

Leadership, context, and populist foreign policy in East Africa: an analysis of Uganda and Rwanda

Author: Michael Mawa, Solomon Muchwa Asiimwe & Anne Abaho

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Abstract

Populism can be understood as the reliance on strong leaders, whom, for political gain mobilize the masses aiming at enacting radical reforms in the name of the “people.” Through their action and speech, populist leaders present themselves as the voice of the people (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Nyadera & Agwanda, 2019; Giovanni, 2005). While populism is intensely debated in Europe and North America, there is now growing interest in the phenomenon among many African countries. For instance, citing examples of populist political parties and leaders from South Africa, Kenya, and Zambia, Nyadera and Agwanda (2019) connected the emergency of populism in Africa to failure by political leaders to offer a tangible development agenda to a burgeoning urban poor population that constitute the largest voting bloc. The above examples however are not unique cases in Africa.

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