] *BBC* (12/07/10); DoS (2010a)
[49] Butagira, *Daily Monitor* (23/07/10)
[50] Prior to 2004 this publication was known as *Patterns of Global Terrorism*
[51] DoS (2004), p.11; DoS (2005), p.32
[52] DoS (2006), p.57 and (2007)
[53] DoS (2009), p.30 and (2010b), p.34
[54] DoS (2005), p,30 and (2006), p.50
[55] DoS (2006), p.50
[56] DoS (2007) and (2008), p.19
[57] DoS (2007)
[58] DoS (2006), p.50, (2007), (2008), p.19, (2009), p.20 and (210b), p.21
[59] Whitaker (2007), p.262; Kelley and Munene, *Daily Nation* (02/06/05)
[60] Opiyo, *Standard*; Barkan (2004), p.97
[61] *Standard* (06/07/03); *Daily Nation* (26/12/02)

strong support for the US war in Iraq and...signature on the [Article 98] treaty...'.[62] In addition, when, in 2006, the US set up an international 'Contact Group on Somalia' to 'address international concerns over terrorism' they invited Tanzania to join but not Kenya, in spite of the latter's deep involvement in trying to resolve the Somali crisis.[63]

In a more general sense, the fact that donors have held contrasting perceptions of Ugandan and Kenyan reliability in the War on Terror has had a significant effect on their overall relationships with these two governments. In Uganda's case, donors have been less inclined to censure Kampala for democratic backsliding, human rights abuses in the north, regime involvement in high-level corruption scandals and regional military brinkmanship since 9/11 because it is seen as such a central and loyal ally in the fight against terrorism.[64] Conversely, the Kibaki regime has been subjected to frequent international criticism and aid cuts for involvement in similar practices, particularly corruption, because it has had the opposite reputation.

Between 2008-2010, for example, Uganda's vice president and ministers of finance, defence and foreign affairs were implicated by the Ugandan parliament in a number of high-profile corruption scandals with no formal response from Washington.[65] In 2009, however, the State Department banned fifteen senior Kenyan officials (including the attorney-general) from entering the US in order to demonstrate displeasure at Nairobi's stalled 'fight against corruption'.[66] In addition, donors overall have consistently provided more aid to Uganda than to Kenya since 9/11 (in 2006, Uganda received nearly double Kenya's allocation) and those who provide direct budget support to African treasuries, most notably the UK, have favoured Uganda especially in their disbursement of this modality but not Kenya.[67]

## The role of 'image management'

It is clear, therefore, that in spite of evidence to the contrary, donors have perceived Kenya, unlike Uganda, as unreliable in the War on Terror and that this has had significant diplomatic, financial and political consequences for both African governments. Why, however, have these narratives endured so robustly in donor minds and coloured so extensively international views of the Museveni and Kibaki administration?

Why, for example, have donors largely seen Kampala's two-decade long campaign to defeat the LRA as evidence of a firm commitment to tackling terrorism? Why has it not been seen instead as evidence of a government unable, or unwilling, to stifle a small-scale, disorganised insurrection enjoying limited local support? This question is particularly salient when one considers that, outside its own borders, Uganda's army has been capable of overthrowing governments themselves in a matter of months – including the Mobutu regime in Zaire.

Why, indeed, have donor policy-makers considered Uganda as such a central player in the regional War on Terror when its own domestic terrorist organisations have had little obvious connection to the global conflict, unlike the groups plotting in Nairobi in 2002 and 2003?

[62] Oloka-Onyango (2004), p.47
[63] *BBC* (15/06/06)
[64] Heilman and Ndumbaro (2004), pp.148-155; Oloka-Onyango (2004), pp.46-47; Tangri and Mwenda (2008), p.91; Interview with DFID official, March 2009 (London, UK)
[65] Mugerwa, *Daily Monitor* (27/10/10); Tangri and Mwenda (2010), pp.39-40
[66] Dagne (2009), p.1; Kanina, *Reuters* (26/10/09); Clarke, *Reuters* (01/11/09)
[67] OECD (2010)

Furthermore, why has Kenya's failure to pass anti-terror legislation been seen by donors solely as an example of lack of commitment to fighting terrorism rather than as a triumph of pluralism; of democracy 'working' in Africa? The promotion of democracy in Africa, after all, has been a longstanding and often genuine (particularly US) objective for many aid donors (particularly the US). Indeed, as Whitaker notes, the US 'supported and provided training for the development' of the same parliamentary committee system which so successfully resisted executive pressure to pass the 2003 and 2006 bills![68] Why, then, was this 'victory' for Kenyan civil society and parliament over State House not seen by donors, at least in part, as a cheering example of a young democracy at work?

This paper will attempt to answer these questions by examining how the regimes themselves have attempted to manage how they are seen by donors in relation to the War on Terror. In looking at Kampala and Nairobi's 'image management' strategies it will be argued that, to a considerable degree, donors view Uganda as a more reliable ally against terrorism than Kenya because the Museveni government has been more successful than the Kibaki government at convincing them that this is the case. In piecing together these strategies, it will be necessary to scrutinise the public and private diplomacy of both governments in contexts where donors are being both directly addressed (either by Kenyan and Ugandan officials or by their hired lobbyists) and where they are likely to be indirectly influenced (particularly through Kenyan and Ugandan official interaction with Western media organisations and think tanks). 'Image management' is therefore conceptualised as a government's 'use of private and/or public diplomacy to influence another government's view of it either as a whole or in relation to particular actions or policies undertaken'.

## Ugandan Strategies

The Museveni government has employed a number of strategies in order to convince donors of its reliability in the War on Terror. While some of these have drawn on its regional and international activities (particularly in relation to Iraq and Somalia), they have not been the focus of Kampala's 'image management'..[69] Instead, the regime has used domestic rebellions, primarily those of the LRA and ADF, to successfully persuade donors that it is both a central player in the War and, most importantly, a committed enemy of terrorism.

In the aftermath of 9/11, this involved an international effort on the regime's part to present the two rebel groups to donors not simply as 'rebels' or 'criminals' but as 'terrorists'.[70] Thus prior to 9/11, Museveni would usually speak of the LRA as 'bandits' or 'ordinary lawbreakers' as was the case in a 1995 meeting with Western diplomats in Kampala, during a 1998 visit to an IDP camp in Amuru and in other contexts where donors were present.[71] From 2001, however, the language changed. In a 2002 interview with *Canada TV*, for example, Museveni described the victims of LRA atrocities as 'victims of Sudan-supported terrorism' while in a 2005 interview with a UN news agency he characterised LRA activity as 'terrorism'.[72] The same rhetoric was used by the Ugandan leader in a 2005 speech to the US Council on Foreign Relations as it was in a 2003 open letter from the president to domestic

[68] Whitaker (2007), p.260, footnote 17
[69] See Mwamunyange et al, *East African* (24/03/03)
[70] Finnström (2003), pp.127-128; Interview with Professor Ron Atkinson, University of South Carolina, February 2010 (Kampala)
[71] Doom and Vlassenroot (1999), p.20; Channel 4 (1997); Dolan (2009), p.97; Atkinson (2010), pp.287-289
[72] Canada Television (CTV) (30/08/02); Integrated Regional News Agency (IRIN) (09/06/05)

and international media houses where the LRA, the focus of the missive, were referred to as 'terrorists' or perpetrators of 'terrorism' on eleven occasions.[73]

In developing this narrative, the Ugandan government has been keen to stress the linkages between these groups and the Global War on Terror more generally. Thus Museveni has often spoken in interviews with Western journalists of 'Uganda's war on terror' while his defence minister told US media organisations in a 2004 trip to Washington that 'Uganda has been a front-line state in the War on Terror for more than a decade' – both references to the LRA rebellion.[74] Similarly, Rosa Whitaker, CEO a Washington lobbying firm retained by Kampala between 2003-2010, noted that 'Uganda is fighting its own war against terrorism' in a letter to US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner in April 2003. This letter also set out a 'modest request' from Uganda to Washington's chief Africa diplomat for several million dollars worth of counter-terrorism equipment in an upcoming Foreign Operations Appropriations bill.[75]

As part of this strategy of presenting its fight against domestic rebels as an integral part of the War on Terror more generally, Kampala has also attempted to connect the rebel groups directly to al-Qaeda. Thus in a 2003 speech to the Council on Foreign Relations, Museveni argued that both organisations 'have been trained by al-Qaeda and operated out of Sudan and...Congo since the 1990s'.[76] He also noted in 2002 that 'bin Laden...was the one who started arming...the ADF...our fight is directly linked to world terrorism' while, only weeks after 9/11 itself told journalists that al-Qaeda, via the ADF, had plotted to assassinate him in 1999 and that 'bin Laden misled our children [Ugandans recruited to the ADF] and took them for terrorism training in Afghanistan...'.[77] Furthermore, following Kampala's lead in her 2003 letter to Kansteiner, Rosa Whitaker asserted, rather equivocally, that 'I am told that the LRA...has connections to Al-Queda [*sic*]'.

The extent to which these contentions have any basis in reality is open to question: certainly there is evidence that ADF fighters received training from bin Laden's terror network between 1996-7.[78] The same cannot be said, however, for the LRA – an organisation which, however it is to be understood, has no association with Islamic *jihadism*. Indeed, one leading expert has argued that the only link between al-Qaeda and the LRA that he has ever been aware of is a seminary in Juba where both groups were hosted, albeit probably not simultaneously, by the Sudanese government in the 1990s.[79] It is clear, therefore, that the Ugandan regime's attempts to connect these two organisations have been a somewhat disingenuous part of an international image management exercise rather than an exposition of the true nature and origins of the LRA.

Since the mid-2000s, Kampala has acted to ensure that its narrative on the LRA/ADF 'terror threat' remains prominent in donor-Ugandan dialogue in order that donors retain this image as their primary 'lense' through which to view the Museveni government. Ugandan policy-makers have therefore 'pushed' the subject to the forefront of bilateral discussions with donors at every opportunity. One former diplomat notes, for example, that during a mid-

[73] Council on Foreign Relations (2005); Museveni, *Daily Monitor* (14/11/03)
[74] CTV (30/08/02); *PR Newswire* (30/09/04)
[75] Whitaker Group (2003), pp.17-23
[76] Council on Foreign Relations (2003)
[77] CTV (30/08/02); Haynes (2006), p.38; Wasike, *New Vision* (17/12/01)
[78] Haynes (2006), p.503
[79] Personal communication, Professor Ron Atkinson (12/03/10)

2000s meeting with Museveni, the president constantly moved the conversation away from issues of democratic and electoral reform to that of the LRA threat.[80] Likewise, a UK official has recorded how, at Kampala's insistence, the LRA became 'really the only subject' of importance debated at UK-Ugandan meetings in the later 2000s in spite of other issues, including forthcoming elections, being nominally on the agenda.[81] This technique has also been employed in encounters with Western journalists. During a 2003 interview with *AP*, for example, Museveni moved the line of questioning away from his country's involvement in Congo and instead stressed the link between 'fighters from the al-Qaida network' and 'rebel groups in northern Uganda'; ultimately it was this narrative, not that on Congo, which came to dominate the printed article and its headline.[82]

The Ugandan regime also successfully lobbied for the inclusion of the LRA and ADF on the State Department's Terrorist Exclusion List in 2001[83] and has continuously highlighted this issue in speeches to US think tanks.[84] In addition, its security services have frequently made clear to Western journalists that both organisations continue to pose a real threat to Uganda in order to maintain the salience of this important narrative. Thus in 2005 and 2010, following the ADF's removal from the State Department List, Ugandan army spokesmen emphasised to Western journalists that the ADF 'was never annihilated and..[was] now re-grouping'.[85]

Most spectacularly, in 2008, Uganda's internal affairs minister announced that the ADF ('a terrorist group linked to al-Qaeda') had planned to launch an attack during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Kampala six months previously – an event attended by 45 Commonwealth leaders – but had been 'neutralised' by the security forces before they could do so.[86] Whether this declaration was true is difficult to say. It is telling, however, that the 'CHOGM plot' was reported in the UK media amid considerable skepticism with journalists characterising it as a 'Ugandan claim' for which 'no evidence was provided'.[87] Regardless of their veracity, however, these claims by Kampala of continued ADF activity into the 2010s have at least served to regularly remind donors of Uganda's own 'war on terror' and its link to that being fought by Washington.

That donors have been strongly influenced by these image management strategies is clear. Not only have US legislators and politicians frequently referred to 'home-grown terrorism' in their introductory comments on Uganda, so also have annual State Department *Country Reports on Terrorism* largely focused on the LRA/ADF insurgencies when profiling Ugandan cooperation in the Global War.[88] What is significant, however, is the emphasis placed herein on Kampala's 'successful operations against' these groups and the military activities it has undertaken to neutralise them.[89] Indeed, at the heart of Uganda's narrative on the War on Terror, and what differentiates it so substantially from Kenya's handling of its image in this

[80] Interview with former Western diplomat (by telephone), November 2009
[81] Interview with UK official, March 2009 (London)
[82] Dunphy, *AP* (13/06/03)
[83] Perrot (2010), p.96
[84] see, for example, Woodrow Wilson Center (2002) and Council on Foreign Relations (2003)
[85] Sheikh, Institute for War and Peace Reporting (17/11/05); Tripp (2010), pp.156-157; *Reuters* (28/05/10)
[86] Chivers, *Daily Telegraph* (13/01/08) and *Daily Telegraph* (14/01/08)
[87] ibid
[88] see, for example, Congressman Edolphus Towns speech on 14 September 2005 (US Congress 2005); Department of State (2004), p.11; (2005), p.32, (2006), p.57, (2007), (2008), p.26, (2009), p.30 and (2010b), p.34
[89] ibid

regard, is the degree to which it has described the fight against domestic terrorism as a 'war' which it is engaged in and is winning.

Thus throughout the 2000s, the Museveni government has repeatedly suggested to donors that its campaign against the LRA has come close to securing the rebel group's military defeat. In the early 2000s, Museveni gave a senior US policy-maker the impression that the rebel group were 'on the ropes' and that very little was required to 'finish them off'.[90] This was also reportedly how he depicted the situation to the official's UK counterpart who recalls being told by Museveni throughout his tenure that the conflict 'would be over by the raining season'.[91] Indeed, on several occasions in the later 2000s, he claimed in front of Western audiences that 'we have actually ended that conflict' and that 'we have defeated these terrorists...'.[92] These assertions have, again, all been disingenuous and the LRA remain active in central Africa at the time of writing.[93] The point, however, is that most donors rarely questioned Museveni's approach or commitment to dealing with the insurgency until the later 2000s and this has had a major effect on how they view his regime and its role in the War on Terror.

By presenting his government as at war with 'terrorists' linked to al-Qaeda since 9/11, Museveni has therefore been able to convince donors to see Uganda as a central and reliable ally in the Global War and this has led them to be more lenient with it in other areas of policy.

## Kenyan strategies

By contrast, the Kenyan government has made minimal efforts to manage how its donors perceive it, particularly in relation to the War on Terror. Kenyan ministers have been far more reluctant than their Ugandan counterparts to speak to Western journalists or at Western think tanks and those who have have generally avoided the issue of terrorism altogether.[94] During his 2003 US visit, for example, Kibaki was criticised by Kenyan journalists for being 'unwilling to engage with the [US] media except in the most scripted and perfunctory manner' and the Kenyan leader has, at other times, demonstrated a similar lack of interest in establishing a dialogue with the international media community, including during the 2010 visit of US vice president Joe Biden to Nairobi.[95] Successive security ministers have also refused to make themselves available for interview on trips to Washington in 2003, 2004 and 2007.[96]

In private, the Kenyan government, unlike the Ugandan, has largely refrained from trying to promote any narrative on its reliability in the Global War to donors and its paltry attempts at image management in this regard have been primarily acts of 'fire-fighting' rather than seizing the initiative. Between 2003-2006, for example, the Kibaki administration retained only one Washington lobbying firm to influence US policy-makers (Uganda hired three during the same period): Baraka Services.[97] This firm's remit was extremely limited (to

[90] Interview with US official, November 2009 (Washington DC)
[91] Interview with UK official, October 2009 (London)
[92] Council on Foreign Relations (2005); *Al Jazeera English* (23/11/07)
[93] *BBC* (27/09/10)
[94] *BBC Hardtalk* (25/06/05); Brookings Institution (2009)
[95] Kelley, Kwayera and Redfern, *East African* (13/10/03); Kelley, *Daily Nation* (12/10/03); White House (2010)
[96] Opiyo, *Standard* (16/05/04); *Daily Nation* (28/04/07)
[97] Information on lobbyists hired by both governments during this period is available at www.fara.gov

convince Washington to lift its travel ban on US citizens visiting Kenya) and deferential to the US government in its approach. Thus rather than attempting to more broadly convince US policy-makers of Kenya's importance in the Global War (as Scribe Strategies, another lobbying firm, had been hired by Kampala to do in 2005), the firm was asked simply to 'negotiate with Department of State officials [on] how to fulfil the conditions and lift the ban'.[98]

Moreover, Kibaki himself has not attempted to use meetings with donor officials as opportunities to manage how his government is seen, as Museveni has. One former diplomat, for example, has described the Kenyan leader's demeanour in such encounters as 'comatose', noting that Kibaki would often 'fall asleep' and leave his aides to deal with the discussion.[99] Consequently there has been no central 'driver' of Kenyan image management policy in relation to terrorism and thus junior ministers have always been on the defensive when dealing with donors. In 2007, for example, Kenya's internal security minister was reportedly 'asked' by Washington to travel to the US to 'inform US officials on steps...[Kenya]...had taken to combat insecurity' thereby demonstrating how little effort Nairobi had made to do this itself.[100]

The Kenyan government's inadvertent depiction of itself to donors as an administration needing to be 'lead to water' on counter-terror issues has been compounded by a number of other factors. Firstly, in his rare moments of engaging with donor officials, Kibaki has consistently presented his government as submissive and a 'follower' in this regard. In his 2003 Washington visit, for example, he embarrassed his hosts by using a White House banquet speech to directly (and unsuccessfully) 'appeal for a lifting of the [2003] travel ban'.[101] Similarly, in 2010, with Ugandan peacekeepers having deployed to Somalia more than three years previously, Kibaki meekly appealed to the visiting US vice president to 'provide leadership to forge a concerted international effort to stabilise Somalia'.[102]

Secondly, in its basic dealings with donor governments, Nairobi has demonstrated a surprising degree of incompetence which has also had an effect on donor perceptions. Thus, during the crisis over travel advisories, Kibaki failed to fill the top diplomatic posts in Kenyan missions in both London and Washington, leaving no senior official based in the UK or US to argue Nairobi's case.[103] In addition, the Kenyan delegation travelling to Washington with Kibaki in October 2003 lobbied the wrong section of the State Department in their failed attempt to secure the lifting of the travel ban.[104] Such mistakes have rarely been made by Uganda in its relations with donors. In fact, Kampala's US envoy between 1996-2006, Edith Ssempala, has been widely praised by US officials for having Washington's complex bureaucracies 'figured out'.[105]

Indeed, the one narrative on terrorism that the Kenyan government *has* attempted to promote – Kenya as a victim not a source of international terrorism - has caused donors to further see

[98] Baraka Services (2004), p.3; Scribe Strategies (2005). p.3
[99] Interview with Western diplomat, October 2009 (London)
[100] *Daily Nation* (23/04/07)
[101] Kelley, *Daily Nation* (12/10/03)
[102] White House (2010)
[103] *Standard* (13/07/03)
[104] Kelley, *Daily Nation* (12/10/03); the delegation discussed the matter with the African Affairs Bureau rather than the Consular Affairs section
[105] Interview with former US official, November 2009 (Washington DC)

it as unreliable.[106] A number of prominent Kenyan politicians have stressed that Kenya has been a victim of terrorism 'not as an individual country but because of her ties with America'.[107] This official 'downplay [ing] of the terrorist presence in Kenya' has strongly, and negatively, influenced donor perceptions of the Kibaki administration and has lead donor policy-makers, particularly in Washington, to see Kenya as 'less serious' about tackling terrorism than, for example, Uganda.[108] That Nairobi's responses to US criticisms and counter-terrorism policies have often come across as petulant or even antagonistic has lead to the further strengthening of this view in donor capitals. In 2003, for example, the Kenyan foreign minister put forward two veiled criticisms of Washington at the UN General Assembly in relation to the travel ban ('unhelpful measures...that discouraged travel to our country, as a result we have been doubly victimised') and the War on Iraq ('unilateral action does not provide a firm basis for the global alliance against terrorism').[109]

In the same year, national security minister Chris Murungaru affirmed that Nairobi would not necessarily 'give in to [donor] demands' on tackling terrorism and another minister attacked the travel bans as a 'gross injustice', imploring donors not to 'bankrupt one of your oldest friends in Africa'.[110] Kenyan officials have also bemoaned in private their apparent 'snubbing' by donors in relation to Somalia with assistant foreign minister Moses Wetang'ula lamenting to one scholar in 2006 that 'we have tried to engage the US on the issue of Somalia without success. They have called everyone except [us]...this kind of exclusive conduct is not helpful'.[111] Interestingly, while Ugandan officials (particularly Museveni) have sometimes criticised 'donors' in general, they have never singled out the US specifically in these comments, nor have they faulted any of its regional counter-terrorism policies.

Where the Ugandan government has devoted considerable resources to promoting itself, via its war against domestic rebel groups, as a central and cooperative ally in the fight against terrorism. Nairobi has made little effort to do the same and through a combination of incompetence, disinterest and lack of initiative has failed to convince donors to see it in the same light, in spite of its substantial cooperation in donor security initiatives and other areas. Indeed, the Kibaki government's submissive and defensive public diplomacy in this regard has done more harm than good in terms of managing Kenya's reputation in the donor community. Uganda's successful use of 'image management' strategies and Kenya's unwillingness or inability to employ similar tactics can therefore be seen as central explanations for why donors have held such contrasting views of these two governments and their reliability in the Global War.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has argued that, since 9/11, donor countries, particularly the US, have seen the Ugandan government as a more reliable ally in the War on Terror than the Kenyan government. A comparison of Ugandan and Kenyan 'compliance' or cooperation with donors in this regard, however, reveals a less stark contrast in levels of cooperation than suggested by donor rhetoric. A 'perception gap' is argued to exist therefore, to some degree,

[106] see Khadiagala (2004) and Muhula (2007), pp.43-51
[107] *Standard* (06/07/03)
[108] Department of State (2004), p.8
[109] Kelley, *Daily Nation* (03/10/03)
[110] Njeru and Mathenge, *Daily Nation* (23/03/03); *Standard* (13/07/03)
[111] Whitaker (2007), p.263

between how donors *see* Kenyan and Ugandan reliability and what the substance of these governments' cooperative actions might imply to a more objective observer.

In explaining the reasons for this 'gap', the paper has argued for the importance of considering African 'image management' strategies – that is, how African governments attempt to present themselves and their actions to donor officials both publicly and privately. It is clear, for example, that Kampala has been far more interested in managing how its donors see it than Nairobi and has also been more adept at doing so than its neighbour for a variety of reasons. Through the savvy use of lobbyists, speeches and personal encounters with donor officials, the Ugandan government has successfully cast itself as a central and loyal donor ally in the fight against terrorism, primarily through presenting its military attempts to put down domestic insurgencies as actions against al-Qaeda proxies closely linked to the Global War.

The Kenyan government, however, has largely eschewed such strategies and shown reluctance to try and influence donor perceptions except in the most defensive, even adversarial, of ways. This has meant that donors have been more inclined to focus on obvious areas of Kenyan 'non-compliance' when developing views of the Kibaki government, rather than on alternative, more positive narratives (for example, on the vibrancy of Kenyan democracy or its government's role in supporting the TFG) that could - but have not - been advanced by Nairobi.

In viewing these regimes differently, however, donors have come to treat them differently. Thus while Uganda has often escaped censure or aid cuts for democratic backsliding or involvement in high-level corruption owing to its perceived reliability in other areas, Kenya has not. Indeed, often donor responses to governance crises in Kenya have been completely different to, and invariably more critical than, their responses to comparable crises in Uganda. This raises crucial questions, therefore, on the nature of agency in the international system and the extent to which seemingly weak states can improve their standing in donor capitals not by bargaining access to raw materials but instead by devoting time and energy into managing how these donors perceive them.

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