

# Grand Strategy – Democratic Forces of Uganda

Prepared by Erik van der Zanden

Uganda is a country with more than 43 million citizens. Of these 43 million, 78% fall into the category of youth. Ugandans are oppressed by a military regime, controlled by a political-military-economic elite concentrated in the NRM party. This elite is controlled and coordinated by dictator Yoweri Museveni, with close friends and family members on central positions. His son Muhoozi Kainerugaba, commanding Presidential Guard Brigade (PGB) is currently the advisor for Special Operations. Well paid, well-trained, equipped, and high morale, these red berets of the PGB provide a personal guard willing to kill in order to maintain power. Due to the strategic role in Great Lakes Area, the military regime has received enormous donor funding.

However, these donors funds were not used for development, rather for entrenching the regime. A failing economy has resulted into bad healthcare, education, infrastructure, energy, water & food provisions. In particular the young face sky-rocketing unemployment, many are desperate. Throughout the decades the regime have placed NRM agents at top of political, social, military, and economic institutions, in order to gain control over society. Religious institutions, labour unions, and middle class, traditionally pressure groups for reform, are afraid to speak out. The few that found jobs in government or the neutral NGO sector are afraid to lose their funding or employment. Society is weak, divided, and unorganized.

There is one sector within society that is willing to engage the regime openly, that is both organized and grounded in ideology for a better future. These are the political parties in Uganda. The Uganda Young Democrats (UYD) and Reform Agenda shaped the political arena around 2000. Reform Agenda turned into the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), which has led the struggle as largest opposition party for the last 20 years. However, even though it won multiple elections before, it has been unable to successfully depose the military regime until now. FDC initiative Activists 4 Change (A4C) came close to gain freedom when the Walk to Work uprising in April 2011 occurred. In this uprising, political parties shortly overcame political divisions and attracted support from wider elements of society. Eventually, it failed due to inability to make oppression backfire. When the 2016 elections were won by FDC, but stolen by the regime, an atmosphere of mourning ruled the streets of Kampala. It became absolutely clear that Uganda was ruled by the gun. Among FDC two camps developed, the camp under Patrick Oboi Amuriat that focussed on action and defiance, and Mugisha Muntu that focussed on building post-Museveni Uganda. The frustration of a continued status quo and lost trust in FDC ability to succeed led musician Bobi Wine to rise in profile. This led to the launch the People Power (PP) movement that transformed into the National Unity Platform (NUP).

In contrast to a frustrated FDC, who had experienced several times how their victories had been stolen in rigged elections, the group of Bobi Wine and PP believed they could take power through the 2021 election. As a result, they have organized since 2017 to increase voter turnout among the youth, besides a clear campaign for the presidential seat. With an initial focus on stopping Museveni to enter into another election yet again, Dr. Besigye stood aside and moved Patrick Oboi Amuriat (POA) forward as FDC presidential candidate in what they called: Plan A.

Even though POA has a delay of three years of campaigning to Bobi Wine, POA and FDC should not be underestimated, as they have a strong legacy, organization, and ideology.

NUP has been able to effectively organize its diaspora and political gatherings around the world in order to create awareness about the injustices in Uganda. Never before has an Ugandan received as much popular support from the international community. Bobi Wine has awoken a sense of power among Uganda's youth, a direct identification as those who are oppressed at the outskirts of urban centres. Nevertheless, NUP also has weaknesses, as it lacks the deepened national coverage of organization of FDC, and experience in street protest for overcoming fear of oppression. Yet the ability of NUP to voice their oppression to international news media is something that FDC has been unable to meet during the last decades of struggle. United they would form an unbeatable alliance.

This was showcased in their united struggle against the amendment of article 102.b of the constitution, that would allow Museveni to run again in the 2021 elections. Using the symbol of red headwear, together they led the nation into its second greatest campaign against the regime. Unfortunately, the campaign died out in parliament, where again the real brutality of the regime was showcased when Museveni send soldiers into parliament to arrest those that opposed him.

Of course, Museveni knows the importance of an FDC/NUP alliance as well, and has successfully used propaganda, use of concentrated force, and manipulation to create a strong distrust among these two democratic forces. After the stolen 2016 elections Dr. Besigye founded the People's Government. However, it's cabinet was officially installed in 2019. Unfortunately, this has disastrous results for unity among opposition, as PP felt that it was an FDC initiative to counter the momentum of the People Power wave. In response, PP youth mocked the FDC struggle as 'comedy', and assaulted Dr. Besigye after a radio show, which turned FDC into a defensive mode. Ever since, distrust exist among both democratic forces.

With two more months to elections, several presidential candidates, of which Patrick Oboi Amuriat and Bobi Wine are most important, are campaigning individually instead of forming an alliance. Although the dependence on charismatic political leaders managed to attract large crowds, house arrests have proven successful in neutralizing these crowds quickly during (planned) protests. An enormous amount of resources are being wasted on MP positions, even though positions will be abolished after a successful peaceful regime change.

Nevertheless, the winds of change are blowing and history is against the regime. In the last 10 years notorious dictators such as Mubarak, Mugabe, and Bashir have fallen. Uganda is increasingly in the spotlight, and Museveni is becoming more isolated and perceived as a corrupt and violent dictator. Ugandans are organizing themselves both in the homeland and diaspora, while social media is used as mass communication tool to attract the world and citizens attention to injustice and oppression. For a long time those that are well-off supported the regime to maintain stability, but they are slowly realizing that the longer the situation endures, the greater the violent explosion of instability will be when Museveni steps down or dies. In order to prevent a new era of political instability and ethnic violence in Uganda, a short campaign of peaceful instability is needed to replace dictatorship with democracy.

## SWOT Analysis - Democratic Forces of Uganda

### Strengths

- Internal organization in political parties
- Communication channels
- Shared goal of freedom
- Experience
- Ideology

### Weaknesses

- Dependence on charismatic leaders
- Distrust & lack of unity among opposition groups
- Elements of self-centred fortune seekers
- Pride among factions
- Lack of resources

### Opportunities

- Ability to stop donor support
- Ability to target economic pillars of support
- Ability to attract diaspora & donor funding
- Ability to attract pillars of support
- Population yearning for change
- Increased sense of national identity

### Threats

- Violent oppression
- Regime manipulation & bribery
- Disorganized society
- Ignorance among society
- Donors ignorance
- Media ignorance

## SWOT Analysis – NRM Military Regime

### Strengths

- Strong donor support network
- Loyal circle of NRM military-political-business elite
- Access to enormous amount of militarized partisan police
- Extreme poverty (effective method of bribery)
- Experience in dealing with protest
- Voter support in villages

### Weaknesses

- Dependency on Western donors
- Dependent on image of 'stability'
- Dissatisfaction among low-paid personnel
- Disability to fully control spread of information
- Huge corruption among all elements of state

### Opportunities

- Continued actions/manipulation to divide FDC/NUP
- Continued reliance of Ugandan people on charismatic leaders
- Opposition find no effective counter for house-arrest
- Continued steady donor support
- Continued neglect by world media
- Continued disorganisation of opposition

### Threats

- Unity among opposition
- Stopped donor funding
- Isolation as 'problem state'
- Organized opposition & society
- Disobedience among troops

## **Goal**

The goal of the struggle is replace the dictatorial regime with a democratic inclusive government where the freedom of society is strongly protected through division of powers, such as well articulated law and independent judiciary.

## **Form of Action**

Uganda has had a history of violence, and never experienced a peaceful handover of power. Three elements have provided the main dilemma's in Uganda's history. The north-south divide, the Buganda question, and the Asian matter. A multitude of ethnicities form important identities, while the nation-building process is still a work in progress. In particular, the NRM regime has favoured Western Ugandans and Rwandese. A violent form of action can quickly result into civil war. As a result, opposition has united in form, and strongly demanded for peaceful methods such as elections and defiance.

Therefore, instead of assaulting the military might of the regime, the strategy is focussed on assaulting the political power of the regime. For this the pillars of support, the elements which provide the sources of power to the regime, needs to be pulled away. There are eight crucial pillars of support, that can all be drawn away from the NRM military regime.

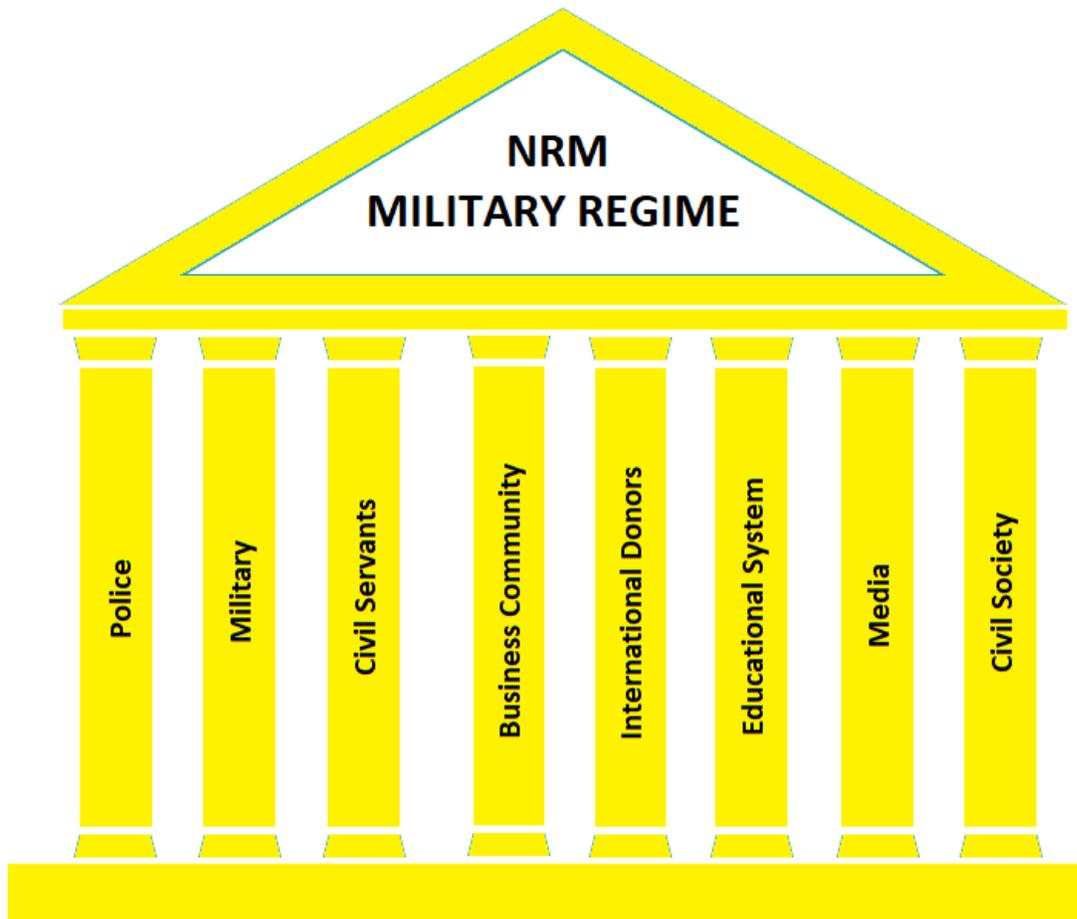
Police is the main arm of violent oppression in Uganda, and is present in every city and village. The Uganda Police Force has low wages and terrible accommodation for most of its officers.

Military is used by the regime when protest is expected, such as during elections. The praetorian guard under the command of Muhoozi will protect the regime at all costs, and does not shy away from killing Ugandans when it comes to survival. However, UPDF has traditionally been a patriotic army that fought for the freedom of Uganda in 1981-86. Most of its veterans and generals fought for a noble cause and feel Museveni and the regime betrayed the cause. Again, low wages and bad accommodation for most soldiers. Furthermore, many are tired of dying for military missions that only support the regime reputation.

Bureaucracy is extremely corrupt and inefficient, now in favour of regime. Civil servants in the bureaucracy are likely pragmatic in order to maintain salaries, and can switch support when it becomes clear the regime is weakening.

Business Community is crucial in providing economic support to regime. Fear for violence or expulsion after Idi Amin has made Asians dependent on Museveni. However, business comes first, so pragmatic when they trust the opposition will protect them from violence and expulsion. Especially Indian middle-class form an important pillar of support in trade, agriculture, and production.

International Donors have been loyal pillars of support, using Museveni as proxy state in their War on Terror, or stopping migration through keeping refugees in Africa. Nevertheless, all Western donors are dependent on their citizens who can be informed that their taxpayers money is used for violently oppressing innocent Ugandans that want freedom. Donors have been increasingly critical on regime since Bobi Wine arrest and torture in Arua.



Educational System often provide the most revolutionary elements in society through her students, who complete expensive educations but enter job market hopeless. Teachers in countryside can stop promoting NRM propaganda and tell traditional and biblical stories of freedom and hope.

Media has provided steady support for the NRM regime. Many stations and news outlets are under the control of NRM agents, or forced to heavily self-censor in order to prevent oppression. In particular, UBC, Bukedde, Urban TV, and the New Vision provide steady support, and many others are besieged. Many journalists feel uneasy in deceiving the nation, and withholding just coverage of opposition activities.

Civil Society forms besides business community main elements of middle class, but as working within government or NGO sector, they are afraid to lose their privileges in showing political discontent. However, this group provides main sources of intellectuals, organization, and civil legitimacy to political struggle to build a new Uganda. This group can used for more covert action against the regime.

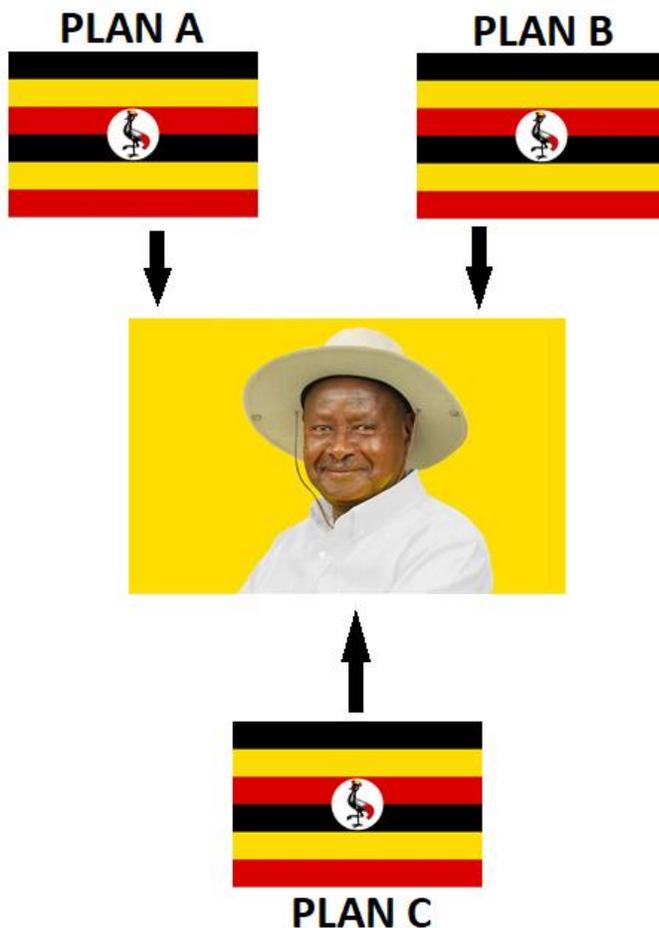
## Achilles Heel: Economic Sources

Regime invests extreme amounts into its capacity to use violence against its citizens. However, the use of this violence needs large amounts of money. Salaries need to be payed, teargas canister and bullets need to be bought. Police riot gear costs money. Secondly, bribing has been a crucial element in a poverty-struck society. Without finances, the regime is hit at its Achilles heel (only weak spot). Therefore, campaigns that focus on pulling the economic pillars of support will be extra efficient in weakening the regime in its capability to use violent oppression.

## Plan of Assault

In order to depose the military regime after 35 years of oppression, it must be assaulted from all sides. Three groups devote all their time and resources in the next 5 months to not only dethrone the NRM junta under leadership of Museveni, but install an inclusive democratic government, first of its kind in Africa. In order to gain victory, there will be a focus on many small victories instead of focus on protests. Revolutions are not like explosions, but like long burns that pull power from the dictatorship to society. During these small victories Ugandans will lose fear, while training and preparing non-violent discipline for the final push.

These groups are Plan A, B, and C.



### Plan A: Elections

The main goal of Plan A is to increase voter turn-out, especially of the youth. In this period the visions of tomorrow will be shared through manifesto's, providing ideology.

Although the urban areas in Uganda, in particular Kampala, have provided a vote for opposition in the 2016 elections, most of the rural areas are still voting on the NRM regime due to a combination of ignorance, intimidation, isolation, and oppression. In order to mobilize the whole nation against the NRM regime, special attention needs to be given to mobilizing Ugandans in rural areas. They still provide the lock to NRM power, and all branding of Museveni as Mzee Owenkofila (the old man with the hat), and cows is using symbols to connect to the rural / peasant voter. Educated and politically activated youth provide an ideal key to organize and enlighten the peasants.

### Plan B: Defiance

Besides providing ideology and mobilizing citizens of Uganda to vote in the 14 January 2021 elections, these politically active citizens need to become able to protect their votes through vigilance. Furthermore, the people need to become more organized and informed, as to become a critical society able to hold their local and national governance accountable. This is key to building a new Uganda.

Therefore, the main goal of Plan B is to organize and inform the masses after it has been mobilized. Initiatives such as Power 10 (P10) and People Councils (PC's) are spread out over the country to give citizens organization and tools to collaborate. In order to become vigilant both for elections and in the protests in case election is stolen, training of non-violent discipline is crucial. Prepare logistics to increase prosperity of local communities. Improve unity in both ideology (building a new Uganda) and collaboration.

### Plan C: Diaspora

The main goal of Plan C is to stop international donor support of the military regime, while providing funds for the democratic forces. By exposing violent oppression to the world, Plan C will furthermore isolate the regime and damage its reputation as beacon of stability and reliable proxy state.

## Symbols

With the colours representing political factions, the colours and party symbols contribute to division among the democratic forces. In order to provide a unified symbol for the democratic forces of Uganda, there is a single possible symbol: the Ugandan flag, representing the nation.

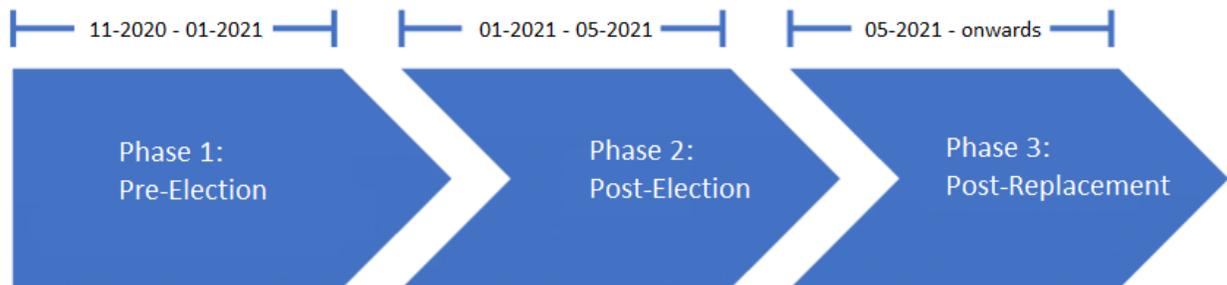


A second symbol could be the crowned crane, also representing the people of Uganda. This is in contrast of the Leopard, that represents Museveni himself. The struggle could be portrayed as a battle between the Crane vs the Leopard. The symbols should unite all Ugandans, not divide it in factions.



## Timing

With only 2 months left to the national elections, time is a crucial and scarce resource. For success of replacing an entrenched military regime towards an inclusive democratic government, time must be used as efficient as possible. Furthermore, it is crucial to plan for both the period of mass protests after the stolen election in January, and the crucial phase of making sure NRM or army does not steal the revolution because of a power vacuum as the result of lack of unity and organization among democratic forces.



### Phase 1: Pre-Election

October 2020 – January 2021

Focus on voter turn-out, make them politically engaged. Penetrate rural areas to remove the NRM lock on power in elections. Seek for opportunities to increase economic pressure on regime, while trying to build an alliance of democratic forces. Momentum should be increased and maintained by using symbolic actions of defiance all over the country. Organization and communication structures for Phase 2 should be prepared.

### Phase 2: Post-Election

January 2021 – May 2021

The military regime will rig the elections again, and use force to oppress the people that want to protest. There are two scenarios. Scenario 1: democratic forces remain divided, it becomes a lot easier for military regime to divide and rule. Scenario 2: democratic forces succeed in forming an alliance, it becomes impossible for military regime to divide and rule, and will lose.

After elections are stolen, massive campaigns of non-cooperation are used to pull pillars of support away from the regime. Economic sources are severed which will provide Achilles heel of regime, that eventually disintegrate.

### Phase 3: Post-Replacement

May 2021 onwards

As we have seen in most revolutions in Africa during the last decade, the military regime will sacrifice its dictator to take power for themselves, either in a coup d'état or other military takeover. Therefore, it is of crucial importance that the democratic forces are prepared to stop the military, and NRM faction, to re-take power. This can be achieved by the same (economic) non-cooperation. Ugandans should not celebrate until the Museveni is dethroned, democratic forces

are in power, and actual transformation is underway that installs an inclusive democratic government. This is likely going to be the hardest phase of the struggle, as in contrary to the first 2 phases, success in phase 3 is extremely rare in Africa.

In order to succeed in phase 3, there will be need for political brokering and unity among democratic forces. Strong reforms to dethrone the NRM and military regime, while radically transforming politics, society, and economy in order to benefit all citizens of Uganda instead of the 10%.

### **Coordination**

The Ugandan struggle is still dependent charismatic leaders, who fight each other for the presidential seat. Therefore, an alliance for coordination for all democratic forces is only possible when working on equal terms. The question who should join who led to an inability to unite, as gaining political seats is a zero-sum game. Only one can win. Focus should be broadened on freedom and justice, where all who succeed win. Although prominence must be given to the most powerful groups (FDC and NUP) minor democratic groups such as DP, ANT, Juuma and independents should be included in the alliance. It is also important to reach out for progressive NRM elements to switch their allegiance from the NRM military regime towards the democratic forces.

### **Allocation & Distribution**

Due to the factionalized democratic forces into political parties, of which allocation and distribution of resources and manpower will likely not be shared, this can remain dependent on own support groups, diaspora, and donor fundraising.

### **Conclusion**

Based on this Grand Strategy for the peaceful revolution of Uganda, further strategies in the forms of campaigns, tactics, and methods can be developed in order to make the plan a reality.

The first duty of a revolutionary is to educate himself. Study the following documents carefully to inform yourself about how peaceful revolution in Uganda can be achieved.

Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (<https://canvasopedia.org/>)

<https://canvasopedia.org/project/50-crucial-points/>

<https://canvasopedia.org/project/making-oppression-backfire/>

<https://canvasopedia.org/project/handbook-working-activists/>

## **Appendix 1: Achilles Heel Methods - Economic Defiance (Gene Sharp)**

### 1. Economic Boycotts

#### Consumers

- Consumers Boycott
- No consumption of boycotted goods
- Policy of austerity
- Rent withholding
- Refusal to rent
- National consumers boycott
- International consumers boycott

#### Workers & producers

- Workmen's boycott
- Producers boycott

#### Middlemen

- Suppliers and handles boycott

#### Owners and Management

- Traders boycott
- Refusal to let or sell property
- Lockout
- Refusal of industrial assistance
- Merchants general strike

#### HOLDERS OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- Withdrawal of bank deposits
- Refusal to pay fees, dues, and assessments
- Refusal to pay debts or interest
- Severance of funds and credit
- Revenue refusal
- Refusal of government's money

#### Governments

- Domestic embargo
- Blacklisting of traders
- International sellers embargo
- International buyers embargo
- International trade embargo

### 2. Strike

#### Symbolic Strikes

- Protest strike
- Quickie walkout (lightning strike)

#### Agricultural Strikes

- Peasant strike
- Farm workers strike

#### Strikes by Special Groups

- Refusal to impressed labour
- Prisoners strike
- Craft strike
- Professional strike

#### Ordinary Industrial Strikes

- Establishment strike
- Industry strike
- Sympathetic strike

#### Restricted Strikes

- Detailed strike
- Bumper strike
- Slowdown strike
- Working-to-rule strike
- Reporting sick (sick-in)
- Strike by resignation
- Limited strike
- Selective strike