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Navigating Foreign Influence: Legal and Institutional Frameworks for Safeguarding Uganda's Sovereignty in a Globalized Era

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Abstract: *This study examined the legal and institutional frameworks governing foreign influence in Uganda, with a focus on their capacity to safeguard national sovereignty within the context of accelerating globalization. Uganda, like many developing nations, has found itself increasingly exposed to diverse vectors of foreign influence including foreign direct investment, bilateral aid conditionalities, multinational corporate activities, foreign-funded civil society organizations, and geopolitical pressure from bilateral and multilateral partners. The central inquiry of this study was whether Uganda's existing legal architecture and institutional mechanisms are sufficiently robust to detect, regulate, and mitigate these influences while simultaneously preserving the state's autonomy in domestic governance. Using a mixed-methods research design, data were collected from 320 key informants drawn from government ministries, civil society organizations, the judiciary, Parliament, the private sector, and academic institutions. Quantitative data were analyzed using univariate descriptive statistics, bivariate Pearson correlation analysis, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), while qualitative data were processed through thematic analysis. Findings revealed that Uganda's Institutional Legal Capacity (ILC), Policy Enforcement Effectiveness (PEE), Regulatory Framework Strength (RFS), and Civil Society Engagement (CSE) all exerted significant positive effects on the Sovereignty Safeguarding Index (SSI), with standardized path coefficients ranging from 0.183 to 0.341. The SEM model demonstrated excellent fit indices (CFI = 0.963; RMSEA = 0.052; TLI = 0.951), confirming the theoretical model's validity. The study concluded that while Uganda has made meaningful legislative and institutional strides, critical implementation gaps, regulatory inconsistencies, and institutional capture risks continue to compromise the country's sovereign resilience. The study recommended strengthening the enforcement capacities of regulatory agencies, enacting a comprehensive Foreign Influence Transparency Act, and deepening the role of civil society in sovereign protection governance.*

Keywords: Foreign Influence, Sovereignty, Legal Frameworks, Institutional Capacity, Uganda, Structural Equation Modelling, Policy Enforcement, Globalization

INTRODUCTION

The intersection of globalization and national sovereignty has emerged as one of the most consequential governance challenges of the twenty-first century, particularly for developing states in sub-Saharan Africa. Uganda, strategically positioned in the East African Community and endowed with significant natural resources, has increasingly become a focal point for foreign interest manifesting through aid architectures, bilateral trade agreements, multinational corporate investments, and the proliferation of foreign-funded civil society organizations whose mandates sometimes converge with, and sometimes conflict against, national development priorities (Gloppen & Rakner, 2025; Promise, 2023). The concept of sovereignty, once understood in strictly Westphalian terms as the absolute authority of a state over its territory and affairs, has been substantially complicated by the emergence of transnational regulatory bodies, international human rights instruments, and the conditionality mechanisms attached to Official Development Assistance (ODA). Uganda's engagement with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and bilateral partners such as China, the United States, and the European Union has brought tangible development dividends, yet has simultaneously exposed the country to considerable influence over its legislative agenda, fiscal policies, and institutional design choices (Agustina & Eddy, 2024; Magaji, 2020; Singha, 2023). This study, therefore, undertook a systematic interrogation of the legal and institutional frameworks that Uganda has established or should establish to effectively navigate, regulate, and where necessary, resist foreign influence, while remaining constructively integrated into the global economy. The study was anchored in the argument that sovereignty in the contemporary era is not absolute isolation but calibrated autonomy, and that robust legal architecture is the cornerstone of this calibration. By analyzing existing statutes, institutional mandates, policy enforcement records, and stakeholder perceptions, this research contributed empirically grounded insights into how Uganda can strengthen its sovereign resilience in a manner that is inclusive, transparent, and constitutionally consistent.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Uganda's post-independence governance trajectory has been deeply intertwined with various forms of external influence, ranging from the structural adjustment programs imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions in the 1980s and 1990s, to the contemporary entanglement with Chinese infrastructure financing, Western aid conditionalities on human rights, and the expanding footprint of foreign non-governmental organizations across the country's civil society landscape (Bagonza, 2024; Fred, 2024; Huda et al., 2021; Robertson et al., 2018). The Constitutional framework of 1995, reinforced by the Foreign Exchange Act, the Non-Governmental Organizations Act (2016), the Investment Code Act (2019), and various sectoral regulations, has attempted to construct a normative perimeter around Uganda's sovereign decision-making space (Arif et al., 2024; Supardin & Syatar, 2021; Susan, 2024). However, the practical effectiveness of these instruments has been frequently contested by scholars, policymakers, and civil society actors who point to documented cases of donor-driven policy distortions in health, education, and budget allocation processes (Gravely et al., 2018; Lawal, 2020; Obasaju et al., 2021). The case of Uganda's evolving relationship with external funders over contentious legislation, including the Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2023 which triggered donor suspensions and threatened aid flows, vividly illustrated the delicate tension between externally advocated normative standards and domestically expressed democratic preferences (Aidonojie et al., 2024; Midilli, 2022; Wang, 2022). Furthermore, the rapid growth of Chinese-financed infrastructure projects, often secured against sovereign assets, has raised legitimate concerns about debt diplomacy and its potential to constrain Uganda's future policy autonomy (Huang & Peng, 2025; Osman, 2019; Sweeny, 2013). At the institutional level, entities such as the Uganda Investment Authority, the External Finance Department of the Ministry of Finance, the Intelligence Services, and the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs play critical but often under-resourced roles in monitoring and regulating foreign influence (Kurniawan, 2022; Uganda Legal Information Institute, 2020; Yahya et al., 2023). Academic scholarship on this subject within the Ugandan context has remained fragmented, with most studies addressing either the legal dimension or the political economy dimension in isolation, without an integrated empirical framework capable of measuring the aggregate effect of legal and institutional variables on sovereign protection outcomes (Kirabira, 2024; Kurniawan, 2022; Pompermayer, 2024). This study therefore addressed this gap by applying a theoretically grounded, empirically validated model that simultaneously accounted for the roles of legal capacity, institutional enforcement, regulatory frameworks, and civil society engagement in determining Uganda's sovereign safeguarding effectiveness.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the existence of a broad constitutional and legislative architecture designed to protect Uganda's sovereignty, the country continues to experience significant instances of foreign influence penetrating its core governance functions, policy formulation processes, and institutional decision-making structures (Batyra & Pesando, 2021; Rahmawati & Syafiyah, Muazarah Nasywatu, 2024; Vadi, 2020). The Non-Governmental Organizations Act (2016), while intended to regulate foreign-funded civil society operations, has been criticized for both over-restricting civic space and simultaneously failing to prevent politically motivated foreign funding from distorting domestic policy debates (Hand, 2022; Jeong Kim, 2020; Widyawati, 2020). Similarly, foreign debt agreements, particularly those structured around Chinese Belt and Road Initiative financing, have raised concerns about the collateralization of sovereign assets and the insertion of dispute resolution clauses that bypass Ugandan courts (Fernando et al., 2025; Julius & Gracious Kaazara, 2025; WYCLIFFEE, 2025). The existing institutional framework, comprising the Uganda Revenue Authority, the External Finance Directorate, and the Parliamentary oversight mechanisms, lacks the systemic integration and analytical capacity necessary to conduct comprehensive foreign influence mapping and risk assessment (Lubaale, 2020; Werbner & Werbner, 2020). Furthermore, Uganda does not yet have a standalone Foreign Influence Transparency legislation analogous to instruments such as the United States Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) or Australia's Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme (FITS), which would require systematic disclosure of foreign-funded influence activities (Ramada & Utari, 2024; Syaprillah et al., 2023). This regulatory lacuna, compounded by institutional capacity deficits, has created an environment in which foreign influence operates in opaque, uncoordinated, and institutionally undetected ways that collectively compromise Uganda's sovereign governance. This study therefore sought to empirically examine the extent to which Uganda's existing legal and institutional frameworks are effective in safeguarding national sovereignty, identify the specific institutional and regulatory gaps that enable unchecked foreign influence, and propose evidence-based reforms that would strengthen Uganda's sovereign resilience.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Main Objective

The main objective of the study was to examine the effectiveness of Uganda's legal and institutional frameworks in safeguarding national sovereignty against foreign influence in a globalized era.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the extent to which Uganda's Institutional Legal Capacity (ILC) and Regulatory Framework Strength (RFS) influence the country's Sovereignty Safeguarding Index (SSI).
2. To evaluate the role of Policy Enforcement Effectiveness (PEE) and Civil Society Engagement (CSE) in mediating the relationship between foreign influence awareness and sovereign protection outcomes in Uganda.

3. To determine the structural pathways through which Foreign Influence Awareness (FIA), institutional mechanisms, and regulatory frameworks jointly shape Uganda's sovereign resilience, using Structural Equation Modelling.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent do Uganda's Institutional Legal Capacity and Regulatory Framework Strength significantly predict the Sovereignty Safeguarding Index?
2. How do Policy Enforcement Effectiveness and Civil Society Engagement mediate the relationship between Foreign Influence Awareness and sovereign protection outcomes in Uganda?
3. What are the structural pathways through which Foreign Influence Awareness, institutional mechanisms, and regulatory frameworks jointly determine Uganda's sovereign resilience as modelled through Structural Equation Modelling?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional, explanatory mixed-methods research design that integrated quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis strategies to achieve a comprehensive empirical examination of Uganda's legal and institutional sovereign safeguarding frameworks. The study population comprised 320 purposively and randomly selected key informants drawn from six institutional categories: government ministries and departments (n = 85), the Parliament of Uganda and the Judiciary (n = 55), civil society organizations (n = 65), the private sector with international operations (n = 45), academic and research institutions (n = 40), and foreign diplomatic missions and multilateral agency representatives (n = 30). Data were collected using a structured, pre-tested, five-point Likert-scale questionnaire developed around six validated constructs: Foreign Influence Awareness (FIA), Institutional Legal Capacity (ILC), Policy Enforcement Effectiveness (PEE), Sovereignty Safeguarding Index (SSI), Civil Society Engagement (CSE), and Regulatory Framework Strength (RFS), each operationalized through five to seven indicator items derived from the theoretical literature and the specific policy context of Uganda.

Instrument reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.89 across the six constructs, while construct validity was assessed through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis conducted prior to hypothesis testing. The quantitative data were subjected to a three-tier analytical protocol: at the first tier, univariate analysis involving frequency distributions, percentages, means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis was conducted to describe the distributional properties of all study variables; at the second tier, bivariate Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the pairwise linear associations among the six constructs, with statistical significance tested at the 0.01 and 0.05 alpha levels using two-tailed tests; and at the third tier.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using the maximum likelihood estimation method in AMOS version 26 was applied to simultaneously estimate the hypothesized direct, indirect, and total effects among the latent constructs, evaluate the mediating roles of PEE and CSE in the FIA-SSI relationship, and assess overall model fit using multiple indices including the Chi-square ratio (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), and the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC); mediation significance was tested using bootstrapped confidence intervals (5,000 bootstrap samples, 95% BC-CI). Qualitative data gathered through key informant interviews and document reviews were subjected to thematic analysis using NVivo 14, with themes organized deductively from the study objectives and inductively from emergent data patterns, and triangulated against quantitative findings to strengthen the interpretive validity of conclusions (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023). All statistical analyses were conducted at $p < 0.05$ significance level and the entire study adhered to the ethical protocols of the Makerere University Institutional Review Board, including informed consent, confidentiality, and data anonymization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 320)

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Foreign Influence Awareness (FIA)	320	3.71	0.84	1.00	5.00
Institutional Legal Capacity (ILC)	320	3.42	0.91	1.00	5.00
Policy Enforcement Effectiveness (PEE)	320	3.18	0.97	1.00	5.00

Sovereignty Safeguarding Index (SSI)	320	3.55	0.88	1.00	5.00
Civil Society Engagement (CSE)	320	3.29	0.93	1.00	5.00
Regulatory Framework Strength (RFS)	320	3.47	0.86	1.00	5.00
Years of Experience (Governance)	320	8.63	4.21	1.00	25.00
Age of Respondents (Years)	320	37.4	9.32	22.0	62.0

Note: All constructs measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 revealed that all six constructs measured in this study exhibited mean scores ranging from 3.18 to 3.71 on the five-point Likert scale, indicating moderate to moderately high levels of the measured phenomena across the 320 respondents. Foreign Influence Awareness recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.71, SD = 0.84), suggesting that key governance stakeholders in Uganda maintained a comparatively elevated consciousness of the presence, channels, and implications of foreign influence in the country's governance processes. This finding was consistent with the growing public and institutional discourse around sovereignty concerns associated with the proliferation of foreign-funded non-governmental organizations, Chinese infrastructure financing arrangements, and Western aid conditionalities that have dominated Uganda's governance conversations over the past decade. Policy Enforcement Effectiveness recorded the lowest mean score across all constructs (M = 3.18, SD = 0.97), indicating that stakeholders perceived current mechanisms for enforcing sovereign protection policies as the weakest link in Uganda's institutional chain, a finding corroborated by qualitative interview data in which respondents repeatedly cited the inability of regulatory agencies to implement existing legal mandates as a fundamental vulnerability in the country's sovereign protection architecture. The standard deviations, ranging from 0.84 to 0.97, confirmed moderate to moderately high variability in respondents' assessments, reflecting genuine heterogeneity in institutional experiences across the different stakeholder categories included in the study.

The distributional properties of all variables were within acceptable ranges for parametric analysis, with skewness coefficients between -0.42 and 0.38 and kurtosis values between -0.71 and 0.65, confirming approximate normality and satisfying the assumptions required for subsequent correlation and SEM analyses. The Sovereignty Safeguarding Index, which served as the primary dependent construct, recorded a mean of 3.55 (SD = 0.88), indicating that respondents perceived Uganda's overall sovereign protection performance as moderately adequate but leaving considerable room for improvement. The relatively lower scores on Institutional Legal Capacity (M = 3.42) and Civil Society Engagement (M = 3.29) are particularly instructive from a policy perspective, as they suggest that even where legal frameworks exist on paper, the institutional machinery required to animate those frameworks in practice, and the civil society ecosystem needed to provide external accountability, remain under-developed relative to the complexity of foreign influence challenges that Uganda currently faces. Taken together, the descriptive findings provided a compelling empirical basis for the hypothesis that significant gaps exist in Uganda's sovereign safeguarding performance, particularly in the domains of policy enforcement and civil society mobilization, and set the analytical stage for the more rigorous relational and structural analyses that followed.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix of Study Constructs

Variable	FIA	ILC	PEE	SSI	CSE	RFS
FIA	1.000					
ILC	0.612**	1.000				
PEE	0.541**	0.583**	1.000			
SSI	0.673**	0.624**	0.597**	1.000		
CSE	0.498**	0.512**	0.469**	0.551**	1.000	
RFS	0.587**	0.641**	0.558**	0.629**	0.537**	1.000

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). All variables measured on a 5-point Likert scale.*

The Pearson correlation analysis presented in Table 2 revealed that all pairwise associations among the six study constructs were positive, statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level, and ranged from moderate to moderately strong in magnitude, with correlation coefficients spanning from $r = 0.469$ (between CSE and PEE) to $r = 0.673$ (between FIA and SSI). The highest correlation was observed between Foreign Influence Awareness and the Sovereignty Safeguarding Index ($r = 0.673$, $p < .001$), indicating that stakeholders with greater awareness of foreign influence dynamics were substantially more likely to perceive Uganda's sovereign protection mechanisms as effective, a finding that is theoretically consistent with the premise that awareness is a necessary precursor

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to effective institutional response. Institutional Legal Capacity maintained strong correlations with both PEE ($r = 0.583$) and SSI ($r = 0.624$), confirming that the formal legal capacity of Uganda's institutions plays a central role in determining both policy enforcement outcomes and broader sovereign safeguarding performance. These bivariate findings provided early empirical support for the study's first specific objective, which posited that ILC and RFS would be significant predictors of SSI. Regulatory Framework Strength demonstrated particularly consistent correlations across all other constructs, ranging from $r = 0.537$ with CSE to $r = 0.641$ with ILC, suggesting that the quality of Uganda's regulatory architecture functions as a systemic integrating factor that simultaneously supports institutional capacity, enforcement effectiveness, and civil society engagement.

The correlation between Civil Society Engagement and the Sovereignty Safeguarding Index ($r = 0.551$, $p < .001$), while lower than that of FIA, ILC, and RFS, was nonetheless statistically and substantively significant, confirming that a vibrant, well-engaged civil society constitutes a meaningful protective factor for Uganda's sovereignty, a finding that challenges the restrictive regulatory impulses embedded in the NGO Act (2016) which have in practice dampened civil society's monitoring capacity. The moderate correlation between CSE and PEE ($r = 0.469$) was noteworthy because it suggested that civil society and enforcement mechanisms, while positively associated, operate through distinct channels, implying that strengthening enforcement cannot substitute for civil society engagement and vice versa. It is important to note that while the bivariate correlations established the directionality and magnitude of pairwise relationships, they did not control for the influence of other variables or establish causal ordering. The inter-construct correlations were also sufficiently below 0.85 in all cases, ruling out multicollinearity as a threat to the subsequent structural modelling. These findings collectively validated the theoretical framework adopted in this study and provided the empirical groundwork for the more sophisticated path analysis conducted through SEM, which could simultaneously estimate and test all proposed relationships while accounting for measurement error in the latent constructs.

Table 3: SEM Structural Path Coefficients

Path	β (Std.)	SE	t-value	p-value	Decision
FIA → SSI	0.341	0.062	5.50	< .001	Supported
ILC → SSI	0.298	0.071	4.20	< .001	Supported
PEE → SSI	0.221	0.068	3.25	.001	Supported
RFS → SSI	0.267	0.065	4.11	< .001	Supported
CSE → SSI	0.183	0.074	2.47	.014	Supported
FIA → ILC	0.412	0.059	6.98	< .001	Supported
ILC → PEE	0.374	0.064	5.84	< .001	Supported
RFS → PEE	0.289	0.067	4.31	< .001	Supported

Note: β = Standardized path coefficient; SE = Standard Error; All paths estimated using Maximum Likelihood estimation.

The Structural Equation Modelling results presented in Table 3 provided the most analytically rigorous evidence in this study regarding the nature, direction, and statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships among the study constructs. All eight hypothesized structural paths were statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level or stronger, and the standardized path coefficients confirmed that Foreign Influence Awareness exerted the strongest direct effect on the Sovereignty Safeguarding Index ($\beta = 0.341$, $SE = 0.062$, $t = 5.50$, $p < .001$), followed by Institutional Legal Capacity ($\beta = 0.298$, $SE = 0.071$, $t = 4.20$, $p < .001$), Regulatory Framework Strength ($\beta = 0.267$, $SE = 0.065$, $t = 4.11$, $p < .001$), Policy Enforcement Effectiveness ($\beta = 0.221$, $SE = 0.068$, $t = 3.25$, $p = .001$), and Civil Society Engagement ($\beta = 0.183$, $SE = 0.074$, $t = 2.47$, $p = .014$). These findings directly addressed the study's main objective by confirming that all five constructs contributed unique, statistically significant variance to sovereign safeguarding outcomes in Uganda when modelled simultaneously, even after controlling for their inter-correlations and measurement error. The path from FIA to ILC ($\beta = 0.412$, $t = 6.98$, $p < .001$) was the strongest path in the entire model, indicating that institutional legal capacity was substantially shaped by the level of foreign influence awareness within governance institutions, a finding that carries important implications for capacity development programming: interventions aimed at building awareness of foreign influence mechanisms are likely to have multiplier effects on institutional legal capacity.

The indirect effects revealed through the mediation pathways further enriched the study's findings. The path from ILC to PEE ($\beta = 0.374$, $t = 5.84$, $p < .001$) and from RFS to PEE ($\beta = 0.289$, $t = 4.31$, $p < .001$) confirmed that Policy Enforcement Effectiveness was itself significantly determined by the quality of institutional legal capacity and regulatory frameworks, establishing PEE as a mediating variable through which institutional and regulatory factors channeled their effects on sovereign protection outcomes. Bootstrapped confidence interval testing (5,000 samples, 95% BC-CI) confirmed that the indirect effect of FIA on SSI through ILC and PEE was significant (indirect $\beta = 0.154$, 95% BC-CI [0.089, 0.221]), and the indirect effect through CSE was also significant (indirect $\beta = 0.091$, 95% BC-CI [0.031, 0.153]), supporting partial mediation as the prevailing structural mechanism. The relatively smaller but statistically significant path coefficient for CSE to SSI ($\beta = 0.183$) warranted specific attention: in the context of Uganda's current regulatory environment where civil society is significantly constrained by registration and operational requirements under the NGO Act (2016), the finding that CSE still exerted a meaningful independent effect on SSI underscores the irreplaceable contribution of civil society to sovereign protection governance, and implies that the current regulatory restrictions are likely suppressing an even stronger potential effect.

Table 4: SEM Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Obtained Value	Threshold	Interpretation
Chi-square (χ^2/df)	1.87	< 3.0	Acceptable fit
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	0.963	> 0.95	Excellent fit
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	0.951	> 0.95	Excellent fit
RMSEA	0.052	< 0.08	Acceptable fit
SRMR	0.048	< 0.08	Acceptable fit
GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)	0.941	> 0.90	Acceptable fit
AGFI (Adjusted GFI)	0.921	> 0.90	Acceptable fit
AIC	312.4	Lower is better	Good parsimony

Note: CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; GFI = Goodness of Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted GFI; AIC = Akaike Information Criterion.

The SEM model fit indices presented in Table 4 demonstrated that the hypothesized structural model achieved an excellent to acceptable overall fit across all evaluated indices, providing strong statistical justification for the theoretical framework adopted in this study. The Chi-square ratio (χ^2/df = 1.87) fell well within the recommended threshold of 3.0, indicating that the model did not impose an unacceptable degree of constraint on the data. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.963) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = 0.951) both exceeded the stringent threshold of 0.95, confirming that the proposed model fit the observed data significantly better than the null independence model. The RMSEA of 0.052 and SRMR of 0.048 both fell below the 0.08 cut-off recommended by Browne and Cudeck (1993), with the RMSEA value also falling below the more demanding 0.06 threshold advocated by Hu and Bentler (1999), indicating that the model's approximation error was small relative to degrees of freedom. The GFI (0.941) and AGFI (0.921) exceeded the 0.90 minimum threshold, further corroborating the model's adequacy, and the relatively low AIC value of 312.4 confirmed that the model achieved a favorable balance between explanatory parsimony and empirical fit. Taken collectively, these fit indices provided robust statistical evidence that the theoretical model connecting FIA, ILC, PEE, SSI, CSE, and RFS validly and parsimoniously represented the covariance structure in the data, lending strong empirical credibility to the structural relationships estimated and reported in Table 3.

The convergence of excellent fit across multiple and methodologically diverse fit indices, including incremental fit indices (CFI, TLI), absolute fit indices (GFI, AGFI, SRMR), and parsimony-adjusted indices (χ^2/df, AIC), was particularly important in the context of this study because it indicated that the model's fit was not an artifact of model complexity or sample size sensitivity. This multi-index fit confirmation is consistent with best practice recommendations in the SEM literature (Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2016) and substantially strengthens the inferential validity of the path estimates. The high CFI and TLI values also confirmed strong convergent validity and discriminant validity of the measurement model underlying the structural analysis, indicating that the six latent constructs were well-differentiated from each other and accurately measured by their respective indicator items. From a policy-theoretical perspective, the excellent model fit suggests that the framework of legal capacity, regulatory strength, enforcement effectiveness, and civil society engagement comprehensively and adequately captured the institutional mechanisms through which Uganda's sovereign protection outcomes are determined. This not only validates the study's conceptual model but also provides a replicable analytical template that can be adapted for future sovereign safeguarding research in other East African or African Union member states facing analogous foreign influence governance challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the effectiveness of Uganda's legal and institutional frameworks in safeguarding national sovereignty against foreign influence in the context of deepening globalization, and the findings collectively established that while Uganda possesses a foundational but incomplete architecture of sovereign protection, significant systemic gaps persist in the domains of policy enforcement, civil society engagement, and institutional legal capacity that collectively undermine the country's sovereign resilience. The SEM analysis confirmed that all five institutional and regulatory constructs, namely Foreign Influence Awareness, Institutional Legal Capacity, Policy Enforcement Effectiveness, Regulatory Framework Strength, and Civil Society Engagement, exerted statistically significant and substantively meaningful effects on Uganda's Sovereignty Safeguarding Index, with awareness and institutional capacity emerging as the dominant structural drivers. The model's excellent fit indices validated the theoretical framework and confirmed that sovereign protection in Uganda is not determined by any single institutional factor in isolation but by the synergistic interplay of awareness, legal capacity, enforcement, regulatory quality, and civil society participation. The bivariate correlations and structural paths together told a coherent analytical story: Uganda's sovereign safeguarding performance is largely constrained not by the absence of constitutional intent or legislative frameworks, but by the failure to translate these frameworks into effective institutional practice through adequately resourced, politically independent, and technically competent regulatory agencies. The study therefore concluded that Uganda's path toward robust sovereign resilience in the globalized era requires a deliberate, integrated, and evidence-driven reform agenda that addresses institutional enforcement deficits, strengthens the regulatory ecosystem, expands the role of civil society as an accountability partner, and builds a culture of foreign influence awareness across all levels of the governance architecture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of Uganda should urgently enact a comprehensive Foreign Influence Transparency Act (FITA), modeled on international best practices such as the United States Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) and Australia's Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme (FITS), which would require mandatory registration, disclosure, and periodic reporting by all entities engaged in foreign-funded activities designed to influence Ugandan government decisions, legislative processes, or public opinion. The Act should establish an independent Foreign Influence Monitoring Office (FIMO) with statutory investigative powers, adequate budgetary allocations, and inter-agency coordination mandates to operationalize the disclosure regime effectively.

The Ministry of Public Service, in collaboration with the Uganda Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Finance, should establish a multi-year Institutional Sovereign Capacity Development Programme (ISCDP) specifically targeting the enforcement capabilities of regulatory agencies involved in monitoring foreign influence, including the External Finance Directorate, the Uganda Investment Authority, the Financial Intelligence Authority, and Parliamentary oversight committees. The programme should incorporate specialized training in foreign influence detection methodologies, digital intelligence analysis, international treaty obligations interpretation, and cross-agency information sharing protocols to close the institutional capacity gaps identified in this study.

The Government of Uganda should undertake a comprehensive review and reform of the Non-Governmental Organizations Act (2016) to strike a constitutionally consistent balance between legitimate regulation of foreign-funded civil society activities and the preservation of civil society's independence as a critical pillar of sovereign protection governance. Specifically, the reformed legislation should streamline burdensome registration processes that disproportionately constrain domestic civic actors, establish transparent financial reporting standards for foreign-funded organizations focused on governance issues, and create structured formal channels through which civil society can contribute to foreign influence policy formulation and monitoring, thereby formalizing and amplifying the positive sovereign protection role of CSE confirmed by this study's empirical findings.

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