

# THE RISE OF IDI AMIN AS THE PRESIDENT OF UGANDA AND ITS IMPLICATION ON THE LIBERATION STRUGGLES OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Edward F. Eliya\* & Anisa K. Mbega\*\*

\*ORCID:0009-0001-7913-6394

\*\*ORCID:0009-0009-2257-3591

---

## Abstract

*The overthrow of the Ugandan President Dr Apollo Milton Obote on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1971 opened a new but provocative chapter of the diplomatic relations between Tanzania and Uganda. Obote and the President of Tanzania then, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, supported Southern African Countries' (SACs) liberation struggles. This study examines the rise of Idi Amin and its implications for the liberation struggles of SACs. Specifically, it examines the Frontline Leaders' (FLLs) reaction to Amin's regime, especially after he invaded Tanzania. Both unpublished and published sources were consulted to gather information. The unpublished data were collected from different reports, magazines, and newspapers from the Tanzania National Library and Tanzania National Archive. The published data were collected from books and journal articles. The data collection in Tanzania was done because the country was directly engaged in the two incidences. Firstly, Tanzania was invaded by Amin, leading to the Tanzania-Uganda War of 1978-1979. Secondly, the country was the center of the Southern Africa Liberation Movements. The results exposed that Amin's coup over Obote and the invasion of Tanzania had imperialist motives behind it. The rise of Amin as the new President of Uganda and his invasion of Tanzania implicated the whole operation of liberation movements in SACs. The FLLs were disappointed seeing their fellow African leaders trying to introduce another kind of imperialism. Amin's vision differed from the FLLs' vision, which was to decolonize SACs such as Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and the liberation of South Africa against apartheid policy.*

**Keywords:** Idi Amin, Milton Obote, Mwalimu Nyerere, Frontline Leaders, Liberation Struggles, Southern African countries.

## **Introduction**

The successful overthrow of the second President of Uganda in January 1971 had long roots. During five years of Obote's presidency in Uganda, we experienced tremendous development in all aspects of life, socially, economically, and politically. O'Cleirigh (2004) Avowed that Obote introduced the Common Man's Charter (move-to-the-left), a document agreed upon during the June 1968 conference and signed into law on 24th October 1969 in Kampala. The charter was drafted as a political tool to unify all Ugandans and remove the colonial mentality among the people. It advanced a unitary, republican, and democratic nature of government. Based on the economic outlook, it was a socialist with a welfare-state solid endorsement (Boyd et al., 2022). The charter was nationally established because it was anti-foreign and wanted to shed the mantle of colonialism.

What was planted in Uganda during the era of the British protectorate appeared in the eyes and minds of our people as the final word in perfection regarding the development of our material resources and human relationship. Consequently, both before and after independence, our people have been living in a society in which an alien way of life has been embedded. The result has that most of our people do not look in to the country for the ideas to make life better in Uganda, but always look elsewhere to import ideas which may be perfectly suitable in some other society but certainly unfitting in a society like ours (Aasland, 1974, p. 11)

The Ugandans were encouraged to think and solve their country's problems out of colonial belief. It criticised the colonial mind that dominated among the Ugandans for a long time. The charter was also a unifying tool among Ugandans. It criticised the Ugandans for being divided based on their ethnic groups and religious differences. The charter strengthened a unifying attitude toward government, pro-unitary and anti-federal government with its motto: one people, one parliament, and one government. Ingham (1994) postulated that the charter believed the government had to be anti-monarchical and anti-federal. The charter further neglected exploitation and oppression among

people in the country. It emphasised common ownership of the significant means of production.

The coup détente that succeeded in overthrowing Obote in 1971 was planned for a long time. It was prepared since he entered the office in 1966. Uganda was one of the East African countries showing good progress economically, socially, and politically with Obote. Something to note is that Obote struggled a lot to become the President of Uganda. It was not simply due to the groups of opponents who also wanted the position and the nature of Uganda itself. Mazrui (1970) asserted that there were three conceivable groups of opponents of the President who might have been implicated in the attempted assassination. These were the ethnic, ideological opponents and the rivals for power. Based on ethnic groups, Uganda was associated with ethnicity, and therefore, Obote would not be supported by some of these ethnic groups. Something terrible is that most of his enemies were close to him, a concept supported by a Swahili proverb, “*kikulacho ki-nguoni mwako.*” Amin, whom Obote appointed Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), implemented the coup. Omara-Otunnu (1987) and Akyeampong & Gates (2012) asserted that the first attempt to overthrow Obote occurred on December 19, 1969, after the annual conference of the Uganda People’s Congress (UPC) delegate, where Obote inaugurated the Common Man’s Charter. While on the way from the conference, a man who is believed to be directed by Amin intervened and shot the President (Mwenegoha & Mbonde, 1979).

It can be noted that death is God’s plan, and for this reason, the attempt failed to kill Obote. Mwenegoha and Mbonde (1979) asserted that one shooting penetrated one of his cheeks and went out through the next cheek. Mwenegoha and Mbonde further asserted that the dropped bomb near the legs of Obote did not blast, something that made the plan fail. Obote was quickly sent to Mulago Hospital, where he was admitted. The literature has revealed that Obote was unconscious and could not speak. Either because he was unconscious or because of the intended plan, the rumours spread across the country that Obote passed away by the assassins. The rumours were reported mainly by the people in authority, which brings many difficult questions. Again, while this

unusual act happened, the top leaders of the security officers were not present at the conference. Since the President chaired the meeting, the top security officers from all departments were commonly expected to attend. Amin, who was the CDF; Akena Adoko, who was the commander of the General Service Department (GSD); and the Inspector General of Police (IGP) were not around.

Since General Amin was not around during the conference and the incident, special security officers were sent to Amin's house, which was located at Prince Charles Drive Street in Kampala, to inform him. Mwenegoha & Mbonde (1979) avowed that the officers from GSD who went to send a message about the incident of Obote were suddenly stopped by Amin's security officers near the house. After discussing for a while, the security guards called to confirm Amin's presence. They were allowed to enter and assured that Amin was inside. Surprisingly, no one responded after reaching the house and knocking on the door. The officers were shocked since the security guards told them that Amin was inside. After they missed him, Ojok called Brigadier Pierino Yere Okaya, who assumed the second position with Amin in the Uganda military forces. It was around 11 pm when they talked to Okaya about Obote's incident and that Amin was not found. Brigadier Okaya, who was at Jinja, quickly returned to Kampala and announced a state of emergence, and he ordered all commandos to attend the meeting the following day around 6 am. During the meeting, several questions were raised without clear clarification on the reasons for the attempted assassination of Obote. Mwenegoha & Mbonde (1979) emphasized that members were trying to speculate if the attempt aimed at overthrowing the government or if it only aimed at killing the President. Something that increased tension was the case of Amin, who disappeared without any official message. It was not until 10 am that Amin reached the military headquarters, where many military officers became shocked. After some discussions with him, the Ugandan interagency suspected that Amin had left his house suddenly, trying to escape. The two minor injuries on his hand and leg were related to such escaping trials. Brigadier Okaya wanted more clarification on the reason for the killing attempt for future security actions.

A few days after he was discharged from the hospital, Obote called for a meeting on 17 January 1970. The meeting was so tuff dominated by contradicting ideas, especially from Okaya's need to clarify why Amin escaped his house by jumping the fence and not using the standard doors and gates where his security officers could assist him. The meeting ended with no agreements because there were no clear clarifications, and the President called for a second meeting on 26 January 1970 (Mwenegoha & Mbonde, 1979). While all necessary preparations for the meeting were done, it could not be held due to the sad news of the death of Brigadier Okaya and his wife. It was reported that Okaya and his wife were killed at 11 pm on 25 January 1970, just a night before the planned meeting day. The two were killed while at home in Karo village. The investigation for the killers was complicated since the police who were investigating were being intimidated, as reported by David Martin, a book writer who came across some of the case files.

It was not until 21st August 1970 that the insights of the case regarding the death of Okaya and his wife started to be observed. Mr. Kayondo, who was a security officer, investigated Mr Bumuli regarding the death of Okaya, as Mr Bumuli was one of the suspects in the assassination. With their long discussions, Bumuli provided plenty of information about the agents for the death of Okaya. Bumuli and another suspect, namely Twaka Katumba, named many persons who were responsible for the death of Okaya. Following the explanations of Bumuli, Katumba, and other suspects, the report concluded that Amin was responsible for the death of Okaya, and he had planned it since 1969. With the support of a report from police intelligence, it was reported that Amin's plan to kill Okaya was associated with power ambitions. Okaya was very close and loyal to the President, creating tension in Amin. Amin feared that the President would replace his position with Okaya. In his interpretations, Amin was sure that Okaya would take his position because Okaya belonged to the Acholi ethnic group, closely related to President Obote. Again, the incidents during the military officials meeting of 17th March 1970 were dominated by uncompromising ideas regarding the assassination attempt (Mwenegoha & Mbonde, 1979). Okaya was very strict during the

conference, and he frequently judged the connection between the assassination attempt on Obote and the absence of the army commander Amin. Moreover, the police reported that Okaya and his wife were assassinated by Kondos, as known in Uganda. The police further noted that the kondos implemented it by an order from Major General Amin.

Amin's administration as the head of the military in Uganda was dominated by favouritism and injustice (Roberts, 2014). The selection of commanders of different military brigades depended on his interests. For instance, Amin refused to appoint the top military officers, such as significant Generals and Captains, to lead different military commands; instead, he appointed officers with Lieutenants to such positions. He appointed Lieutenant Dodi, who led the Bamunanika brigade, and Lieutenant Avudria to lead the Gulu brigade. Moreover, Amin did not allow different military officers to get a chance to go to Europe for various courses. He also overlooked power in different military camps by intervening in roles that heads of such commands could perform. In the case of military cooperation with Sudan, Amin was totally against the national policy by not supporting Southern Sudan, which was in chaos with their Government. It had been noted that Amin ordered the military officers bordering South Sudan to allow the passage of military equipment and foodstuff to the Anyanya group in South Sudan.

One year after the coup, many discussions confirmed Obote's claims over Amin, especially on the misuse of public funds. Mwenegoha & Mbonde (1979) postulated that Professor Michael F. Lofchie from California University published a paper in the *Journal of Modern African Studies*, which discussed many issues related to Obote's claims about the misuse of public funds by the Ministry of Defence. Prof. Lofchie remarked that it is reasonable for some of us to disregard the allegations posed by Obote. However, the report from the general auditor of the public fund disposed of many issues regarding the misuse of public funds by the Ugandan military. For instance, the 1968/1969 report indicated that the military spent more than the parliament had endorsed. For example, the military spent 29,955,215/- Ugandan shillings out of 45,355,067/- as the whole Government budget. This

indicates that the military spent 66% of the government budget while only 44% was used in all other sectors. Specifically, the Ugandan parliament endorsed 24,900,000/- Ugandan shillings. Misuse and misallocation of public funds dominated Amin's leadership in the military. Poor record-keeping increased mistrust towards the use of public funds. Moreover, due to a lack of records, the national treasurer prohibited using 5,800,000/- Ugandan Shillings in 1968 (Mwenegoha & Mbonde, 1979). Without consent from the national treasurer, the same amount was withdrawn by 30th June 1969 with the title that the amount was used to develop the military. Why was such an amount withdrawn on the last day of the financial year without consent from the national treasurer? The President was unaware of the military development agenda that required such an amount of money.

From that moment, Obote was preparing a vital file that would quickly end the power of Amin in the Ugandan military. Among other steps, Obote lowered the power and status of Amin by appointing the commander of land forces and the commander of air forces in November 1970. All these made Amin in a trapping net who waited for the final decision from the President. It should be remembered that Amin played a vital role in stopping the Kabaka's trial of overthrowing the Government in 1966. Thus, Obote stacked several times to punish Amin despite what Amin was doing. The delay of Obote's action gave Amin an advantage in preparing for a coup. Bouckaert, P. (1999) argued that while Obote ordered Amin to submit a report on the misuse of 40,000,000/- Ugandan shillings in the name of developing the military, his journey to Singapore gave Amin an advantage. While in Singapore, Obote ordered Amin to be detained on 24th January 1971. Before the implementation of the order, Amin saw it as the only chance to run a coup against Obote's government (Avirgan & Honey, (1982).

### **The Coup Itself**

As the newspapers reported, Obote received the news of the Uganda coup while attending the Commonwealth meeting in Singapore. David Martin, a journalist, said that before the flight left Singapore, Obote was aware of the coup over his government. Ntende and his friend told Obote that Amin had overthrown his government (Mwenegoha &

Mbonde, 1979). While speaking to Bataringaya, who hid himself at Apollo Hospital, he confirmed to Obote that there was no hope of overthrowing Amin's military government. He was further told that Amin's military groups were already spread in Kampala and that the army under Brigadier Hussein was defeated. Before moving to the airport, Obote informed all the delegates about the situation in their country. Obote and his team arrived in Nairobi at seven in the evening. While landing at Nairobi, he received attention from Arap Moi, Kenya's Vice President, and Njoroge Mungai, Kenya's Minister of Foreign Affairs. With exceptional attention, Obote was escorted to the Pan Afrique Hotel (Mwenegoha & Mbonde, 1979). While in Kenya, Obote wanted to secretly organise the military forces, which supported him in defending his presidency against Amin's forces. As he found out there was not enough support from the Government of Kenya, Obote decided to go to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Following Obote's plan to go to Dar es Salaam, Mwalimu Nyerere postponed his journey to India. At the Mwalimu Nyerere International Airport, Obote and his delegates were received by the deputy Vice President and the Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania, Rashid Mfaume Kawawa. Obote and his delegates were surprised by the masses who cheered at them in the streets, giving them all the respect of the head of state. Tanzanians did not accept the overthrow of Obote, and they did not acknowledge Amin's presidency. Tanzania supported Obote because of the position of their President, Nyerere, who disregarded Amin's presidency. To Obote, Tanzania was the right place for him to prepare for any political movement in his country (Mwenegoha & Mbonde, 1979). Then, Nyerere declared to the world that he would stand with Obote, the democratically elected President of Uganda. Five days after the coup in Uganda, Nyerere broadcasted live on Radio Tanzania. In his remarks, Nyerere insisted that he could not sit at the same table with Amin, who killed several people for the sake of becoming a President.

Amin used different slogans to ensure he gained support from several countries worldwide. Among other things, Amin wanted to gain support from Britain. According to Mwenegoha & Mbonde (1979),



there were about 50,000 British citizens in Uganda by then. Amin wanted to take advantage of the British population in Uganda and get support from Britain. By then, Britain was led by a Conservative Party under Edward Heath. Most African countries, especially those who engineered the Liberation of South African Countries Movement (LSACM), were against Heath's Government's plan to sell military equipment to the Boers Government of South Africa. Obote was one of the African Presidents against the British Government's plan. The Singapore conference raised an agreement among Commonwealth countries to disregard Heath's Government plan and that if the plan continued, members would remove their membership. To Amin, this was an opportunity to gain support from Britain. In one of his public meetings, Amin claimed that since the process of selling military equipment to the Boers government of South Africa was an internal agenda, he could not interfere. He pretended to respect international agreements that prohibited governments from interfering in internal matters. Thus, he promised to continue with historical relations with Britain. Similarly, Amin vowed to hand over to the British all nationalised companies in a plan to be nationalised by Obote's Government.

Heath and his people admired Amin's Government and saw him as a hero. Many British Newspapers reported positively about the coup implemented by Amin in Uganda. For instance, soon after the coup, the New Statesman newspaper of 26th January 1971 reported that it was a nice moment for the British government to work with Amin rather than Obote (Roberts, 2012). Similarly, the Daily Telegram newspaper of 26th January 1971 reported that the importance of conducting Commonwealth meetings regularly is that all leaders who oppose its plans are being overthrown, like what happened to Obote. Spectator newspaper of 30th February 1971 reported that it was more pleasant to work with military Governments than autocratic ones, especially in Africa. Hutton and Bloch (1979) postulated that Heath compared Obote's government, which he termed dictatorial, and that of Amin, which he termed a military government. He then concluded that the military government of Amin was desirable and not that of Obote. It was 4 February 1971, and while the world still had several questions

about Amin's government, the British government officially announced that they recognised and supported Amin's government.

Just a few days after the British Government recognised Amin's administration, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the President of Malawi, and Dr Kofi Busia, the Prime Minister of Ghana, then supported the decision of the British Government. Malawi and Ghana supported Amin's Government because they supported South Africa and its plan to buy military weapons from the British. To get more supporters, Amin announced that he was planning to make a state visit to South Africa and Zimbabwe. The next step was for Amin to stop participating in the LSACM. As he always used to be, Amin could have done anything when he wanted to get something potential for his Government. Hansen (2013) avowed that Amin raised different paradoxes, making understanding his nature difficult for many nations. For instance, after one year, Amin made a speech noting that he was ready to support the LSACM and that he could provide military forces. He also blamed Kamuzu Banda for supporting the South African government under the Boers. Amin proposed that Banda be isolated from Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) countries.

Throughout the eight years of his presidency in Uganda, Amin posed several intimidations to the neighbouring countries. Mmbondo (1980) avowed that Amin wanted to extend Uganda's borders to Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, and Tanzania. For instance, Amin claimed that the whole of Kenya's Western Rift Valley and Central Province up to Limuru was part of Uganda. Amin also claimed that the southern part of Sudan and the extensive land of Rwanda were Uganda's land. Regarding the part of Tanzania that is our central case, Amin believed that the West Lake Region, currently Kagera, belonged to Uganda. Although Amin's expansionist tendencies involved almost all bordering countries, Tanzania experienced the most trauma from Amin's actions. It should be remembered that since his overthrow, Obote was hosted by Mwalimu Nyerere of Tanzania, which angered Amin. However, this was done based on international policies that allow countries to host political exiles (Ngatuni et al., 1980). With such

regard, Amin was not supposed to hate and blame Tanzania for hosting Dr. Obote.

A few supporters of Obote also fled from Uganda and held different meetings with Obote in Dar es Salaam and Arusha cities of Tanzania. Bhagat (1983) postulated that with mass killings in Uganda implemented by Amin continued, many Ugandans fled to Tanzania, and they settled in Tabora (central Tanzania zone), engaging themselves in tobacco production. Mmbando (1980) asserted that the Ugandan refugees in Tabora included Amin's soldiers who feared being killed. For instance, many of Amin's soldiers escaped Mutukula Army Prison and joined their fellow Ugandans in Tabora. Several scholars have examined the main reasons for Amin's strong military desire in Tanzania, unlike other countries (Acheson-Brown, 2001). On October 27th, 1978, early in the morning at 5, Amin's troops, with their military tanks and cannons, started to march from Kakuto village to Mutukula (Mzirai, 1980, p. 23). With full violence and killings, Amin invaded the Northern part of the Kagera River. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 1978, Nyerere declared war against Amin's government (Prunier, 1984).

### **The Reaction of the Frontline Leaders of the Liberation of Southern Africa Movement**

Throughout his presidency to the time he invaded Tanzania, several African heads of states and cabinets disregarded Amin for his cruelty. The leaders of LSACM refused to cooperate with Amin's government. They perceived him to be a puppet leader who intentionally wanted to destroy the unit and effort for the liberation movement of the African continent, especially the Southern part of Africa (Glenn, 1997). It should be remembered that most African countries attained independence from colonial rule in the 1960s (Ellis, 2002). Things were the opposite in the Southern part of Africa. For instance, Mozambique struggled steadily against Portuguese colonial rule until 25<sup>th</sup> June 1975 under the leadership of Samora Moises Machel. Moreover, under British control, Zimbabwe struggled against Ian Douglas Smith's government until 18 April 1980. Along similar lines, Angola attained independence from Portuguese colonial rule on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1975. Namibia also was in a war struggle for independence

from the Boers of South Africa until March 1990. South Africa itself was still struggling for majority independence against minority independence. While the minority independence of South Africa was attained back in 1910, the country was dominated by racial discrimination in what came to be known as the apartheid policy. It was not until April 1994 that South Africa attained independence and marked the end of apartheid policy.

Despite Amin's allegations and intimidations against neighbouring countries such as Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo, and Tanzania, Nyerere maintained his side by disregarding Amin's presidency. Nyerere continued to lead Frontline States (FLSs) for the liberation of SACs. Under Nyerere's leadership, Tanzania became the centre for frontline members. Ishemo (2000) asserted that Nyerere considered Tanzania's independence meaningless if the independence of other African colonies did not accompany it. Ishemo further emphasised that, just like Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Toure, Nyerere believed that Africa was not accessible until colonialism and apartheid were removed and that it was through unity, absolute unity, that Africa could effectively free herself (Ishemo, 2000). Mwalimu Nyerere believed that the victory of SACs was the victory of Tanzania. Nyerere believed Africa had no future without unity (Kamata, 2018). Nyerere participated in his total capacity, chairing different meetings to ensure that the SACs attained independence. For instance, he chaired a historic meeting in Dar es Salaam that identified Zimbabwe and Namibia as priorities. The meeting led to the inauguration of the Dar sa Salaam Declaration, which demanded the withdrawal of the South African military and economic support for the Smith regime (Ibid). Bassey and Oshita (2010) and Magu (2021) argued that the FLSs saw the rise of Amin and his invasion of Tanzania as a symbol of weakening the liberation efforts. The situation made all supporters of the liberation movement react and strongly condemn Amin.

A Mozambique newspaper strongly condemned Amin's invasion of Tanzania. It said the aim of the military attack on Tanzania from Uganda was to weaken the efforts of the FLSs in the liberation struggle in Sothern Africa. The Newspaper "Noticias Da Beira" said in an editorial that the objective was to divert the attention of the FLSs to secondary questions,

putting aside the main question – to end colonialism, racism, and apartheid. The Daily News noted the FLSs' role in supporting the liberation struggle in Namibia and Zimbabwe and pointed out that all five FLSs were being subjected to armed aggression. Zambia was attacked by Rhodesia and South Africa, Mozambique by Rhodesia, Botswana by Rhodesia, Angola from South Africa, and now Tanzania by Uganda (Daily News, Friday, November 2, 1978). It is worth noting that there were military training camps in Uganda at the disposal of Ndabaning Sithole, one of Smith's puppets. This indicated that Rhodesia supported Amin's actions.

President Machel of Mozambique pointed out that imperialists were using Amin to divert Tanzania's attention from the struggle for African liberation (Mamdani, 1983). Machel emphasised that imperialism was behind all; Uganda was simply an instrument used to divert attention to open a new front (Daily News, Saturday, November 11, 1978). The President argued that Mozambique's territorial integrity had been violated countless times by the Rhodesian rebels, that Mozambique supported whatever steps Tanzania would take to drive out the invaders, and that his country was against expansionism and aggression. In an interview with two editors of Cuadernos Del Tee Tercel Mundo magazine, published in Mexico and Portugal, President Machel said that imperialists believed that Tanzania was the obstacle to their proposals for Zimbabwe (Daily News, Saturday, November 11, 1978). Their perception was that Nyerere blocked the proposals. They were conscious that the Tanzanians and President Nyerere were involved with Zimbabwean struggles and took it as their struggle, too. President Michel asserted that imperialists prepared and selected the best dancer, Amin, who played rumba, samba, and tango. So, they found Amin to be the instrument. This was purposely to divert Tanzania from its alignment with African liberation, so they opened a new front and involved Tanzania so that she would not pay the necessary attention to the problem of Zimbabwe. President Machel told the editors, Neiva Moreira and Beatriz Bissio, that Tanzania was the most internationalist country in Africa then (Daily News, Saturday, November 11, 1978).

President Machel added that all the liberation movements in Africa, including the independence of the frontiers, were in Tanzania (Mwakikagile, 2006). For instance, UNIP of Zambia had its base in Tanzania, Frelimo was born in Tanzania, MPLA of Angola had its base in Tanzania, SWAPO of Namibia had its headquarters in Tanzania, ANC of South Africa had its headquarters in Tanzania, the headquarters of ZAPU and ZANU of Zimbabwe were in Tanzania, and MOLINACO of Comoros has its headquarters in Tanzania. All these eight movements had their headquarters in Tanzania (Daily News, Saturday, November 11, 1978). He added that there is also a presence of Latin Americans – the Montoneros of Argentina. President Machel emphasised that these movements had their headquarters in Tanzania and that, for instance, FRELIMO carried out its military training for its cadres and had its military bases there. MPLA also had military training and military bases in Tanzania despite having its frontiers far away in the Atlantic Ocean. Only after Angola's independence did SWAPO transfer its headquarters to Angola. ZAPU's and ZANU's first military bases were in Tanzania.

President Machel emphasized that all those who had to engage in armed struggle had their bases in Tanzania. For instance, apart from this courtesy by Tanzania, arms that began the armed struggle in Zimbabwe, Namibia, and the eastern front of Angola were disembarked in Tanzania (Daily News, Saturday, November 11, 1978). Tanzania also made financial contributions to the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, "*Partido Africano Para a Independencia da Guine e Cabo Verde*" (PAIGC), and famous contributions to help Vietnam. President Machel asserted that there was rare in Africa – the only example of a famous contribution to help the liberation struggle in Africa and other parts of the world. There were queues in Tanzania to donate blood for Mozambican fighters and the FRELIMO hospitals. President Machel said that the imperialists were conscious of all this and that Amin's aggression was not accidental. The blood of Tanzanians had mixed with the blood of different people, which was genuine internationalism. President Machel concluded that the diplomatic initiative to stop the Ugandan aggression, Amin had invaded Tanzania, but he would never occupy it (Mzalendo, Sunday, November 12, 1978:1).



**Figure 1.1: President Samora Machel of Mozambique (left) during an interview with Cuadernos Del Tee Tercel Mundo newspaper editors in Maputo. In the middle is Neiva Moreira, and on the right is Beatriz Bissio Picture, courtesy of Tanzania Central Library, NBS section**

The Democratic Republic of Madagascar also strongly condemned Amin's unprovoked aggression against Tanzania and demanded immediate and unconditional withdrawal of aggressor troops from Tanzania territory. The Malagasy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Christian Remi Richard said his country was sure that Tanzania would rout out the aggressors (Daily News, Wednesday, December 6, 1978). While arriving in Dar es Salaam, Mr. Richard said that his country expressed her solidarity with the Tanzanian people in their just struggle to restore their territorial integrity. He further added that Amin's aggression against Tanzania was not only a violation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Charter but it was also an attempt to weaken the liberation struggle in Africa. The armed invasion and occupation of the party of Tanzania territory by Amin's troops was part of a coordinated international imperialist campaign to stifle the liberation struggle in Southern Africa. The Minister further said Amin's efforts to disrupt the fight for African liberation would fail (Daily News, Wednesday, December 6, 1978). Tanzania was a victim of international imperialism because of her commitment to African unity and her respect for the territorial integrity of independent states. He said the agents of imperialism were not happy with Tanzania's success in cementing her union by merging her two political parties, Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and Afro Shirazi Party (ASP), into Chama Cha

Mapinduzi (CCM). He emphasised that the union was a blow to imperialism, and now, by instituting CCM, Tanzania has dealt another heavy blow to international imperialism. On the other hand, the Tanzanian Minister for External Affairs, Benjamin Mkapa, assured his guest, Mr Richard, that Tanzania would destroy the invaders shortly. Eventually, Mkapa concluded that it was the duty of the Tanzanian Government to its people, the people of Africa, and humanity to destroy such warmongers. The Tanzanian Government had the means, the reason, and the will to destroy the invaders (Daily News, Wednesday, December 6, 1978).

The President of Angola, Agostinho Neto, warned that Amin's aggression and hostility against Tanzania could be detrimental to developing bilateral relations between Uganda and Angola. President Neto, in a message addressed to Amin on November 6, 1978, and made available in Dar es Salaam on 16<sup>th</sup> November, describes the invasion of Tanzania by Amin's aggressor troops as a flagrant violation of the principles of the OAU charter.

It is with anxiety that we follow the gravity of the situation existing between Uganda and Tanzania as a result of the invasion and occupation of Tanzania's territory by Uganda's armed forces, which we consider a flagrant violation of the principles of the OAU charter – namely the inviolability of the borders, national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and solution to conflicts through negotiations. I appeal to your immediate withdrawal of the Ugandan armed forces and the consequent cessation of armed confrontation. I hope you consider our preoccupation and wishes in view of the fact that the maintenance of acts of aggression and hostility against Tanzania also cannot favour the future development of bilateral relations between Uganda and the People's Republic of Angola. It is our hope that the expression of our feelings can contribute to reconsideration on your part with a view to the elimination of causes of the present armed conflict between two African countries (Daily News, Friday, November 17, 1978).



Additionally, the country's President Neto made the Angolan statement in the special greetings he sent to President Nyerere regarding Libya's threat that it will send its forces to fight side by side with the forces of fascist Amin of Uganda if Tanzania does not withdraw its troops from Uganda. President Neto continued to say that his country was agitated by the action taken by Libya about the invasion of Amin's forces in Tanzania (Daily News, Wednesday, March 28, 1979). President Neto added that Angola's cooperation with the people of Tanzania, their party, the Government, and President Nyerere is unquestionable. Regarding equipment, President Neto said that the People's Republic of Angola will do everything possible to help protect Tanzania's independence and borders. He emphasised that Amin's brutality was done to hinder the efforts to liberate the countries still under colonial rule, especially the SACs (Uhuru, Friday, March 30, 1979).

Along similar lines, President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia clearly explained that Amin was the aggressor for his action to invade and rule part of Tanzania's land. President Kaunda also asked African countries to condemn the act as it was against the principles of the OAU (Sellström, 2002). President Kaunda was also surprised by the Libyan President who sent a message to Nyerere intending to resolve the crisis without making a statement condemning Amin, who held the territory of Tanzania (Mzalendo, Sunday, November 12, 1978:2). President Kaunda further emphasised that the Zambian Government condemned the double standards shown in the appeals. President Kaunda pointed out that the protocol requires Member States of the OAU to recognise the boundaries of sister states. He finally concluded that Zambia expressed unflinching solidarity and committed to joining Tanzanian people in all their efforts to dislodge the invaders from the territory, that Ugandan troops must be driven out of Tanzania, and that there could be no negotiation about kicking the aggressor out of Tanzania (Daily News, Tanzania, Wednesday, November 8, 1978:1).

President Kaunda criticised African leaders who hid behind the OAU clause of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, thereby letting the murderer Amin get away with attacking other countries (Daily News, Saturday, November 11, 1978). Kaunda said that Amin was clearly the aggressor, and it was thus Tanzania's right to drive out the mercenary troops. He continued saying that it was warped thinking for Amin to

suggest mediation when his troops were in Tanzanian territory. President Kaunda was speaking at State House when he received credentials from Tanzania's new High Commissioner to Zambia, Mr Joseph Rwegasira, who replaced Auckland Mhina (Daily News, Saturday, November 11, 1978). President Kaunda said some African leaders were unable to face the truth and chose to hide away from it by saying they believed in non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. President Kaunda emphasised that it would be madness to expect President Nyerere to sit at a conference table and talk with the Ugandan murderer whose troops were on Tanzanian soil. He asserted that Tanzania has the right to move out of Amin. Zambia supported Nyerere's stand and said there could be no negotiations with invaders (Daily News, Saturday, November 11, 1978). He emphasised that he was not condemning Uganda but one savage man who had usurped power and put it in his hands to terrorise other countries. He commented that Zambia was solidly behind the people of Tanzania and would offer moral and material support to drive out Amin's troops. Bassey & Oshita (2010) postulated that The President concluded that Amin's actions were there to hinder the Liberation Movement of Southern Africa and that Tanzania should not give up. He said that even the people of Zambia, despite the bombings of the country by the Smith regime, remained committed to ensuring the liberation of Zimbabwe (Daily News, Saturday, November 11, 1978).

Moreover, the UNIP Secretary General, Mr Mainza Chona, said the enemies of Zambia and Tanzania were trying hard to drive the two sister countries to weaken the liberation struggle in Southern Africa. Addressing party and Government leaders at Samfya Secondary School, Mr Chona said it was not a coincidence that Tanzania was being attacked. At the same time, Smith had stepped up his aggressive activities against Zambia. The Party Secretary General said the aggression against the two countries was a calculated move to weaken their resolute stand on the liberation of Southern African countries. He added that for this to be effective, the enemies have also resorted to spreading malicious propaganda aimed at making the two countries hostile to each other so that they can divert their attention from their obligation to assist the oppressed people of Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa.

The five African FLSs strongly condemned the premeditated war of aggression launched by Amin against Tanzania, as reported by Angola News Agency (ANA). The condemnation was made in a communique issued at the end of a two-day summit meeting of the FLLs in Luanda, the capital of Angola (Daily News, Tuesday, March 6, 1979). The delegates condemned that the aggression of Amin has the sole object of obliging Tanzania to divert its resources from the liberation struggle to the defence of its sovereignty and territorial integrity (Okoth, 1987). The Frontline Presidents sent a message of solidarity to the Government and people of Tanzania as they faced the fascist and expansionist of Amin (Daily News, Tuesday, March 6, 1979).



**Figure 1.2: At the Luanda Frontline States Summit (left to the right), Tanzania's Vice President Aboud Jumbe and Presidents Agostinho Neto of Angola, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Samora Machel of Mozambique, and Seretse Khama of Botswana. Picture, Daily News, Tuesday, March 6, 1979**

The delegates compared Amin's aggression with the Rhodesian strikes into neighbouring African countries as an attempt by the Salisbury regime to drag other countries into the guerrilla war. The delegates emphasised that such actions include repeated and barbarous acts against FLSs (Daily News, Tuesday, March 6, 1979). Zambian President Kaunda chaired the meeting. It was attended by the President of Mozambique, Samora Machel, the President of Botswana, Sir Seletse Khama, and the President of Angola, Agostinho Neto. Tanzania was represented by then Vice President Aboud Jumbe (Daily News, Tuesday, March 6, 1979).

Along similar lines, the "Nairobi Times" newspaper condemned the invasion. It linked it to the conspiracy of the imperialists opposing the plan of Mwalimu Nyerere and his colleagues leading the Liberation Movement of the Southern African Countries. The newspaper continued to report that the act of invading another country's land not only violates the laws of the United Nations (UN) and the OAU but

also human rights. In addition to getting involved in finding a solution at the beginning of the crisis, Kenya's President, Daniel Arap Moi, now asked Amin to withdraw his forces from Tanzania. Moreover, the Kenyan Government urged to impose an oil embargo on Uganda unless Amin halted the war his country was waging against Tanzania. In a Press Statement which was issued in Nairobi, the organising secretary of the Nairobi KANU Branch, Mr. Sammy Maina, called for the Kenyan Government to deny Uganda oil and transport facilities until Amin had heeded the request by President Moi to halt the war and withdraw his troops from Tanzanian soil (Daily News, Tanzania, Wednesday, November 8, 1978:1). Additionally, Mr. Maina called on the Government to deny Amin essential commodities transported to his country by Kenya. He pointed out that if Amin continued to enjoy oil supplies from or through Kenya and Kenya's facilities to transport arms as long as the war continued, it would fuel the conflict (Daily News, Tanzania, Wednesday, November 8, 1978:1).

### **Conclusion**

Most African countries attained their independence in the 1960s. The decade has been marked as the turning point for African freedom, self-reliance, unity, and solidarity. Following colonial dominancy in the continent for more than 70 years, the continent was dominated by colonial legacies like disunity and segregation. New African nationalist leaders adopted a new approach to overcome the challenges by introducing Pan-Africanism and OAU. The liberation of the rest of the African countries was among the key roles that had to be dealt with by the leaders. More emphasis was placed on SACs, which was still under colonial rule. Forming a frontline organization was a cornerstone for the liberation struggles of SACs. The overthrow of President Obote of Uganda, who was in Singapore for a Commonwealth meeting, sparked another challenge for the LSACM. Among other issues that were discussed during the Singapore Commonwealth conference was the issue of British interest in selling war weapons to the South African minority Government. Obote disagreed with the issue because he participated in LSACM. The new leader of Uganda, Idi Amin, changed Uganda's whole vision of dealing with African issues. Amin sided with

the British interest in South Africa to gain support and popularity and supported the Smith's regime in Rhodesia. Amin introduced an expansionist doctrine by intimidating the neighbouring countries to surrender part of their land. Bassey and Oshita (2010) argued that Amin claimed parts of Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, and Tanzania were his parts. Although he attempted to invade and annex Tanzania several times, the plans were unsuccessful. It was not until 27<sup>th</sup> October 1978 that Amin succeeded in annexing the Northern part of the Kagera River. At this time, Mwalimu Nyerere declared war against Uganda on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1978 to liberate the invaded land. Nyerere dealt with two issues throughout the war: the war and the LSACM.

The rise of Amin as the President of Uganda and his invasion of Tanzania was interpreted by the FLLs as a way of limiting the liberation struggles. It was perceived as a plan prepared by the imperialists to implement their interests in the Southern part of Africa. Amin paid particular attention to frustrating the leaders of LSACM so that they could change their attention to the war of invasion. Mwalimu Nyerere, the critical actor in the LSACM, never gave up; instead, he organized different meetings while battling with Amin. Amin joined the Rhodesian Smith and the South African Boers, who implemented the imperialists' motives. All FLLs, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Angola, and Botswana, agreed to join hands to defeat Amin. For instance, President Kaunda chaired a meeting that was attended by the President of Mozambique, Samora Machel, the President of Botswana, Sir Seletse Khama, and the President of Angola, Agostinho Neto, and the Vice President of Tanzania, Aboud Jumbe to disregard Ami's leadership. All delegates agreed to support Tanzania in defeating Amin's regime.

**References****Published Sources**

- Aasland, T. (1974). On the move-to-the-left in Uganda 1969-1971: The Common Man's Charter-dissemination and attitude. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Acheson-Brown, D. G. (2001). The Tanzanian invasion of Uganda: A just war?. *International Third World Studies Journal and Review*, 12, 1-11.
- Akyeampong, E. K., & Gates Jr, H. L. (2012). *Dictionary of African biography* (Vol. 1). OUP USA.
- Avirgan, T., & Honey, M. (1982). *War in Uganda: the legacy of Idi Amin*. (No Title).
- Bassey, C. O., & Oshita, O. O. (Eds.). (2010). *Governance and border security in Africa*. African Books Collective.
- Bhagat, H. (1983). *Rise and Fall of Idi Amin*.
- Bouckaert, P. (1999). Hostile to democracy: the movement system and political repression in Uganda (Vol. 3169, No. 190). Human Rights Watch.
- Boyd, L., Eaton, D., wa Tushabe, T., Greene, A. L., Khisa, M., & Victor, L. (2022). *Decolonising State & Society in Uganda: The Politics of Knowledge & Public Life* (Vol. 56). Boydell & Brewer.
- Ellis, S. (2002). Writing histories of contemporary Africa. *The Journal of African History*, 43(1), 1-26.
- Glenn, J. (1997). The interregnum: the South's insecurity dilemma. *Nations and Nationalism*, 3(1), 45-63.
- Hansen, H. B. (2013). Uganda in the 1970s: A Decade of Paradoxes and Ambiguities. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 7(1), 83-103.
- Hutton, P., & Bloch, J. (1979). How the West Established Idi Amin and Kept Him There. *Dirty Work 2: The CIA in Africa*, 171-179.
- Ingham, K. (1994). *Obote. A political biography*.

- Ishemo, S. (2000). 'A symbol that cannot be substituted': The role of JK Nyerere in the liberation of Southern Africa, 1955–1990. *Review of African Political Economy*, 27(83), 81–94.
- Kamata, N. W. (2019). Julius Nyerere: from a Territorial Nationalist to a Pan African Nationalist. *The African Review*, 46(2), 309-332.
- Magu, S. M. (2021). *Explaining Foreign Policy in Post-Colonial Africa*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mamdani, M. (1983). *Imperialism and fascism in Uganda*. (No Title).
- Mazrui, A. A. (1970). Leadership in Africa: Obote of Uganda. *International Journal*, 25(3), 538-564.
- Mmbondo S.I (1980). *The Tanzania – Uganda War in Pictures*. Longman Tanzania Limited
- Mwakikagile, G. (2006). *Life under Nyerere*. New Africa Press.
- Mwenegoha H.A.K, & Mbonde J.P. (1979). *Kuanguka kwa Fashisti Idi Amin*. Swala Publications
- Mzirai Baldwin. (1980). *Kuzama kwa Idi Amin*. Publicity International Ltd
- O'Cleirigh, N. (2004). *Recollections of Uganda Under Milton Obote and Idi Amin*. Trafford Publishing.
- Okoth, P. G. (1987). The OAU and the Uganda-Tanzania War, 1978-79. *Journal of African Studies*, 14(3), 152.
- Omara-Otunnu, A. (1987). *Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890–1985*. Springer.
- Prunier, G. A. (1984). Kuanguka Kwa fashisti Idi Amin: Tanzania's ambiguous Ugandan victory. *Cultures et développement*, 16(3-4), 735-756.
- Roberts, G. (2012). *The British Government and Uganda under Idi Amin, November 1972 to April 1979*. BA diss., University of Cambridge.
- Roberts, G. (2014). The Uganda–Tanzania War, the fall of Idi Amin, and the failure of African diplomacy, 1978–1979. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8(4), 692-709.

Sellström, T. (Ed.). (2002). *Liberation in Southern Africa: Regional and Swedish Voices: Interviews from Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, the Frontline and Sweden*. Nordic Africa Institute.

### **Unpublished Sources**

Daily News, Friday, November 2, 1978

Daily News, Tuesday, November 7, 1978

Daily News, Wednesday, November 8, 1978

Daily News, Saturday, November 11, 1978

Daily News, Friday, November 17, 1978

Daily News, Wednesday, December 6, 1978

Daily News, Tuesday, March 6, 1979

Daily News, Wednesday, March 28, 1979

Mzalendo, Sunday, November 12, 1978

Uhuru, Friday, March 30, 1979