

Türkiye and the method in Muhoozi's 'madness'

Uganda's Chief of Defence Forces, Gen Kainerugaba Muhoozi, has become renowned for his controversial and sometimes outrageous posts on X (Twitter).

But while they infuriate Ugandans and foreigners whom they attack, there is a small community of geopolitical watchers and analysts who don't get caught up in the bluster and proceed from the position, as the saying goes, that "there is method to the madness". A while back, I was invited to join one of those small groups, full of nerdy, dry-eyed chaps for whom everything is simply a data point.

It is a fascinating world, and you can get blown away by just how much politicians, security officials, and government agencies reveal in their social media posts, especially if you have the advanced analytical tools and data-crunching capabilities that have been dramatically increased by artificial intelligence. I now think that, until about five to 10 years ago, some countries needed spies working inside Uganda; today, they don't. Most of what they needed previously is handed to them on a plate on social media, unknowingly by state parties and regular users who don't see the significance of the grainy photo or video of a car with diplomatic number plates entering a Big Woman's compound in Kampala that they post.

So while some people clamour for Muhoozi's phone to be taken away, or for his father, President Yoweri Museveni, to order him off X, these social media miners want him to post more and be more controversial, because that is where the big reveals come from.

On April 11, 2026, Gen Muhoozi posted a series of demands on X, arguing that Türkiye profited from Somalia's infrastructure while Uganda bore the security costs. He demanded a \$1 billion "security dividend" and the "most beautiful woman in Turkey" as a wife. He issued a 30-day ultimatum for

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Türkiye to comply or face the closure of its embassy in Kampala and a ban on Turkish Airlines. Following a diplomatic backlash, he deleted the posts on April 12 and retracted the threats.

But was there a method to the madness? The chaps in the group I am in thought so, and went drilling. Unlike intellectuals of old, they ask almost banal questions: What is (X) running from, or towards? Simple but powerful. The early findings on Muhoozi show a lot.

It began when the African Union Mission in Somalia (Amisom), in which Uganda was the main and lead contingent, ended its 15-year tenure on March 31, 2022. Its successor, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (Atmis), launched on April 1, 2022, and officially concluded on December 31, 2024. On January 1, 2025, the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (Aussom) began operations. Aussom's mandate is currently scheduled to run through December 31, 2026.

Nearly all the AU Somalia mission funding comes from the European Union (and some from the USA), and with Russia's attack on Ukraine in 2022, they started cutting that to

fund Ukraine. By 2024, the contribution had fallen, and by the time US President Donald Trump came in 2025 and threw a wrecking ball at the AU Somalia operation, it was in intensive care.

Following the cut in AU troop levels, the government of Somalia, led by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, agreed to a separate bilateral security deal with Uganda. While Uganda kept nearly 5,000 troops in Aussom, it deployed about 8,000 under the direct agreement with Mogadishu.

The AU already owed Uganda a lot of money then, and it has now climbed to over \$100 million in 18 months' worth of backpay for troops, death and injury compensation, and other costs.

So when the bilateral deal was reached, Mogadishu got Türkiye and Qatar to pay Uganda. Qatar was to pay for the first phase, and Turkey for the second. The Qatar payments arrived, but soon they stopped. It turns out Mogadishu received the money, and to put it bluntly, ate it. Türkiye stepped in, but it didn't step out. It had agreed to provide air cover for UPDF operations and carry out joint operations. But the air support didn't materialise, and beyond operations on the Somali coast where Türkiye has economic interests, it didn't support UPDF in the country's hinterland where Al-Shabaab operates and waits patiently – this time for UPDF to leave.

Apparently, Uganda has decided to withdraw from Somalia, and a delegation is going to Mogadishu shortly to close the 19-year-old UPDF mission finally. Muhoozi's X gambit was to force progress on Uganda's payments. However, other pointers suggest it was a bargaining chip (or a veiled ransom demand), since all or a chunk of Mogadishu could well fall to Al-Shabaab within two months of the UPDF's departure. There was a lot of foam in the social media drink Muhoozi served on Türkiye on April 11. But the important story is in the beer, not the foam.

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