BRITISH IMPERIALISM IN ACHOLILAND 1890-1962

This chapter examines how British colonialism was rooted in Acholiland in order to analyse its impact on the socio-economic and political life and institutions of the area.

Introduction

Acholiland was marginal in many ways to early British colonial rule. It was viewed as occupied by a tribe of a quite different and inferior order and its people (the Acholi) were perceived as "naturally lazy"[195] and as having little to contribute to the "development" of the colonial economy. According to Ronald Atkinson Acholiland was marginal in three main ways to early colonial rule.[196] First, it was a dry and sparsely populated land located far to the north and of limited interest to those at the centre of the colonial endeavour in Buganda. When new British Commissioner Hesketh Bell, visited the region in 1906, he was unimpressed by northern Uganda, describing it as "a country with little or no promise of successful development in which I cannot think of a single product that might be grown...which will pay for the cost of carriage to the seaboard".[197]

In addition, the Acholi people were considered "naturally lazy" and averse to work simply because the initial Acholi response to peasant cash cropping and

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[195] A. D. Roberts, "The Sub-Imperialism of the Baganda", in *Journal of African History,* 111, 3 (1962), 12 -79.
[196] R. R. Atkinson, The *Roots of Ethnicity*, 4-5.
[197] J. P. Barber, "The Moving Frontier of British Imperialism in Northern Uganda", 31.

labour migration to the south was not enthusiastic. To British colonial administrators in Buganda like Hesketh Bell, direct involvement in Acholiland offered heavy expenditure without any reward. They also argued that extending colonial administration to northern Uganda would "bring into the Protectorate a group of tribes whose organization and customs were completely different from the Bantu Kingdoms that formed the core of Uganda.[198]

Thirdly, Acholi social and cultural practices, especially the wearing of minimal clothing, were considered primitive and backward. Worse still, their decentralized and small scale political organization made them neither an especially feared enemy nor a valued ally.[199] As Berber put it,

> No tribe in Northern Uganda (Acholiland included) had an effective central organization, which made it powerful enough to capture the attention of the British. The tribes were seen neither as potential threats to established British interests nor as potential allies to share the burden of administrative expansion.[200]

Marginal and inferior as they were considered, however, the Acholi were gradually incorporated into the colonial political economy. In this study, we contend that such stereotyping of the Acholi and ethnic manipulation that was the hallmark of British colonial politics of "divide and rule" greatly laid the foundation on which post-independence politics was developed. This will offer a good base from which to anchor our argument that conflict in post-colonial Acholiland can be traced to the history of the area in the colonial period. We

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[198] A. D. Roberts, "The Sub-Imperialism of the Baganda", 70.
[199] R.R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity*, 4-5.
[200] J.P. Berber, "The Moving Frontier", 32.

seek to identify the major trends that shaped the region's post-colonial experience from its colonial history.

The Period 1890-1910

In 1889, Emin Pasha's administration of Egypt's Equatorial Province ended when he was persuaded to withdraw to the coast with Henry Stanley's famous expedition which had come so far to relieve him. Emin Pasha was Governor of Equatoria Province, then under the Khedives of Egypt. In the 1820s, Khedive Ali, ruler of Egypt invaded present-day Sudan and took control of it as its vassal state. This alien thrust into Sudan extended southwards into what became the Equatorial Province (present day Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda).[201]

The first administrators of the Equatorial Province used the Nubians (also called the Sudanese soldiers by the Acholi) to consolidate their imperial control over Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda. As employees of the Egyptian government, they helped consolidate Egypt's control over Acholiland and governed it as one of Egypt's territories in order to stop the slave trade and modern civilization.[202]

In the period of Khedive Ismail Pasha as ruler or the Khedive of Egypt (1863-1879), changes took place in the administration of the Equatorial province. Under the influence of both the ideas and finances of Europe, Ismail initiated a policy of eradicating slave trading. For this purpose, Europeans were employed;

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[201] J. O. Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda: Adjustment to Imperialism", 36.
[202] F.K. Uma, "Acoli-Arabs-Nubian Relations," 42.

first, Samuel Baker, then Charles Gordon and, later, Emin Pasha.[203] Emin Pasha was charged with the responsibility of administering Egypt's Equatorial province between 1885 and 1889. Like his predecessor Charles Gordon, who had been killed by the Mahdist revolters in 1885, Emin Pasha did not often visit Acholiland in person and his administration largely relied on the continued use of Nubian troops.[204]

During his tenure as the leading Turko-Egyptian administrator in the Equatorial province, Emin Pasha had enlisted Nubians (or Sudanese) troops to reinforce his policies in the Province.   When he was forced to abandon Equatorial Province following the Mahdist nationalist uprising against Turko-Egyptian administrators and imperial control, these troops were left under the command of Selim Bey. Under Selim Bey, the Sudanese soldiers (as the Acholi referred to them) acted freely and were, most times, out of control; raping women, raiding the Acholi for food and killing at will.[205]

When Uganda was declared a British protectorate in 1894, these Sudanese soldiers, then under Salim Bey, became the 'askaris' or 'guards' of the British administration. Later, the British used them defeat the resistance of King Mwanga of Buganda in 1894 and also to conquer Bunyoro by 1896.[206]

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[203] J. H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, 592.
[204] Acholiland became part of the Equatorial province of Egypt during Turko-Egyptian Administration. Nubians acted as agents of Egyptian Khedives. In Acholiland, the Nubians (Employees of Egypt) were also referred to as Sudanese soldiers.
[205] R Oliver, "Some Factors in the British Occupation of East Africa," 60.
[206] F. K. Uma, "Acoli-Arabs-Nubian Relations, 1-2.

Before the coming of Arabs into Acholiland, there was relative peace and stability within Acholi because the Acholi regarded themselves, largely, as brothers. They based their argument on the fact that all the people now living in Acholiland came originally from the southern Sudan led by Lwo.[207]

In the first place, many of the royal families were related through marriage. For instance, the mother of rwot (Chief) Camo of Paira and the grandmother of rwot Ogwok of Padibe were daughters of rwot Bwomono of Palabek. The mother of rwot (chief) Alinga of Atyak was also the daughter of the rwot of Palabek.[208]

Links were also created by members of different clans that recognized common ancestry. For instance, the three branches of the Bobi clan which are found in Puranga, Padibe and Pajule claim that they are related. The Agoro clan which settled in Palaro in the 19th century migrated from Agoro in East Acholi. In Puranga, the Paciko clan claims common ancestry with the Paciko in Pairo.[209] The inter-clan links described above helped to bring about cordial relationships among the people of Acholi before the advent of Arabs. The spirit of brotherhood that had developed was abruptly destroyed by the Arab-inspired slave trade, slave raids and accompanying wars and manipulation of one clan against the other. It was in this way that alien Arab imperialism in Acholiland divided the people and left them to be manipulated by later alien forces.

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[207] R. S. Anywar, *Acoli Kiker Megi* (Kampala: Eagle Press, 1954), 11.
[208] F. K. Uma, "Acoli-Arabs-Nubian Relations", 3.
[209] F. K. Uma, "Acoli-Arabs-Nubian Relations", 3-4.

Whereas Dwyer concurs that the Acholi were indeed left to their own devices, he still maintains that the years (1889-1899) were years of "excitement and achievement in Acholiland".[210] In support of his position, he believes that for the first time in nearly half a century, the Acholi were able to establish their own political traditions in the ten years, in the absence of powerful alien intruders. By the 1870s, Arab traders in slaves and ivory had been ousted through the efforts of Khedive Ismail Pasha and his European administrators of the Equatorial Province, first Samuel Baker and, later, Emin Pash. When the Mahdist Nationalist revolt ended Turko-Egyptian administration in southern Sudan and northern Uganda (Acholiland) in 1889, Acholiland was left free of alien rule until the British had established themselves firmly in the north of their Ugandan Protectorate by opening a station at Gulu in Acholiland in 1910.[211] Acholiland, therefore, remained peaceful and free from pillage from 1888 to 1898. The British first settled at Paraa (Murchison Falls) on the bank of the River Nile. They did not, however, stay at this site for long and soon established other administrative posts at Wadelai and at Guruguru in Lamogi in Acholiland.[212]

Moving Frontier of British Imperialism in Acholiland

The extension of British Imperialism into northern Uganda, including Acholiland, was a gradual exercise and was accomplished much later than in the South. According to J.P. Barber, the extension of British control across

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[210] J. O. Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda: Adjustment to Imperialism", 58.
[211] D.A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, 104.
[212] J. B. Webster & Onyango-Ku-Odongo, "The Peopling of Agago", 167.

northern Uganda was a "hesitant and timid piece of colonization".[213] The policy revolved around the dispute between those who were for administrative expansion and those who favoured concentration upon the Bantu areas of the protectorate. It was the "concentrators" and notably Hesketh Bell, backed up by the British government, who dominated policy after Harry Johnstone's departure in 1901.[214]

British operations in northern Uganda in the 1890s, generally, were not dictated by their interests in Acholiland that forms the largest portion of this region or other neighbouring peoples. After the British decided to establish a protectorate over Uganda in 1894, there were only two absolutes in the policy handed down from the foreign office in London. The first was that the kingdom of Buganda should be the headquarters of the administration and the second was to establish a foothold on the Upper Nile from which to observe the movements of the Belgians and the French. In 1882, British forces occupied Egypt as one of their African colonies. After the British occupation, imperial struggles between the British and French were over the Nile valley countries. This was contained in what British administrator, Lord Salisbury, described as the 'Nile valley strategy'. Uganda remained the pivot of this strategy.

During the reign of Khedive Ismail Pasha in Egypt between 1863 and 1879, French and British traders had noticeable investments in Egypt and shares in

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[213] J. P. Barber, "The Moving Frontier of British Imperialism", 41.

[214] Sir Harry Johnstone was a special commissioner, appointed by the British Government to place the Administration of the Uganda Protectorate on a satisfactory permanent footing. He had served in Cameroon and as Commissioner in British Central Africa (Malawi). He was to ensure that Uganda was effectively occupied and "developed". He arrived at Kampala on 20th September, 1899.

the Suez Canal project. Once Egypt became bankrupt and could not pay back borrowed funds from both the British and French, politicians from these two imperial countries decided to take over Egypt as a dual colony.[215] The French failed to implement the immediate takeover of Egypt due to parliamentary and administrative bureaucracy.

In 1882 the British immediately took control of Egypt, to the annoyance of French politicians. In their frustrations, the French design after 1882 was to occupy any country through which the River Nile flowed, as a way to deter British cotton development in Egypt. In June 1895, British Intelligence at Cairo warned that:

> Rumors have been in Cairo of the arrival of a French expedition in the Barhr-El-Ghazel region of Sudan. There is no reason to assume that the arrival of French parties in that neighbourhood is impossible or unlikely.[216]

It was with the object of forestalling the possibility of the French taking over northern Uganda and Southern Sudan (former Equatorial Province) that the British government ordered Major L. Macdonald to lead an exploratory expedition northwards from Buganda in Southern Uganda. Macdonald was instructed to confirm British claims to northern Uganda by establishing military and administrative posts and hoisting the British flag in the area.[217]

The threat to the Upper Nile came from Leopold II King of Belgium, then the colonial force in Congo in April 1893. As the British administrator in Uganda

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[215] R. Robinson & J. Ghallager, *Africa and the Victorians*, *The Official Mind of Imperialism*, (London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1981), 321.
[216] Intelligence Report: Egypt, no 38, Confidential Report, 18 June 1895, bound as Confidential Print in F.O. 78/4986.
[217] J.P. Berber, "The Moving Frontier of British Imperialism", 25.

then put it in a letter to the Queen of England; "The sovereign of Congo is a large filibustering force into the British sphere of influence and it has occupied Lado (current West Nile region of Uganda), an important post on the Nile".[218] Leopold II's ambition was to build an extensive colonial empire for Belgium, stretching from the Congo to Zanzibar on the East African coast and encompassing modern northern Uganda. Therefore, even when the British official position was not to effectively occupy northern Uganda because it was still regarded as an area with little to offer in the way of commerce and an area whose people had not yet become accustomed to the sojourn of white men in their midst,[219] French and Belgian threats made the British change their attitude to the effective occupation of northern Uganda by 1906.

Up to 1898, British administration in Uganda was confined to the four kingdoms of Buganda, Bunyoro, Toro and Ankole, the district of Busoga and to a line of stations along the supply route from Mombasa. The great stretch of country to the north, between the Nile and Lake Rudolph was completely unadministered and unexplored. Its people were left to fend for themselves. The British attitude about Acholiland only depended on vital political and economic interests that they felt were under threat from different colonial powers at different times, such as the French and also in order to contain Ethiopian elephant hunters.

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[218] The best account of Leopold's ambitions on the River Nile is in J. Stengers, "La Primiere Tentative de Resprise du Congo par lar Beligique; *Bulletin de la Geographie,* LXIII, (1959), 1-80.
[219] AF No. 7 (1900) Command 671 instructions to Sadler 28/1/1902.

Between 1898 and 1904, northern Uganda was still largely free of British imperial control, as compared to southern Uganda, then already effectively occupied. Ethiopian elephant hunters exploited this vacuum to intensify their unrestricted killing of elephants for ivory and to trade their guns with Acholi rival chiefs (rwots). As Karugire notes,

> the activities of the Ethiopian traders were so harmful that by 1914, the vast herds of elephants of North-Eastern Uganda were virtually exhausted and this, in turn, led to the sharp decline in the revenue the protectorate had been used to collecting from this source (sale of ivory). Additionally, through the same ivory hunters the people of northern Uganda were getting and accumulating large quantities of arms and this worried the protectorate administration, especially as an increasing number of breach loaders-considered to be sophisticated weapons by the standard of those days were finding their way into Acholiland.[220]

Such were the events, in addition to the French and Belgium threats discussed earlier, which gradually changed British policy and attitude about directly controlling northern Uganda. Thus, clearly, northern Uganda was not occupied because it was considered economically viable to British imperial interests but much more because of considerable threats to British safe occupation of Southern Uganda. This thinking later developed into British divide and rule policy.

In July 1899, Sir Harry Johnstone went to Uganda as special Commissioner to reorganize the protectorate. Johnstone aimed at establishing an administration over the northern part of the Uganda Protectorate that was "economic and

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[220] S. R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda* , 113-114.

efficient".[221] For him, "economy and efficiency" meant a policy of expansion that was contrary to the position of the Foreign office in London. Although Harry Johnstone never visited Acholiland during his tenure, he had read with enthusiasm the reports of British Officers sent to the area, particularly those of Delme'-Redcliffe. He came to realize that northern Uganda was economically productive and British colonial control of the area would be of great economic value. The area had vast stock of elephants and, hence, ivory then unilaterally exploited by Ethiopian ivory traders. He wanted a formal declaration that the Uganda Protectorate extended to 5° north latitude between Lake Rudolf and the Nile, including Acholiland. The Foreign Office would not sanction such a claim, partly because official policy then was to concentrate in the South[222]. Johnstone's tenure came to an end and, likewise, his expansionist policy in the north.

Colonel Hayes Sadler was, henceforth, sent as the new commissioner to Uganda. The instruction given to the new Commissioner confirms our earlier position about British colonial politics and attitude about the Acholi. The instructions to Hayes Sadler stated that:

> in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, it is not desirable
> to push too quickly amongst tribes in outlying districts who
> have little to offer at the present in the way of commerce and
> who have not yet become accustomed to the sojourn of the
> White men in their midst.[223]

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[221] F. O. C.P 7867, Johnstone-Landowne, 107/1901.
[222] Entebbe Archives, A17/1: 25/8/1900, Johnstone to Delme-Redcliffe.
[223] For details on this British stereotype/ position and politics of divisionism, see AF No, 7, Cmd 671, Instructions to Sadler, 28/7/1902.

Sadler's policy was later described by Hesketh Bell as "merely keeping open the waterways and as little interference as possible with the wilder tribes of the interior".[224]

In one of his correspondences, Sadler reported that the trade through Gondokoro was "insignificant", and that the Nile Province (largely Acholiland) was "the most backward part of the Protectorate because of its distance from the headquarters, the difficulty of communication and the "poverty and primitive" character of its people who still feel the effects of the rule of Emin Pasha's mutinous soldiers followed by the Dervishes".[225]

Hesketh Bell was the strongest exponent of the Foreign office's 1902 policy of 'concentration' or keeping the British occupation to the more economically viable south and the strongest opponent of Harry Johnstone's policy of expansion. Bell did not consider that Acholiland itself could be productive. He thought the soil poor, the timber sparse and the prospect for the survival of sheep or cattle thin. This was a clear contrast to the writings of enthusiastic missionaries a few years before. Kitching, for one, had noted that "almost every village boasts some cattle".[226] To Bell, Acholiland offered "heavy expenditure without any reward". Not only did he dismiss its commercial value, but he also strongly believed that Johnstone's northern expansion had more than territorial implications as it would bring into the protectorate a group of tribes whose

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[224] Entebbe Archives (E/A), 50/1906, Bell- Hesketh to Sadler, 13/9/1906.
[225] Details in Sadler's Annual Report, 3/3/1903.
[226] Correspondence from Sir Hesketh Bell to Secretary of State, Sept. 13.1906, C.O 53617.

organization and customs were completely different from that of the Bantu Kingdom and people who formed the core of Uganda.[227]

That the colonial government could afford to play the reluctant colonizer was a reflection of its attitude on the economic and political weaknesses of the northern tribes like the Acholi. British administrators like Bell strongly held the view that the tribes of the north (like the Acholi) presented no more than an administrative problem that would involve the British in endless petty squabbles while an administrative system was being imposed upon them. He also emphasized that "the natives were unwilling to submit to domination by chiefs". There were "no powerful local authorities through which we might transmit our directions".[228] It is interesting to note how firmly Bell was committed to the Buganda model. His concern for what came to be called "indirect rule", not only predated the experience of Lugard in Nigeria, but it also restricted his vision toward the possibility of administering so-called "stateless societies".

Bell concluded by making apologies for a policy which would restrict the government's active authority to within twenty miles of the river. Bell strongly believed that the resources of the Protectorate should not be frittered away "on inadequate efforts in outlying provinces" but should be concentrated "in the more favoured localities, where the soil is excellent, the people industrious and the country full of promise". He decided, therefore, that in the north, "the

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[227] This kind of stereotype characterized British colonial politics of "divide and rule" in Uganda. Post-colonial rulers exacerbated such politics and this laid foundation for the turbulence that has characterized Acholiland since 1962.
[228] Correspondence from Sir Hesketh Bell to Secretary of State, Sept. 13.1906, C.O 53617.

administration should be confined to a radius of 20 miles from the banks of the Nile river, that no responsibility should be accepted for tribes inland, that the troops at the Nile stations should be withdrawn and that the administrative status of the stations should be lowered from a Province to a District".[229]

Hesketh Bell's policy of administrative concentration was clear, but even then the north generally, Acholi in particular, could not be ignored completely by the British. It was partly the problem of the ivory traders that caught the attention of the British in the later years.

The policy which, since 1900, had given the ivory traders and hunters unrestricted freedom to hunt down large populations of elephants for ivory was severely criticized by a later Governor, Fredrick Jackson. In 1901, he wrote,

> I consider as deplorable the conditions of affairs now existing in these parts (i.e. Acholiland and adjacent areas)… It cannot be pleaded that it was unknown that such a condition existed nor is it possible to support the assertion that the traders were confining themselves to a war of extermination against the elephants. Many of the traders are stirring up strife amongst the natives and assisting one tribe against another in order to share the loot.[230]

Governor Fredrick Jackson was alarmed at the lack of administrative control by the British in Acholiland and how the Ethiopian ivory traders had exploited this administrative vacuum to indiscriminately hunt elephants for ivory.

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[229] Entebbe Achieves, Bell to Sadler, 13/9/1906.
[230] Entebbe Archives, Memo by Jackson Fredrick 19/1911 of 4/7/1911.

Additionally through the same ivory traders, the people of northern Uganda particularly the Acholi, got and accumulated large quantities of arms which their chiefs (rwots) used in inter-clan feuds. Consequently, this made the Acholi a threat to even the British. As Karugire notes,

> Hitherto, the British officials had reasoned that the communities of northern Uganda, armed with a few antiquated weapons, could be subdued as and when it became necessary. But the increasing supplies of sophisticated weapons made the occupation of the region urgent since the more the occupation was delayed the more the communities would learn the effective use of those weapons and hence the more difficult they would be to subdue in future.[231]

The colonial government may not have known the full extent of the tribal fighting and destruction of elephant by Ethiopian hunters in the north, but there was undeniable evidence that all was not well. As early as 1900, Johnstone reported that the destruction of elephants was "shocking"[232]. In 1903, T. Grant, an administrative officer, reported that European and Swahili traders were also taking part in local Acholi tribal raids for cattle, goats, women and food-stuff.[233] In 1906, H. Rayne, a police officer, made a full report of the unlawful activities of the Swahili in the Turkwell region and, in 1908 Lieutenant Fishbourne wrote that the tribes "raid each other all year round. All the country lying west of Lake Rudolf and for some distance south is continuously swept by raiding bands of Abyssinians or Ethiopians.[234] For long, what took place in the Acholi sub-region did not attract immediate attention of the colonial government partly because of their policy of concentrating their meager

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[231] S.R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda,* 114.
[232] F.O.C.P 74005, Johnstone H. to Hardinge, 26 March 1900.
[233] For details see Karamoja Records 1903.
[234] M. Bartlet, *The Kings African Rifles*, 234.

resources on economically viable areas like Buganda and the kingdoms in the south. The other reason for the change in policy was, as Jackson noted, the importance of ivory as a source of trade and revenue in the period before cotton dominated the Uganda economy.[235] The colonial government then viewed the north as a source of revenue from ivory without undertaking the responsibility of administration. This policy was later seen as a failure because the fortunes from the ivory went to individuals and not to the government. As James Barber put it,

> The British officials were compelled to pursue an active policy
> in northern Uganda, not because they thought it or its
> inhabitants had any intrinsic value in themselves, but
> because of British strategic and economic interests.[236]

The point to emphasize here is that the policy of marginalization of the Acholi that was employed in Uganda by the British is what partly contributed to the current state of this region. The colonial and later post-colonial regimes did not value Acholiland, for it was considered as a land of less economic value compared to, for example, Buganda in the south, and very little infrastructure developments were made in the area in the colonial period. Post colonial regimes after 1962 have done very little to transform the life and social status of the people there. Leaders have, instead, manipulated the Acholi in different ways and at different times for their selfish political motives, leading to the current turbulence. The Acholi became manipulatable, partly because of the unfortunate outcome of their relations with aliens. The foundation of this was

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[235] Figures given in the Annual reports show that for 1904-1905 ivory was the largest single export item (£24,331) and in 1905-06 (£24,331); the second largest to goat skins. No indication is given of the districts from which the ivory was obtained but the reaction of local officers indicates the importance of the north.
[236] J. P. Berber, "The Moving Frontier of British Imperialism", 88.

laid by Arab activities in the region. By 1872, Arab slave traders had already created very unstable conditions in Acholi. As Webster & Onyango-Ku-Odongo have noted regarding the consequence of Arabs in Acholi,

> In fact there was no group which regarded peaceful relations as normal and fighting as exceptional. Generally, there was a war of each against all. Torn apart by feuds and internal strife, created and encouraged by the Arab traders, the Acholi people could not stand together and face a common enemy.[237]

The lasting effect of this early contact with aliens contributed greatly to Acholi response to later aliens and post-independence leaders. The social fabric of society had been torn apart by Arabs and the British found a people not yet congealed as a large political unit beyond clans; which were also in a state of rivalry or feuds. In such a state, the Acholi fell easily prey to colonial and post-colonial politics of divide and rule.

1910 was a turning point in the colonial government's attitude to the north in general. This was the year when British colonial administration was effectively established in northern Uganda. Colonial government reports of 1910 revealed the seriousness of tribal fighting and the failure of the "Uganda" government to control the ivory trade. It also revealed the dangers to British interests both from the Ethiopian ivory hunters and from the tribes. As F.A. Knowles, the Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Province wrote:

> The matter (Ethiopian hunters and tribal fights) is of utmost importance as there is little doubt that in the near future a considerable force will be necessary to deal with these natives and ivory hunters. The situation becomes more dangerous

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[237] J. B. Webster, & Onyango-Ku-Odong, "The Peopling of Agago", 165.

every day, unless prompt measures are taken to deal with the situation at once.[238]

This forced Stanley Tomkins, the acting Governor, to appoint a touring officer for Karamoja and Turkwell, South of 3°N, to control ivory traders and enter relations with the northern tribes, in an endeavour to control the tribes[239].

There were other important developments in the north in 1910. In July, the District Commissioner (D.C) Nimule in Acholiland reported that large quantities of firearms were being smuggled by ivory traders in from Ethiopia via Karamoja.[240] He estimated that each year about Rs. 250,000 worth of ivory was being taken into Ethiopia. The firearms that came in return were used both in the destruction of elephants and in tribal raiding. "I found" he reported, "that the whole country was in an extremely lawless state, raiding, looting and killing among the tribes being a very ordinary occurrence".[241]

Another report from Nimule stated: "During one tour in the Central Acholi unadministered area,"

> I personally saw 500 firearms . . . a large number of which being Grass rifles... Relying on their rifles, the Acholi war parties numbering sometimes 2000-3000 strong have now created a reign of terror in the country to the east.[242]

These arms smuggled into the Acholi sub-region were exchanged for ivory and foodstuff by the Ethiopians. In a divide and rule tactic, these traders would arm one Acholi leader (rwot) against the other, as a way to weaken them and render

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[238] Entebbe Archives, Doc. 106/1910, Provincial Commissioner to Governor, 27/3/1911.
[239] Entebbe Archives, 19/1911 Tomkins- S of S 13/3/1911 and Jackson-S of S, 4.7/1911.
[240] Memo by District Commissioner, Nimule, 71/1910, C/S/14.7. 1910, Entebbe Archives.
[241] Tanner's Report, dated 22/12/1910, Entebbe Archives (71/1Q10).
[242] Report of the District Commissioner, Nimule No E/A, 106/1910, D. C, Nimule to Provincial Commissioner Hoima, dated 5/2/1911.

them manipulatable. Once the Acholi were weakened, Ethiopian ivory traders then freely hunted down large numbers of elephants without fear of the Acholi.

What the reports of 1910 and 1911 revealed was, not only the seriousness of the tribal fighting, lawlessness and the failure of the British colonial government to control the ivory trade, but also the dangers to British interests both from the Ethiopians and from the tribes. Although still divided in their organization, the tribes could, with their firearms, present a formidable danger to any future administration. While there was no tribal cohesion of any sort among the Acholi and the other people of northern Uganda, it can be said with equal truth that the presence of these undesirable foreigners created a new and unhealthy atmosphere. Before British colonial rule was firmly established, there were tribal wars and wars among clans of the Acholi tribe. Such wars were, however, not so devastating as those which occurred after the foreigners arrived in the area and those in the post-colonial period.

As is evident from the above, British colonialism in Uganda did not value the interest of the local people. Acholiland only became an area of importance much later when British economic interests were under threat from Ethiopians, the French and Belgians.

The first signs of a break in the old policy came in Lango district. Government stations had been established among the Lango at Bululu (1907) and Ibuja (or

Kibuji) in 1909/1910.[243] In 1910, J.C. Boyle, then acting Governor, reported that information from District officers showed that "the description of the North by Bell as unsuitable for economic development was incorrect".[244]

In November 1911, Fredrick Jackson, who was not content to leave the north to military control, extended civil administration eastwards from the Nile to embrace a block of territory bounded by the river Nile, the 4°North and 33° east.

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[243] I. Kenneth, "British Administration in Lango District, 1909-1935", in I. Kenneth, *The Making of Modern Uganda*, (London: Allen and Unwin,1958)
[244]   Letter from Boyle J. C. to Crewe, 4/1/1910, E/A, 50/1006.)

Map showing Districts

DISTRICTS AND COUNTIES OF ACHOLILAND.
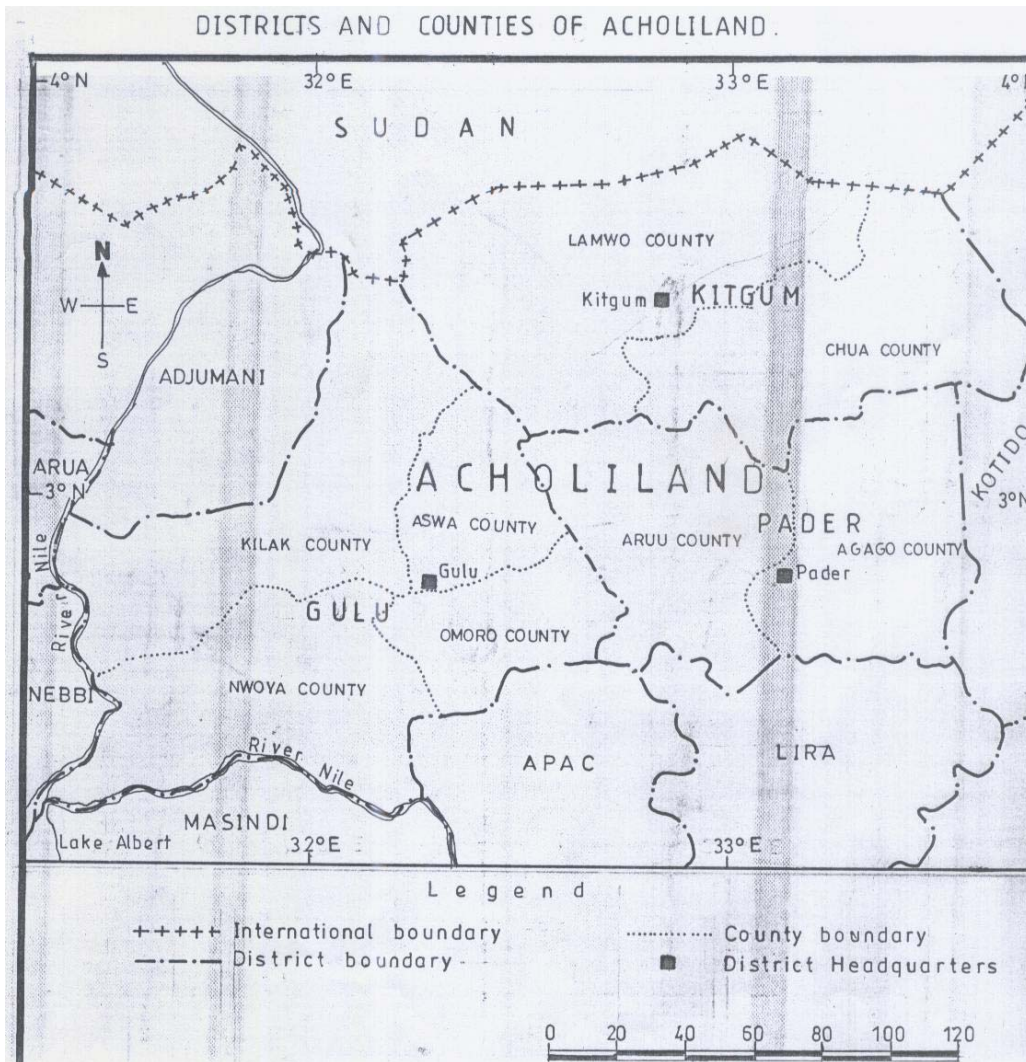
Source: A New Macmillan Social Studies Atlas, 1998.

Jackson's extension of administration covered a territorial block and not only a tribal group, although it so happened that the Acholi occupied most of the block. By this measure, the Gulu area of Acholiland was brought under effective British control. The remainder of the Acholi was brought under civil

administration in 1913 when Chua district, with its headquarters at Kitgum, was extended eastwards to the 34⁰ E.[245]

British Colonialism and Transformations in Acholiland: 1911-1962

By 1902, the British official position about Acholiland had largely changed. Acholiland was, henceforth, recognized as one of the three districts in the Nile Province.[246] Even then, it was not until late 1910 that the British established their first administrative center in Acholiland at Gulu.

The period 1910-1920

The first major concern of British administrators in Acholiland was the question of firearms, inter-tribal conflicts and general insecurity in the area. The spread of firearms in Acholiland started in the 1870s during the time of Khedive Ismail Pasha's brief administration of the Equatorial province. After the successful Mahdist nationalists revolt in Sudan against Turko-Egyptian rule, Nubian soldiers who had been used by the Turko Egyptians were left on their own. For survival, most of them began to exchange their firearms with different Acholi rwots (Chiefs). After their final withdrawal from Equatorial Province in 1888, fire arms into Acholi came from Ethiopian ivory traders.

As Karugire notes, "through the ivory traders from Ethiopia, the peoples of northern Uganda were getting and accumulating large quantities of arms and this worried the protectorate administration.[247] Through the activities of these

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[245] E/A 2364, Statement to Provincial Commissioner, 19/4/1913.
[246] Official Gazette (Mombasa), June 1, 1902, 200 and August 1902, 256.
[247] S. R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*, 113.

early traders, Acholi district remained one of the most heavily armed in the protectorate.[248] In the 19th century and into the early twentieth century, trade in guns continued between the Acholi and the Alur in the North with Kabarega King of Bunyoro in the South of Lake Kyoga. As British colonial administrator Lord Owen noted, the Acholi and the Alur to the north, provided Omukama (King) Kabarega of Bunyoro with ivory in exchange for guns, and Kabarega was able to sell the ivory to the Arabs at a large profit.[249]

The first political and military officer in Acholiland (Tufnell) had the dual task of aiding the British military forces and laying the foundation for future civil administration. He had to find porters and food for the military, to make roads, and to persuade outlying tribal groups to concentrate near the roads or military posts so that they could be controlled. He also offered protection against their traditional enemies.[250] Tufnell, however, met all the problems foreseen by Hesketh Bell. This included the problem of weak chiefs and tribes with no central organization so that to persuade one village to accept British control peacefully was no guarantee that the next village would not offer resistance. As Tufnell himself contrasted his situation with that in the remainder of the Protectorate, "These tribes", he wrote, "are not like tribes previously dealt with. In every other part of the Protectorate, it had been found possible to enlarge the sphere of administered area by peaceful methods".[251]

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[248] R.R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity,* 5.
[249] Owen to Colville, March 29, 1894. F.O. 6557/3.
[250] J. P. Berber, "The Moving Frontier of British Imperialism", 36.
[251] Entebbe Archives, 2364, Tufnell (memo), dated 16/1/1912.

In any case, due to the period of Nubian and Ethiopian incursion into the region and the spread of arms, almost every tribe was armed and hostile to the other and, later, to the British. As Berber (1965) notes, to deal with fierce and often heavily armed northern tribes, Tufnell believed that military force was necessary. Once started, there was no end to the responsibilities, for a tribal group brought under control had to be protected from its neighbours. The only efficient way to do this was to control the neighbours, and so on until the British dominated all.[252]

The above situation should not be used to justify the stereotypical position that the Acholi are naturally warlike people but largely portrays the unfortunate results of Acholi interaction with early intruders into their area. The overall consequence was that Acholi socio-political fabric was greatly weakened by in-fights among the different clans and between the Acholi and other tribes in the north that it was impossible for the Acholi to put up uniform responses to British colonialists. Secondly, this situation of lawlessness and inter-tribal wars was not confined to the Acholi only but held true of the northern tribes in general. As Berber notes, "the civil administrators who followed Tufnell into the Acholi district and parts of northern Uganda encountered similar problems. These problems were not confined to the Acholi".[253]

Dwyer emphasizes that the major task of the officers in the Nile stations between 1908 and 1910 was the registration of guns, with a view to disarming

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[252] Acholi perception of aliens was, likewise, affected by the effects and activities of early intruders like Nubians and Ethiopians in their area. This partly explains their response to the British later, and other peoples they considered aliens, (for instance the NRA from the south) in their midst.
[253] J. P. Berber, "The Moving Frontier of British Imperialism", 36.

the Acholi.[254]   British administrators had to ensure that law and order were maintained and that the petty inter-tribal raids and squabbles of the past were eliminated. The first concern was the level of Acholi armaments.   As J. R Postlethwaite noted in his book *I look Back,* "The district officers who were charged with the responsibility of opening up the Acholi district saw disarmament of the area as their first and most important task".[255]

In August-September 1911, a policy of enforcing the firearms ordinance was advanced by the Provincial commissioners of the Nile Province. After signing the Brussels Arms Regulation Treaty of 1890, the British came up with the Firearms Ordinance (1900) to implement the terms of the treaty.   This ordinance permitted British colonial administrators to disarm the Acholi to an "acceptable level".[256]   Tufnell pleaded that this ordinance should be put into force against the portion of Acholi then under British administration.   The seriousness of the process of disarmament illustrates how Acholiland was insecure due to foreign infiltration.

When the colonial administration began registering guns and disarming the Acholi, the chiefs of Gondokoro and Gulu possessed about 1500 rifle[257].   The 1913 report noted that, in the month of March alone, more than 1400 rifles were collected.   Some Acholi leaders resisted this exercise, especially when it was poorly coordinated.

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[254] J. Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda: Adjustment to Imperialism, 104.
[255] J. R. P Postlethwaite, *I Look Back,* 51-52.
[256] A. B. Adimola, "The Lamogi Rebellion", 166-177.
[257] Native Report, E/A, 1910 Security report-Northern Garrison, 1910, Entebbe Archives, 110.

The most extensive Acholi resistance occurred in Lamogi in 1911-1912 in opposition to the Government policy of weapon confiscation. In a study of the Lamogi rebellion, A.B Adimola noted two main causes of the revolt. The first, which Adimola deemed the "most important", was the British demand that all firearms be registered in accordance with the Brussels Treaty of 1890. This treaty of 1890 was a formal agreement between Britain and German to restrict the flow of firearms into parts of Africa. British and German Trading company agents in Africa, especially East Africa, were astounded at the number of firearms they encountered in their travels in the region. The Brussels Treaty of 1890 was meant to bring some control to the situation.[258]

The second, a "factor of minor importance", was the forced recruitment of porters and labourers for the roads and rest camps.[259] The disarmament of the Acholi, and especially the Lamogi, had serious social and military consequences. Firstly, individual Acholi rwots (chiefs) like Awich of Payira[260] tried then to use the colonial army and British power for their own purpose. They denounced their "enemies" to the colonial administration and gave the military cause for punitive measures. They used the foreign military power to settle their own accounts. Those chiefs who acquiesced to the new political realities helped to exacerbate division and manipulative politics that came to characterize British colonial rule in Uganda. After the Lamogi rebellion, only

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[258] J.O. Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda: Adjustment to Imperialism", 146.
[259] A.B. Adimola, "The Lamogi Rebellion, 1911- 1912", 166-177.
[260] For more on Rwot Arucha and his unsettled Acholiland, read his biography by Reuben Anywar; an Acholi ethnographer and Historian.

those chiefs appointed by the colonial administration continued to have access to rifles.[261]

This epitomizes British politics of manipulation and divisionism in Acholiland. Chiefs who retained firearms also maintained a monopoly of force, using it for self-aggrandizement and as an instrument of vengeance against old and new rivals. A Divisional chief explained: "you see we must rule by fear".[262] Girling observes that "Government became little more than police".[263] This illustrates how the major trends that have shaped the development and contributed to Acholiland's turbulent post colonial experience can be traced back to its history in the colonial period. By weakening the Acholi political system of rwotship, the British laid the foundation for politics of manipulation that post colonial leaders exacerbated.

From the beginning, the colonial administration in Acholiland also failed to create a public space characterized by, at least, the fiction of functionality and neutrality. On the contrary, the colonial state and its representatives in Acholiland appeared to profit from a policy of "eating" and "full-belly"[264] that served their own interests, but not those of the majority.

Worse still, by disarming the southern Acholi communities of both registered and unregistered firearms in 1912, the Northern Patrol Officers created a serious imbalance in Acholiland. While those in the south were virtually

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[261] H. Behrend, Is *Alice Lakwena a Witch*? 17.
[262] F. K. Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda,* 198.
[263] F. K. Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda,* 199.
[264] J. F. Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly,* (London: New York, Longman, 1989), 16.

disarmed, Acholi in the north remained with both registered and unregistered guns.[265] The southern Acholi became easy victims of raids by the north. To-date, insurgency movements against established governments remain pronounced in northern Acholiland than in the south. Districts like Kitgum and Pader in north Acholi have been the major centers of hostilities to the National Resistance Movement government since 1986.[266]

Moreover, this discriminatory process of disarming increased Acholi suspicion about foreigners and government agents in this area. Such memory and history partly explain why the National Resistance Army instruction in 1986 that Acholi should surrender all guns in their possession was viewed with suspicion. Many Acholi ex-soldiers decided to join the insurgent group in the "bush" for fear of further betrayal.

Against the chiefs (rwot) installed by the colonial administration after the Lamogi rebellion in 1912 and who lacked local legitimacy, the Acholi elected their own traditional representatives who they called *rwod* or *Jagi Kwer*, "chief of the hoe". Like the colonial warrant chiefs, they also maintained an enforcement staff of clerks, messengers and policemen who headed work groups to support each other's labour in the fields and punished those who did not fulfill their obligations.[267] This illustrates how British colonial politics brought confusion that weakened the Acholi political system. In the post-colonial era,

[265] J. O. Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda: Adjustment to Imperialism, 149.
[266] This view is held by most military and government officials posted to Northern Uganda. See interview with major Kazini, retired Army Chief on 5th March 2007, interview with current RDC Gulu, Walter Ochora 10th March 2007. Chairman Gulu, Hon. Mao Robert, feels that this explanation is limited in scope.
[267] F. K. Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda*, 93.

such division and weakening of the Acholi local political structures continued under Native Ordinances. To-date, the Acholi cannot easily solve their local grievances using local elders or traditional offices. Issues that have contributed to turbulence in these areas partly relate to their weak political base.

The suppression of the Lamogi rebellion in the early part of 1912 did not signal the final "pacification" of the Acholi people but rather the beginning of effective administration of their district by the British. After the rebellion, the British committed themselves to full administration of the area. This was only possible after the British deployed more administrative staff in the area in the early 1920s.

Transformation of Acholi political structures (1912-1950).

The Uganda protectorate had been built upon the alliance between the British and the Kingdom of Buganda. As the protectorate had expanded, so the Buganda system of government had been spread both by the British and the Baganda agents in what Andrew Roberts called "Buganda sub-imperialism".[268]

From the outset, the British were convinced that the "Kiganda" model of local government would be the most viable and probably the cheapest also and that, therefore, this should be "exported" into all parts of the protectorate.[269] The Buganda system of Lukiiko (chief's council) and "civil service" chiefs at county,

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[268] A. D. Roberts, "The Sub-imperialism of the Baganda", 435-450.
[269] S. R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda,* 123.

sub-county and parish levels offered a uniform system for the whole protectorate, Acholiland included.

The Buganda system was a completely new political structure for the "stateless societies" of the North. Early European anthropologists,[270] just like the British administrators later, failed to appreciate that the so-called pre-colonial "stateless states" like Acholi had a system of government that gave meaning to the collective preservation of law and order, administration and the protection of human rights among their chieftaincies. Non-Bantu speaking people like the Acholi were defined in terms of what political institutions they lacked rather than in terms of how they organized their political life. "The Natives," wrote Hesketh Bell (in reference to the Acholi),

> unlike those of Uganda (Buganda) and Unyoro (Bunyoro), are apparently unwilling to submit to domination by chiefs. There are no powerful local authorities through which we might transmit our directions and every group of families seems to live independently and to be more or less at variance with their neighbours.[271]

This mischaracterization of Acholi communities continued even in the 1930s and 1950s. This became the cornerstone of political changes carried out by the British on Acholi political structure.

Postlethwaite, the pioneer colonial administrator of Acholiland, recalls the effort to include East Acholi into the Protectorate. "I became so discouraged by the absence of any real chiefs with definite, permanent tribal authority that I found

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[270] For more on this read Lucy Mair, *Primitive Government*, (Baltimore: Penguin, 1962).
[271] F. K. Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda,* 199.

my mind turning for salvation to the Old Buganda Agent Policy of Eastern Uganda," he wrote.[272] This illustrates the frustrations of British administrators in their political dealings with the Acholi, compared to the kingdom areas with clear political structures like the office of Kings. In the colonial and also post colonial period, Acholiland was regarded as a home for "war like" and "primitive people".

Early explorers like Speke and Grant also described Acholi as a primitive people when these two explorers crossed the Nile River and entered Acholiland. Moorehead proposes that "the tribes grew more primitive; they were back in a region of naked, painted men who carried bows and arrow, and who knew nothing of the arts and crafts of Buganda".[273] The negative characterization of the Acholi by the British formed the basis of their policy of divide and rule where the Acholi and other West Nile tribes were declared labour supplies for the South and for the army and police. The colonial administration effected this in Uganda, especially in southern Uganda, by inculcating in them a sense of racial superiority partly through religion and education at the expense of the Acholi and northerners in general who were regarded as, 'warlike and primitive people'.

After independence in most African states, as Amii Omara-Otunnu notes, in most fields, power was transferred to Africans who had not been in a position to accrue a record of comparable achievements which would command the respect

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[272] J. R. P. Postlethwaite, *I Look Back*, 56.
[273] A. Moorehead, *The White Nile* (London: H. Hamilton, 1960), 68.

of across-section of the population.[274] Almost all post-colonial leaders in post-independent Uganda fall into this category. Obote, a Langi from northern Uganda, who ruled Uganda between 1962 and 1971 and 1981 and 1985, did not have a track record in Uganda's pre-independence history that would have swayed the entire population to support him as president. To rule, he resorted to manipulation of the high Acholi population in the post-independence army to overthrow the 1962 government led by Kabaka (king) Mutesa II, a Muganda. He used the Buganda factor to rally support from the north, North East, West Nile and Bunyoro until he was overthrown by Idi Amin, from West Nile. Amin also exploited the hatred of the Baganda towards Obote and his Kakwa-Lugbara-dominated army to rule till 1979.

In the same way, to come to power in 1986, Museveni and his National Resistance Army exploited Buganda's hatred for Obote and his Acholi-dominated army to fight a five-year bush war in Luwero in Buganda against Obote's second regime. After victory in 1986, the Uganda National Liberation Army Acholi soldiers launched war on the NRA of Museveni partly to regain power and also because of the NRA record of revenge against all Acholi for the mistakes of the Acholi UNLA soldiers. This shows how post-colonial leaders in Uganda carried on with "divide and rule politics" of the British. The 20-year conflict in Acholiland partly draws from this negative history. The Africans who succeeded to positions of authority after independence failed to narrow the divide. As a result of the stereotype and politics of marginalisation, British

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[274] A. Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890-1985*, 8.

administrators started institutional transformation in Acholiland without due regard for consequences on future Acholi political and social life.

As British authority became more firmly established, chiefs who were seen as "unco-operative" or "incompetent" were deposed or replaced by more compliant men known as warrant chiefs. Acholi chiefs who collaborated with the British and those appointed by them became an integral part of the new system of alien rule.

To confirm the above, Bere R.M, the administrative successor to Postlethwaite in Acholiland, notes that the British administration was influential in the election of chiefs who were willing to co-operate with the colonial administration. Consequently, the tendency was for the proportion of government nominees to increase at the cost of patrilineal clan chiefs. "Many of the traditional chiefs were dismissed, retrenched or retired, and others were transferred to fill vacancies caused by these removals. New chiefs were appointed irrespective of clan or family" he writes.[275]

For instance, new chiefs like rwot Okello-Mwaka were imposed on the Puranga. Rwot Aliker of Payira was given authority over the Labongo clans. In addition, Rwot Atyak was deposed in 1927 "because he failed to carry out government orders" and was replaced by one Atoyo Jakanya from Patiko.[276]

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[275] R. M. Bere, "Land and Chieftainship Among the Acholi", *Uganda Journal*, 19, 1 (1955), 49-56.
[276] S. R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*, 125.

Dwyer points out that several local Acholi leaders, as well as ordinary people, resisted what they regarded as the disruption of their indigenous modes of political representation.[277]   For example, the Labongo clans resisted Rwot Eliya Aliker.   Reuben S. Anywar, in his work "Acoli Ki Ker Megi", observes that the Labongo clan saw the imposition on them of Rwot Eliya Aliker from Payira as Payira paramountcy and resented it.[278]   Aliker also made demands upon the Labongo to provide labour for the building of roads before he was able to win their confidence. Apart from seeing him as a foreigner, the Labongo people also hated being ruled by force.[279]   Together with the European District Commissioner of Acholi, M. Wright, they ordered the confiscation of Labongo cattle.   A British military officer, Wegstaff, with Payira auxiliaries, attacked, killed and confiscated Labongo cattle.[280] In this way, British colonial politics was very instrumental in weakening the Acholi political system and laying ground for the later political events, including conflicts that have bedeviled Acholiland.

Administrative re-arrangements were resisted elsewhere, too, by the Alero who opposed amalgamation with Koic and others, like those eastern Acholi of Paimol area who refused to accept the chiefs appointed over them.   The resulting "Paimol rising" of 1918 had to be put down strongly and the leaders died before a firing squad.[281]   The British had deposed Lakidi, the chief of Paimol, on grounds that he was unjust and dishonest. As his replacement, the British had

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[277] J. O. Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda: Adjustment to Imperialism", 103.
[278] J. O. Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda: Adjustment to Imperialism", 19.
[279] J. O. Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda: Adjustment to Imperialism", 164.
[280] J. O. Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda: Adjustment to Imperialism", 164.
[281] More on this is detailed in an unpublished paper by Okello James and John Orr Dwyer- "The Paimol rising of 1918", (1969, Unpublished).

chosen Amet-chief of Lira Amiel, about twenty miles south of Paimol. Amet was a proven leader but, unfortunately, had suffered from leprosy and had lost some of his fingers and toes.[282] Besides the issue of leprosy, this resistance was evidence that the people of that area had defied British imposition of Paimol paramouncty over them. Such British actions did not only contribute to loss of lives and property, but they also increased the enmity between the Paimol and the Acholi of Alero. British colonial administrators exploited such differences to consolidate their rule over the Acholi.

In other parts of Acholi, those chiefs who allied with the British were rebuked, derided and threatened with death or even killed by the local people. In Puranga, warrant chief-Okello Mwaka, who was deemed despotic and untraditional, was assassinated. For colonialism to consolidate unchallenged supremacy in the area, the alleged assassins of Okello Mwaka were executed in Gulu by District Commissioner J. Postlethwaite. In his book, *I look Back*, J. Postlethwaite wrote: "Our warrant chief (Okello Mwaka) became very unpopular and was murdered by his enemies". He continued, "I tried these murderers, sentencing four to a long term of imprisonment and four to death; sentencing duly confirmed and carried out in Gulu one early morning".[283] Such measures and punishment not only scared those opposed to warrant chiefs, but also deepened division in Acholiland. Chiefs like Olia of Atyak, who had turned to collaboration with the British, happily supported the British action and remarked, "That is the best show you've put up since you have been here. That

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[282] Adimola Andrew in an interview with the author at Gulu Town, February 15, 2007. A Leper was and is still regarded as a social misfit or a curse among the Acholi.
[283] J. R. P. Postlethwaite, *I Look Back,* 64.

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has taught all the Acholi to be government men, and when can we have another?"[284]

The above action fits within the guiding principle of British divide and rule as summarized by the Provincial Commissioner of Northern Province in 1917 that "…if the villagers are going to resist the authority of the chiefs, every action must be taken and a good lesson given so that others will not follow suit".[285]

The foregoing analysis of the situation in Acholiland during the early years of British colonialism shows that attempts to establish paramountcy had been bedeviled with tension, wars and death and political authority in the district of Acholi was restructured. The British were, in fact, asking the chiefs to undertake administrative and executive functions for which there was no precedent in their tribal organizations. Some British administrators even became so exasperated that they took unto themselves duties which were normally the responsibility of the chiefs. In 1912, Postlethwaite advocated that, because of the inefficiency and illiteracy of the chiefs, the only successful method of tax collection among the Acholi was direct collection by District officers (DOs).[286] The climax of this process was the setting up of Acholi administrative courts, with chiefs appointed by the same colonial authority to preside over cases instead of the old rwots and elders. As Sverker Finnström notes, "In practice as Acholi individuals were assigned to run the courts, some

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[284] J. R. P. Postlethwaite, *I Look Back,* 64.
[285] E.S.A, S.M.P 4513, Correspondence from Eden to D.C., Chua, Jan. 19, 1917.
[286] J.P. Barber, "The Moving Frontier", 37.

came to incorporate imperial attitudes which were further disseminated and imposed on the subjects under colonial administration".[287]

Around 1950, the anthropologist F. K. Girling attended one of these courts, watching how it meted out beatings, fines and imprisonments. "You see, we must rule by fear," its divisional chief attested to the anthropologist. As the chief continued to justify his work, his word echoed the colonial image of Africans in general:

> The people (Acholi) are lazy; they do not realize what good things the government is doing for them. How can we make Acholi progress unless we grow cotton, pay our taxes and dig latrines as the government wants us to do.[288]

By a studied refusal to show much comprehension or any respect for the political traditions of the people they were "protecting", the British were responsible for the inevitable decay of those traditions. This shows how far the colonial administration had promoted polarization among the Acholi. The changes they initiated produced "winners" as well as "losers" and were met with responses ranging from overt resistance, always scattered and localized; and almost always brutally suppressed, to active collaboration. The chiefs who acquiesced to the new political realities were able therein to maintain influential positions. This shows that the Acholi too were attempting to manipulate the colonial situation to maintain influential positions and advantages.

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[287] F. Sverker, *Living With Bad Surrounding,* 68.
[288] M. Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, 159. See also F. K. Girling, The *Acholi of Uganda*, 198.

The Acholi case reinforces the argument that just as ethnic codification was a primary means through which the colonial power of indirect rule tried to keep its control, so ethnic belonging was to become one of the main ways of protesting against the very same control. In other words the colonial politics of ethnification was also an avenue of anti-colonialism.[289]

The early British administrators of Acholiland clearly measured progress by European standards. According to them, there had to be a recognizable chain of command which passed from the European officers through the chiefs to the people. The people, as "beneficiaries" of British programs of protection, roads and station-building, and contact with the outside world would have to pay through respect and, later, taxes.

The British were also not wise enough not to restrict their attention to the recognized "royalty" (in the sense of "hereditary hierarchy") of Acholiland, but to seek help from enterprising and politically astute Acholi of "non royal" background. The colonial conquest appropriated colonized societies and perhaps, more importantly, the past of these societies. In Acholiland, the result of this was the promotion of division and politics of intrigue. It also largely contributed to Acholi negative memory about foreign rule. In the post-colonial period, the Acholi have struggled to survive in the politics of manipulation, ethnic stereotyping by the different regimes. The current turbulence in this area partly draws from this colonial experience.

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[289] M. Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, 223. See also J. Okuku, "Ethnicity, State Power and the Democratization Process in Uganda", 11.

As shown above, the Acholi became victims of, but also agents in, the formation of Uganda and its ethnic districts. The Acholi, organized "without sultans or kings" of any consequence, as Speke (1863:575) claimed, came to suffer under the racist imperial authority they had to obey.[290]

Other agents of change in Acholiland

The impact of the second formidable force of change upon Acholiland was of a different sort. This was the force and role of the Christian mission. The representatives of the Christian churches did not make momentous decisions which disturbed the nature of politics in the country, but on a local level, their influence upon individuals was perhaps greater than that of the new government in Acholiland.

Missionaries promoted a tribal consciousness in Acholiland and neighbouring areas primarily by developing written vernacular languages and producing written accounts of local (or tribal) histories and customs[291]. Both Protestant and Catholic Missions played these roles in Acholiland, but the most active were the remarkable Crazzolara and his fellow Verona Fathers. "By a process of selection, emphasis, and distortions," Girling wrote, "they will write 'histories' which fit the needs of the present social order". [292]

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[290] J. H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, 376.
[291] R. R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity*, 7.
[292] F. K. Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda*, 203.

Together, missionaries helped create a powerful new idiom and new avenues for the expression of a consciously identified and clearly bounded ethnic (tribal) identity. Comboni missionary collection on the "Old Acholi" or "Acoli Macon" history and cultures became a vital tool used to revive Acholi identity and ethnic consciousness. By the end of the 1960s, Allen notes that this booklet on "The Old Acholi" had been printed in an amazing, 45,000 copies.[293]

Moreover, missionaries also produced locally-educated elite who further developed and articulated this identity and propagated it to a much wider audience than the missionaries alone could ever have done. The point being emphasized here is that missionary activity, assisted by the colonial system, was crucial in the creation of new or new kinds of ethnic identity in colonial Uganda. Ethnic and religious boundary drawing went hand in hand in the colonial period. In the later years, missionary competition created new divisions between Catholicism and Anglican Protestantism, although in Acholiland, Catholicism took the dominant position.[294] This division was further widened by the different regimes in the post-colonial period. Manipulation of such differences has contributed in one way or the other to the rise of different rebel movements along religious backgrounds.

Meanwhile, to articulate their various interests in the colonial discourse, the colonial subjects were dependent on their ability to read, write and speak

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[293] Most collections on Acholi traditions made in the early 1970s were the product of missionaries or Acholi trained by them. Most extensive works on this has bean collections by J. P. Crazzolara, *The Lwoo: Part II and the Lwoo: Part II,* (all by Verona: Museum Combonianum).

[294] In the 1991 national census, 70 percent of the population in Acholiland listed themselves as Catholic, 25 percent as protestants and only 0.5 percent as Muslims.

English. Education, which in northern Uganda was for many years monopolized by the missionaries, provided them with this.[295] Education was however, double-edged. As Mudoola observes, "colonial education domesticated its subjects, at least in part".[296] The protectorate government did not get involved in the provision of education in this region until later, while the first schools in the south had been operational since 1901. As Karugire rightly notes, the excuse for letting this province lag behind in the extension of social services was always the same; "its stage of development was not yet of the order to make full use of such facilities".[297] Ordinary people in Acholiland took critical notice of this process of domestication.

When missionaries spread education, the few Africans who attained it had to adopt European Christian values as well at the expense of traditional African values. In such a case the "graduates" of this early education were domesticated to support missionaries and later colonialists in their diverse activities. In addition, as Karugire further explains, the introduction of western Education and values also effectively disenfranchised those, who for one reason or another, did not get that Education so that the uneducated populace-something in the region of 80% or so of the population – were largely spectators rather than active participants in the events leading to the granting of independence.[298] Education also created a wedge in the political structure, especially in identification of chiefs'. Chiefs who were acknowledged or even put into office by

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[295] J. Middleton, *Lugbara Religion: Ritual and Authority among an East African People*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 3.
[296] D. Mudoola, *Religion, Ethnicity and Politics in Uganda*, 75.
[297] S. R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda,* 140.
[298] S. R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda,* 144.

the colonial administration obtained new denominations in popular talk. Educated chiefs became "chiefs of the pen" (rwodi kalam) which effectively differentiated them from those leaders who were ritually anointed with oil made from the shea-butter tree (rwodi moo). The point being made here is that British colonialism brought about polarization in Acholi political structure. This was the basis for internal division as the people began to regard new educated leaders as stooges of the British up to undermine the local chiefs. The inheritors of the colonial state and the politics played thereafter is what possibly made it worse.

British colonial practices were also powerful instruments in the making of more rigid ethnic boundaries in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa.[299] The lines drawn on colonial maps and images in "peoples' heads" were increasingly operationalized, reinforced and reified. On the basis of perceived common origins, political organization and language, the Acholi were a designated tribe, unique from other tribes and, as such, was administered as a discrete tribal unit.[300] In this way, British politics at that time became strictly limited and exclusively tribal. Consequently, at the local level, individuals and social and, later, political groups among the Acholi began to compete for power and influence within the context of their tribe. The Acholi as a collective entity also competed with other tribes for scarce social and economic investments and opportunities. It is this urge that the people in power, especially in the post-colonial period, exploited and manipulated with respect to ethnic groups, like

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[299] J. Lonsdale, "States and Social Processes in Africa: A Historiographical survey, *African Studies Review,* 24, 2/3 (1994), 139-225. See also T. Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa", in E. Hobsbawn & T.O. Ranger (Eds.), *The Invention of Ethnicity in Zimbabwe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)
[300] R. R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity,* 7.

the Acholi, leading to deeper ethnic division and conflicts. Politics then emphasized sharp differences and exclusive tribal cultures and identities, exaggerated and even invented differences among the people, laying the ground for conflict. The end result has been politicization of ethnicity in order to satisfy selfish economic and political ends. In this context, the Acholi and their neighbours increasingly saw themselves as different and as distinct from each other.

In other parts of East Africa where this labeling and reifying was not highly politicized, the exercise did not contribute to conflicts. With regard to, for example, the Sukuma, Brandstroom notes that they were labeled and categorised as a bounded and united "tribe" during the colonial years. Like the Acholi, the Sukuma were registered as a distinct tribe in the documents of the colonial administration and a Sukuma Federation of Chiefs came into being".[301] While this made the Sukuma think of their own identity against their neighbours, political players in post-independent Tanzania did not manipulate this for selfish ends. Instead, the unitary politics developed and played after independence down-sized such colonial categorization in Tanzania. In Uganda, post-colonial leaders fell prey to this British divisive politics which laid the foundation for and encouraged polarization of ethnic identities rather than trans-ethnic alignments. This can partly be explained by the way Uganda had been divided into the North and South. The immediate post-independent rulers, with little historical records of their own to rally the masses, turned to petty

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[301] P. Brandstroom, Who *is a Sukuma and Who is a Nyamwezi: Ethnic Identity in West- Central Tanzania,* Working Papers in African Studies, 27, (Uppsala: Department of Cultural Anthropology, Uppsala University, 1986).

ethnic differences to win political favours from one or the other of the different ethnic groups leading to division and later conflicts. (A later chapter will explore the role of political leadership and conflict in Uganda).

After World War II, a substantial number of Acholi were or had been members of the colonial army and police forces. Because cotton production, introduced in Acholiland in 1930s, and unskilled migrant labour yielded such low returns, many Acholi with army or police ties attempted to join the growing wartime forces. By the end of World War II, some 5600 Acholi were serving in the army; roughly 20 percent of the male household heads then paying poll tax in the district. Demobilization after the war saw most of these men discharged, though enough Acholi remained to make them the Ugandan tribe with the highest number of soldiers.[302] Ali Mazrui, too, emphasizes that, after the KAR, the Acholi remained dominant in post-independence armies. The Acholi constituted the largest single group within the armed forces of Uganda, although they were clearly one of the smaller groups in the total population of Uganda. Between a third and a half of the Uganda army consisted of the Acholi.[303] He adds that "their preponderance was partly due to their categorization as a tribal unit in the colonial period".[304] Mazrui acknowledges the role of the British colonialists, first in creating the Acholi as an ethnic identity and, secondly, in establishing their dominance in the army; hence the ethnification process in the military.

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[302] R. R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity,* 7.
[303] A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda,* 445.
[304] A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda,* 445.

In any case, their "superior position" in the army also portrayed them as a cruel people since the colonial army was very repressive. They have since been stereotyped, hated, and isolated by other ethnic groups especially from the south.[305] Not only do stereotypes distort history through oversimplification, but they are also extremely dangerous breeding grounds for bigotry, fear, resentment, irrationality, animosity, hatred and ethnic conflict and cleansing. In extreme cases, as Kasozi, Prunier, and M. Mamdani, have noted, stereotypes have culminated in mass violence, the mass displacement of people, ethnic cleansing, pogroms and genocide.[306] This, otherwise normal process, became the most important feature of the North-South divide in post-colonial Uganda politics. As Mamdani observes, "Every institution touched by the hand of the colonial state was given a pronounced regional or ethnic character. It became a truism that a soldier must be a northerner, a civil servant, a southerner, and a merchant an Asian".[307]

The implication of this institutional "division of labour", and the organization of power, could only be realized during the post-colonial period with attempts to reform the state. In addition, the assignment to the north, for instance, as a source of soldiers and policemen had negative implications for stability as the ruling elite during the immediate post-colonial period, who were from the north (i.e., Obote, 1962-1971) used this military predominance to acquire and retain

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[305] Interview with Adimola A. 2007.
[306] A. B. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, see also G. Prunier, "Armed Conflict in the Heart of Africa: Sudan's Regional War", in *Le monde Diplomatique* (Feb 1997), available online: <mondepliplo.com/1997/02/02sudan>, M. Mamdani, *When Victims become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and Genocide in Rwanda*.
[307] M. Mamdani, *Citizens and Subjects: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of late Colonialism,* (Princeton N.J: Princeton University Press.1996), 29.

power undemocratically. Such leaders then resorted to excessive use of the military in trying to solve what were typically political issues.

After Uganda attained political independence in 1962, this ethnic division of labour continued. Under Obote from Lango (1962-1971) and until 1985, almost two-thirds of the army came from the north, especially from Acholi. In this period, not only did the tension between North and South increase, but the politicization of ethnic groups was also exacerbated,[308] although or perhaps precisely because, Obote tried to pursue an anti-tribal policy. In combination, with the failure of successive post-colonial leaders to work out generally accepted and institutionalized peaceful means of resolving differences, the result is the current conflict in places like Acholiland. The ethnification and militarization of politics therefore remains an important factor in any explanation of Uganda's post-independent conflicts.

With the dominance of colonial power, a complex process ensued in which ethnicity actualized itself more and more in struggles to participate in central government. In relation to the Europeans who held the central power and to other ethnic groups, the Acholi increasingly objectified their own way of life, expressed in the "invention" of ethnicity, "traditions" of their own, and an ethnic history.

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[308] H. Holger Bernt, *Ethnicity and Military Rule in Uganda*: *A Study of Ethnicity as a Political Factor in Uganda, Based on a Discussion of Political Anthropology and the Application of its Results*. Research Paper, 43, (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1977)

British colonialism, therefore, remains very instrumental in the construction of Acholi ethnic identity. Having brought the different Acholi chiefdoms together, and later congealed them in a single district, the British then gave the Acholi occupational identity in the army and as labourers in plantations in the south. Due to the fact that the colonial army was repressive, just like the first post-colonial armies, the Acholi, who largely constituted it, were perceived as repressive. Beyond this, the colonial army, like the later post-colonial armies of Obote (1962-1971) and Amin (1971-1979), was regarded as the "home for illiterates". The Acholi were then stereotyped as "illiterates and social-outcasts" in Uganda.[309] Stereotypes always have simplicity largely because they provide simple and deceptive explanations of complex situations and historical realities. This trend became a dangerous phenomenon in Uganda's politics and partly explains the current conflicts in Acholiland.

In 1944, the Acholi Association was founded as a sports and cultural club. With this, Behrend tells us, the Acholi congealed not only as an administrative, but also as a cultural unit. Lectures on Acholi music and language reinforced and spread the idea of a common Acholi identity. In 1948, the Acholi developed the idea of having a paramount chief for the entire Acholi District who would preside over the, until then, smaller chiefs (rwots); and in 1950 a faction attempted to follow the model of the King of Buganda and establish a king of Acholi "to restore our beloved King Awich".[310] The idea of a paramount Acholi leader was promoted and several terms were suggested for the position, notably

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[309] A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda,* 49.
[310] This development led to a new struggle over the paramount status between the Payira and Padibe.

rwot Acholi (Chief or king of the Acholi) lawir rwodi (the head of "the chiefs"), rwot madit (the big chief) and Laloyo maber (the winner is good).[311] At the climax of this quest for change, however, a struggle over the paramount status erupted between the Payira and Padibe. This shows how disruptive British colonial arrangement had been on the development of Acholi political system. Besides, this innovation as well reflects on the nature of ethnic consciousness then developing in Acholiland. It was a move towards self-determination in the independence process. Ethnicity in Acholiland was crystallizing amidst political frustrations and divide-and-rule politics played by the British.

Emerging party politics on the eve of independence added to the struggle. As noted by Gertzel, "Party leaders established their legitimacy at the district level largely by usurping the role of the chiefs as the recognized spokesmen of the local people".[312] When Uganda's largest political party; the Uganda National Congress (UNC), with Milton Obote as its national leader, committed itself to Payira's claim to Acholi paramountcy the divide widened.[313]

What this illustrates is that Acholi ethnic identity developed fast during the period of British colonialism and mounting frustrations. Acholi identity was then forming in competition with other ethnic groups. This set the precedent of continued Acholi unity against the other groups they considered negatively. Such polarization was widened in the post-colonial period.

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[311] F. Sverker, *Living With Bad Surrounding*, 70.
[312] C. Gertzel, *Party and Locality in Northern Uganda,* 77.
[313] Around the time of independence, Uganda National Congress (UNC) was renamed Uganda People's Congress (UPC).

The Acholi community under British colonial rule also had inner contradictions. As Acholi identity was forming in competition with other ethnic groups, the internal opposition between rich and poor, aristocrats and commoners, elders and the young, as well as between women and men was increasing. According to Behrend, such internal contradictions were partly the result of the demise of Acholi traditional setting during the period of Turko-Egyptians control. There was no respect for any kind of leadership and elders. Rich Acholi wanted to dominate the poor ones, thereby creating a kind of internal division. An increasing social and economic inequality was also emerging between East and West Acholi. While Gulu District in the west developed more rapidly due to its proximity to the center and its greater fertility, the Kitgum District in the East remained peripheral, serving more as a reservoir for recruiting labour, soldiers for the kings African Rifles and the police.[314] Rudimentary formal education became the criterion for a military career.[315]

This division within Acholiland has a lot to do with the current turbulence. Kitgum and Pader that fall within the poor eastern section have remained the base for different insurgent groups after the Acholi lost political power and monopoly in the military to the National Resistance Army of Yoweri Museveni in 1986.

British colonial rule in Uganda promoted inequality in development among the different ethnic groups. This was mirrored within the Acholi District. While the

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[314] H. Behrend, *Is Alice Lakwena a Witch?*, 18.
[315] A. Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and Military in Uganda, 1890*-1985, 44.

colonial administration recruited the bureaucratic elite from the south, especially from Buganda, the north of Uganda was used as a reservoir of labour. This ethnic division of labour contributed substantially to the opposition between north and south and between the Nilotes and Bantu that became so significant in Uganda's history.[316] This opposition which was "invented" in the scholarly discourse of linguists, anthropologists and historians founded renewed actualization in the history of conflict in Acholiland.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the most important political and administrative unit the British created and respected was the Acholi District Council. The intention of the British was that through such Councils, the Acholi would relate with other people more easily and positively, and it would be easier to administer them. As R.M Bere the District Commissioner stated in 1947:

> The urgent trend of modern administration has been to bring the clans together to make the Acholi conscious of their unity as a single people without their individualistic background. To this end the districts of Gulu and Chua were amalgamated in 1937, when a unified district was formed; at the same time the Acholi Council with sects not only for chiefs but for representatives of the people from all parts of the country was brought into being.[317]

Whereas the intention of the British was clearly positive and designed to promote the unity of Acholi and positive relations with other people, in later years, parochial ethnic nationalism developed. In one of its resolutions, the Council suggested that "the bus routes then in the hands of an Indian firm should be given to an Acholi company".[318] The feeling then was that Indian

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[316] S. R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*, 21.
[317] R. M. Bere, "An Outline of Acholi History, 8.
[318] F. K. Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda*, 201.

control of such routes did not benefit the Acholi. The expectation was that once the Acholi took direct control of wealth generating projects, this would help alleviate their poor economic plight and enable them to compete with the south. They also came up with several suggestions and resolutions to protect their identity and interests as Acholi. For example, they requested that the "present structure of the Native Authority should be changed so that instead of all the county chiefs being responsible individually to the District Commissioner, there should be a <u>Lawi Rwot</u> (Head chief/rwot) who should be responsible for them all".[319]

The trend that developed was that the Acholi Council increasingly became a mouth piece for Acholi protest and unity against other non-Acholi groups. In the 1950s when political party activities began, it even acted as an ethnic institution to campaign for Acholi privileges and resources vis-à-vis those of others in the protectorate. The point is that the politicization of ethnicity, which has a lot to do with the current conflict situation in Uganda and in Acholi in particular, was the outcome of British policies and administrative arrangements. Post-colonial leaders later magnified and militarized it with major-negative results.

In their territorial re-arrangement, the British had also separated the Acholi from their neighbours using rigid ethnic boundaries. What became Acholi District was demarcated and surveyed by the British. As Girling F.K. writes:

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[319] F. K. Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda,* 201.

> The whole of Acholiland, to a greater or lesser degree now forms one large group of persons, united by bonds, which are a combination of kinship, territorial political relationship and ritual; as well as by bonds of common subjection to alien rulers, and of territorial and secular relationships.[320]

As Acholi District developed, others like Madi, Teso, and Alur were also promoted. No interaction across districts was encouraged by the British. Worse still, even pre-colonial trade in ivory and cattle, bark-cloth from Buganda, and hoes was not encouraged by British colonialism. According to G. N. Uzoigwe, Commerce across ethnic groups had encouraged a good deal of co-operation between the northern communities and Bunyoro. Such co-operation was both of an economic and military nature"[321].

The point is that British administrative economic re-arrangements and reforms deepened ethnic cleavages. The problem with the reforms and the political organizations that emerged after independence was that they did not transcend the limitations of the colonial political economy and politics, particularly ethnicity and regionalism. Therefore, even when the colonial period contributed to the present trouble in Acholiland, much of the blame lies with the post-colonial leadership in Uganda and their failure to learn from History.

PRE-INDEPENDENCE POLITICS IN ACHOLILAND (1950-1962)

By the late 1950s, as Uganda moved towards independence, many of the contradictions of colonial rule became obvious. The late 1940s and 1950s saw a number of political and economic reforms as a result of the anti-colonial

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[320] F. K. Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda,* 116.
[321] G. N. Uzoigwe, "Inter-Ethnic Co-operation", in S. Osoba & I. Obaro (Eds.), *Tarikh; The Peoples of Uganda in the 19th Century*, 3, 2 (Great Britain: Longman, Whitstable Litho Ltd, 1967), 69-77.

movement. Reforms allowed for enhanced rights of association, permitted the formation of co-operatives and trade unions, and witnessed the removal of some racial restrictions on trade and employment. It was also the eve of the establishment of political parties.[322]

The first Ugandan political party, the Uganda National Congress (UNC), founded in 1952-1953 was predominantly Protestant and Buganda. The next major political development was the formation of the Democratic Party in 1956 to advance the interests of Catholics in the administration of Buganda Kingdom.[323] The rise of these political parties and their competition for power, when it eventually came, widened cleavages in Acholiland.

The first constituency of the Uganda Peoples Congress under Obote from Lango was the non-Bantu speaking north. Support in this region was often expressed in ethnic terms in the sense that while Obote was very popular among his Langi tribe, he was not initially heralded among the Acholi. Even then, the identity Obote used most was the large northern region composed of the Lwo mainly rather than his Langi tribe. Obote was from the Luo-speaking Lango ethnic group.[324] According to Colin Leys, when the Uganda National Congress (UNC) was formed, it was seen by its activists in Acholi as the beginning of an independence movement at a time when many Acholi were serving in the Kings

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[322] J. Oloka-Onyango, "New Wine or New Bottles: Movement Politics and One-partyism in Uganda", in J. Mugaju and J. Oloka-Onyango (Eds.), *No Party Democracy in Uganda: Myths and Realities*, (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2000), 174.
[323] J. Okuku, "Ethnicity, State Power and the Democratization Process in Uganda", 10
[324] R. R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity,* 7-8.

African Rifles in the operation against the Mau-Mau in Kenya.[325] The formation in the district of the Democratic Party, which quickly became strong in Acholiland after 1956, was looked upon by the UNC militants as an attempt by the missionaries, abetted by the colonial administration, to create a "moderate" organization subject to their influence, which would draw support away from the UNC.[326]

The point being emphasised here is the new dimension and divisive politics that this new political dispensation brought into Acholiland. The most notable result, as Colin Leys notes, is that "There is no doubt that hostility between the parties, exacerbated by the monopoly of patronage and influence of the victorious party, runs very deep in the Acholi countryside and it is sharpened by the aggressive and bitter political "style" which the Acholi cultivate".[327]

In other words, political party competition exacerbated Acholi traditions of clan and chiefdom competition. The UNC (later Uganda Peoples Congress) resorted to supporting divisive events and manipulating local politics to secure votes. For instance, as Gertzel noted, "Party leaders established their legitimacy at the district level largely by usurping the role of the chiefs as the recognized spokesmen of the local people".[328] The UNC intervened further to support Payira's claim to Acholi Paramountcy against the wishes of the Padibe. Such

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[325] C. Leys, *Politicians and Policies: An Essay on Politics in Acholi, Uganda*, 17.
[326] Although the provincial administration had no reason to favour Catholicism, there is evidence that its officers shared the Catholic fear of the supposed communist tendencies of the UNC and regarded with sympathy many of the nice, sensible and reliable men, many of them school teachers, who were drawn to the DP by their religious affiliation.
[327] C. Leys, *Politicians and Policies: An Essay on Politics in Acholi, Uganda*, 17.
[328] C. Gertzel, *Party and Locality in Northern Uganda,* 77.

manipulation of the Acholi as an ethnic group continued well into the period after independence using the army.

As Atkinson ably puts it, "as the army grew larger and more powerful, receiving ever greater shares of the national budget, the officer ranks were transformed from a small number of mostly Europeans, Baganda and other southern Ugandans to a much larger group increasingly from the north of the country. The majority from the north still came from Acholiland".[329]

Under Obote (1962 to1971), as will be shown later, a process set in that would prove extremely significant for the later history of Uganda in general and Acholiland in particular, namely, the militarization of politics. Nevertheless, already under Obote, the military became an instrument of domestic politics leading to conflicts.

This chapter has contended that, in their administrative reforms in Acholiland, the British had helped to create a united Acholi people and district out of several independent clans. Having done this, however, British colonialism then superimposed a new political and social order and consciousness that lay the foundation for the current turbulence in this sub-region. First, by destroying the traditional political set-up of the Acholi, the British ushered this area and its people into a new phase of confusion. Through their policy of divide and rule, they weakened the rwotship system, and created new rwots and a sense of

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[329] R. R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity*, 9.

centralization of power among a people who had for long established their own democratic order of work.

Within the Uganda protectorate, the Acholi were marginalized and given peripheral duties as labourers or recruits in the colonial army. This hardened Acholi ethnic consciousness and beliefs that there were secondary citizens. As Atkinson has stated elsewhere, "Ethnic groups and ethnic identity, then, are not a necessary or natural outcome of cultural beliefs and practices, but a creation of politics and ideology".[330] British politics/policies in Uganda in the colonial period and those pursued by the post-colonial regimes in Uganda since 1962 had a lot to do with the current state of conflicts in Acholiland. The next chapter will provide an in-depth analysis of the post-independence era.

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[330] R. R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity*, 9.

CHAPTER FOUR

POST INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND CONFLICT IN UGANDA, 1962-2006

> Africa has remained underdeveloped because political leaders on the continent are confused and keep meandering. The continent has plenty of endowments but the leaders lack clear vision to identify the problems of the society to frame proper intervention for continued progress (Says Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda).[331]

This chapter will analyse the role of independent political leadership in the ensuing conflict since 1962.

Introduction

Uganda became independent from British colonial rule on 9th October 1962. However, unlike other African states like Tanzania, Kenya, Egypt and Senegal where independence was followed by relative political stability, Uganda has experienced extended periods of violent internal strife resulting in massive destruction of life and property. Apart from the period from 1962 to 1964 when the country enjoyed relative peace and stability,[332] Uganda is an example of a post-colonial society that has been riddled with internal conflicts; one which is comparable to the experiences of states like Sudan, Chad, and Democratic Republic of Congo.

During the past forty-five years of independence, Uganda has had nine national presidents and governments. The first government under Sir Edward Mutesa II ended in 1966 when Apollo Milton Obote (then Prime Minister), assisted by the

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[331] *The Daily Monitor,* March 12, 2009.
[332] *The Daily Monitor,* March 12, 2009.

army, overthrew the 1962 independence Constitutional arrangements and introduced the 1967 Republican Constitution. By this manouvre, Obote had overthrown Mutesa II in a 'palace coup', as the two leaders had initially been part of an alliance (Kabaka Yekka and Uganda People's Congress). Obote was later overthrown by General Idi Amin on the 25th of January 1971.

Idi Amin ruled Uganda with an 'iron hand' until a combined force of Tanzania and Uganda exiles forced him out in 1979. In the five years after Idi Amin's fall, Uganda was ruled by Yusuf Lule for sixty-eight days, Godfrey Binaisa, Paul Muwanga, who rigged the 1980 elections that ushered in Milton Obote's second rule, and General Tito-Okello, a one time army commander under Obote who later overthrew his boss. Okello was subsequently forced out of power by the National Resistance Army led by Yoweri Museveni in 1986. All these changes in government and leadership involved unconstitutional means and wars, reflecting the crisis of governance that has dogged post-colonial Uganda. From 1964, therefore, the political situation has been so volatile that Uganda has become almost synonymous with political disorder, social chaos and conflict. It is this apparent tragic paradox that this work attempts to explain.

Ali Mazrui[333] and Nelson Kasfir have explained the political upheavals in Uganda since independence as a result of ethnic tension and ethnic diversities. Other scholars like Tarsis Kabwegyere, Lwanga-Lunyiigo[334] and others contend that post-independence instability and conflicts in Uganda are a legacy of

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[333] A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda,* and N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 60.
[334] T. Kabwegyere, *The Politics of State Formation*, 67-83. See also S. Lwanga-Lunyiigo, "The Colonial roots of Internal Conflict", 24 -41.

British colonialism and particularly the effects of British colonial policy of divide and rule.

While these views are persuasive, this study contends that conflicts in post-independent Uganda are essentially political in nature and have their origin in how politics has been organized in the post-colonial period. Given, that politics is usually organized around institutions, any proper understanding of conflicts in Uganda must take into account the role of leadership, especially the presidency and the personalities of those who have governed Uganda since independence and how they have managed or mismanaged its institutions, leading to conflict.

Conceptual Framework

'Conflict' has been defined differently depending on the context in which the term is used. K.J. Holsti defines "conflict" as the contentions or disagreements that arise between interested parties in a given issue or activity. Considering that parties would always seek to achieve certain goals by defending particular positions in a given issue or activity, their demands and action would run counter to the interests and objectives of other parties.[335]

According to Coser, conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources whose main aim is to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals.[336] While the above definitions are useful, they only regard conflicts as

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[335] K. J. Holsti, International *Politics; A Framework for Analysis* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1972), 447.
[336] A. Coser, *The Function of Social Concept,* (New York: Free Press, 1956), 8.

negative phenomena that are completely disruptive and dislocating. This study contends that conflicts can also lead to a better understanding of one or both parties in the conflict. This study argues that most of the conflicts in Africa (Uganda inclusive) have been by-products of political activities orchestrated by political leadership.

Leadership

'Leadership' is defined differently by different scholars. Foster Byarugaba defines leadership as the interpersonal influence exercised in a situation and directed through the communication process aimed at the attainment of a specific goal or goals.[337] Put briefly, to lead is to influence people so that they can accept the ideas of the leader. Such influence can be positive or negative, depending on the personality and capability of any given leader. The influence of most post-colonial leaders in Uganda has been negative and divisive, leading to the unending conflicts the country has experienced.

Ochieng-Odhiambo gives us, perhaps, a more comprehensive but precise definition. He defines leadership as an organizing element for the survival of any human community. Odhiambo's contention is that the existence of a society is immediately in jeopardy if there is no qualitative leadership.[338] Indeed, the lack of qualitative leadership appears to be the main problem faced by Uganda since independence 1962.

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[337] F. Byarugaba, "Trends in the National Resistance Movement Leadership: Basis for Domestic, Regional and Global Relations", in Kabweru Mukwaya (Ed.), *Uganda, Riding the Political Tiger: Security and War in the Great Lakes Region,* (Kampala: Makerere University Printery, 2004).
[338] Ochieng-Odhiambo, "The Crisis of Leadership in Africa", *CODESRIA*, 3, 1995.

The current perception of leadership in Uganda, as elsewhere in Africa, is that most African leaders have not lived up to the task of developing their areas and enforcing meaningful unity necessary for development. Instead, they have contributed to ethnic division, conflicts and economic malaise. As A. G. A. Bello correctly pointed out, most African political leaders are dictatorial, despotic, autocratic, intolerant and repressive. They do not brook any opposition from any quarters whatever and will use any means, fair or foul, to keep themselves in power even when their actions negate the yearnings and aspirations of the people.[339]

This is precisely how post-colonial Ugandan leaders have conducted themselves. Uganda's political leaders have, since independence, failed to build a consensus on which political institutions can be built to resolve political conflicts, short of physical force[340]. Such force, however, is not a state monopoly entirely, but a means by which political groups seek to establish their hegemony over other competing political groups. This implies that when a group is denied access to political and economic resources, it resorts to military options, leading to upheavals and conflicts that have come to define the Ugandan state.

Leadership should be the logical outgrowth of the existence of a society of individuals and their interests. In Africa, however, the violence is traceable to defective political leadership. Citizens are victims of defective leadership, instead, especially given the reality of the state or leadership having secured

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[339] A. G. Bello, "On the Concept of Rationality and Legitimacy of the Constitution", in Olusegun Oladipo (Ed.), *Third Way in African philosophy:* Essays *in Honour of Kwasi Wiredu* (Ibadan, Hope publishers, 2004), 241.
[340] D. Mudoola, *Religion, Ethnicity and Politics in Uganda*, 20.

power and authority through the use of force.[341] This analysis fits very well within the Ugandan political experience after independence. This study contends that the trouble with Uganda is not its diverse ethnic nature but clearly a failure of leadership. The leaders who governed Uganda from independence have played a vital role in determining whether or not the inherited ethnic diversities could be united in order to create social peace. In Uganda, this factor explains the unremitting and politically motivated violence since 1964.

As Mudoola notes, "Ugandan political and military elites have, over time, worked out political formulae not as a means through which conflicts can be resolved for the ultimate good of the political system as in developed countries, but as tactical weapons for taking care of interests articulated by the political elites; interests peculiar to themselves or the social forces they purport to represent"[342]. Such formulae range from abusing constitutional processes, involving the army in politics to solve political differences, and manipulating ethnicity. They would adhere to such formulae as long as their interests are served. If they felt that they were still disadvantaged and were strong enough to operate outside the prevailing political formulae they would do so. In this way they created situations that culminated indifferences and, later, open and violent conflict.

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[341] D. Nkurunziza and L. Mugumya (Eds.), Towards *a Culture of Peace and Non-Violent Action in Uganda*, 2, (2000), 71.
[342] D. Mudoola, *Religion, Ethnicity and Politics in Uganda,* 20.

POST-INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND CONFLICT

At independence in 1962, the new Ugandan state was in a fairly good position to give its citizens more than the two years of relative peace and stability it enjoyed between 1962 and1964. A resource-rich country, colonial Uganda had long been paying the costs of its administration and, by 1916, was no longer a burden to the British taxpayer.[343] Between 1945 and 1960, Uganda peasants paid over £118 million to the administration and development of their country. After independence, unlike Kenya, Uganda attracted no substantial foreign investment or "aid" and, unlike other dependent ex-colonies, Uganda's subsistence sector was not only self-supporting but very strong.[344] Overall, the new Uganda state was in a fairly good economic position to sustain a strong political environment. Instead between 1964 and 2006, Ugandans were exposed to a high level of violence that far exceeds that of any other people in eastern Africa[345]. This failure can be attributed largely to Uganda's leadership.

As Mudoola argues,

> the period between 1962 and May 1966 was one of relative peace, not necessarily because the leaders were committed to the politics of reconciliation and peaceful resolution of political differences but simply because some of the leaders and the forces they represented then did not feel strong enough to question the independence constitutional arrangements.[346]

This implies that, once any of Uganda's immediate post-independent leaders found himself and the party he represented strong enough to initiate unconstitutional or constitutional changes of interest to him and his party, he

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[343] C. C. Wrigley, *Crops and Wealth in Uganda: An Agrarian History,* (East Africa: Indres, 17, 1959), 40.
[344] A. B. K. Kasozi, *The Social Origin of Violence in Uganda,* 3.
[345] A. B. K. Kasozi, *The Social Origin of Violence in Uganda*, 4.
[346] D. Mudoola, *Religion, Ethnicity and Politics in Uganda*, 20.

would do so. In this way, Ugandan leaders laid ground for differences and later instability. This tendency is documented below.

Obote Apollo Milton & Edward Mutesa II's period (1962-1971)

Uganda was granted independence in 1962 with Apollo Milton Obote, leader of Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC), as executive Prime Minister, supported temporarily by the powerful Kabaka of Buganda and his Kabaka Yekka (KY) Party. The Kabaka became the president the following year.[347] The position of a powerful kingdom of Buganda within Uganda, with the Kabaka as president without real political powers, remained a source of controversy and instability.[348] The constitutional arrangement then was such that Buganda and other kingdom areas of Ankole, Toro, Bunyoro and the district of Busoga would remain federal states within Uganda. Obote respected this arrangement for as long as it served the faction that he represented (i.e. UPC) and as long as he calculated that he and his UPC were not yet strong enough to initiate changes.

Apollo Milton Obote's leadership, first as Prime Minister and later as a president (1966-1971), was characterized by ethnic and constitutional manipulation largely against Buganda. The first issue used was the "Lost Counties", i. e. counties of Bunyoro like Bugangazi and Buyaga which the British had given to Buganda as pay-back for Buganda's assistance in conquering Bunyoro under Kabalega in the 1890s. There were other boundary disputes between Bukedi and Bugisu in the East of Uganda, the Bamba and Bakonjo rebellion against the

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[347] H. Kyemba, *A State of Blood,* 22.
[348] A. Gakwandi, *Uganda Pocket Facts*, 22.

rule of the Batoro.[349] Such conflicts and especially the issue of lost counties of Bunyoro was what Obote used to isolate Buganda. When President Mutesa II protested about the return of the "lost counties" to Bunyoro, Obote adhered to the constitution of 1962. The 1962 Constitution clearly stated that, in case of boundary conflict or people who wanted to secede, a referendum would be conducted.[350] In any difference then where the constitution worked in his favour, Obote would always refer the Kabaka to the sanctity of the Constitution of 1962.

The Obote-Mutesa showdown ended with the break-up of the UPC-KY alliance that had enabled Obote (a Langi) to associate with Federal Buganda and be granted political power by the British as Executive Prime Minister in 1962. By then, he had already sown seeds of hatred against Buganda within other ethnic groups, especially Bunyoro, and other kingdom areas that were initially opposed to the presidency of Mutesa II.[351] On the issue of "lost counties", political actors from outside Buganda believed a historic wrong had been set "right".[352] This made parliamentarians from outside Buganda and especially Banyoro to support Obote. He also benefited by cross-overs of 14 Parliamentarians from Kabaka Yekka and Democratic Party to Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) by the end of 1964, thus gaining the much needed two-thirds majority for his Party in the National Assembly.[353] With this majority, Obote officially ended the KY-UPC

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[349] S. R. Karugire, *Roots of Political Instability in Uganda*, 45.
[350] S. R. Karugire, *Roots of Political Instability in Uganda*, 45.
[351] D. Mudoola, *Religion, Ethnicity and Politics in Uganda*, 95.
[352] S. R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*, 45.
[353] E. Masinde Aseka, Transformational *Leadership in East Africa,* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2005), 313.

alliance and continued to rule Uganda under his majority party (UPC). This marked the beginning of political and later conflictual problems in Uganda.

Obote's leadership is also held responsible for the involvement of the military in politics and in settling what appeared to be political matters using the military (i.e. militarization of politics). As Uganda's first post-colonial leader, Obote set the standard that subsequent leaders after him tended to follow. Several cases illustrate this.

In 1964, all the three East African countries (Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania) experienced army mutinies. There were mutinies in the Colito Barracks in Dar-es-Salam, Lanet Barracks near Nakuru, Kenya and Jinja Barracks near Jinja in Uganda. This was an indication of serious social and transitional problems in the management of inherited bureaucracies, including the military. The three East African leaders handled these events differently and hence experienced different histories in civil-military relations in the subsequent years. While Nyerere and Tanzania called in the assistance of British Marines to crush the mutiny, in Kenya, Kenyatta took it as a lesson on the dangers of coups and took steps to keep the army out of politics. Kenyatta resorted to carrying out ethnic balancing in the army to neutralize it politically.[354]

In Uganda, Obote took care to nurse the military as a power base outside the traditional ethnic constituencies. First, he gave in to the demands of soldiers, hence creating a tradition of "demands" by soldiers. Secondly, no effort was

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[354] E. Masinde-Aseka, *Transformational Leadership in East Africa,* 239.

ever made to rebuild the army as a national institution after the mutiny. The military, largely from the North was left intact as it had been before the mutiny on the grounds of what Mudoola calls the doctrine of Ethno-functionalism,[355] which was vividly illustrated by Felix Onama, then Minister of Defence:

> Thousands of Northerners (notably Acholi and Langi) died in the two World Wars to defend Uganda against Nazism and Fascism and if the young generation or their children who have grown up in the North would like to follow in the footsteps of their fathers, nobody is going to stop me from recruiting them into the army.[356].

Instead there was a general purge of army officer corps in which Bantu officers were the victims. Among these officers were Major Katabarwa, Major Kisira, and Captain Irima.[357]   Obote's tribesmen, the Acholi and Langi, then came to dominate the rank and file of the army. This process of ethnification of the military has dogged Uganda since then and partly accounts for the conflicts after independence.

In the struggle for political power, therefore, the political leaders and other ethnic group actors then made maximum use of the resources available to them. With such an ethnic based army, the Obote regime was then prepared for a 'show-down' with Buganda. This tradition of using the national army as a force to protect the interest of political leaders has since remained a feature of Ugandan politics. Every leader has to ensure that the army is largely constituted of members of his ethnic group. During Idi Amin's rule (1971-1979) West Nilers, mostly Kakwa and Lugbara dominated the then Uganda Army

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[355] D. Mudoola, "Communal Conflict in the Military and its Political Consequences116-138.
[356] See *Uganda Parliamentary Debates*,   3, 3205.
[357] D. Mudoola, *Religion, Ethnicity and Politics in Uganda*, 96.

(Amin was a Kakwa). The National Resistance Army of Yoweri Museveni (1986-to-date) is largely dominated by Banyankole and Bahima. Of the five Generals, all are Banyankole. Museveni is a Munyankole of Hima stock.

This clearly supports this study's earlier contention that conflicts in Uganda are largely political rather than ethnic. Ethnicity is only used as a factor of support by one group against the other, hence its politicization. Secondly, Obote's manipulation of the National Assembly, National Constitution and the army still lends credence to the argument that post-independence Ugandan leadership failed to work out a basic political consensus on the basis of which political institutions can be built to resolve political conflict; short of physical force. Post independence political leaders adopt political formulae as tactical weapons for taking care of their own interests and that of the group they purportedly represent at the expense of others. This leads to conflict.

1966 remains a turning point in the political History of Uganda. On February 4, 1966, at about 2 O'clock, when Parliament was due to convene, Parliament Building was, for the first time in Uganda's history, surrounded by heavily armed troops purportedly on the orders of the Army Commander, Milton Obote. An opposition motion denouncing Prime Minister Obote as corrupt and accusing him of plotting to overthrow his own government under the Presidency of Kabaka Mutesa II was due to be tabled.[358] Obote was also accused of filling the Uganda army with Acholi and Langi and of training a personal army[359]. Daudi

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[358] E. Masinde-Aseka, *Transformational Leadership in East Africa*, 314.
[359] A. Gakwandi, *Uganda Pocket Facts,* 23.

Ochieng, an opposition member of Parliament, then demanded Obote's resignation and called on UPC to appoint a new Prime Minister. He also called for the suspension of Idi Amin, the second highest ranking officer in the army on grounds that he had participated in the looting of Gold and Ivory from the Congo (Zaire). Obote responded to this accusation with coercion and intimidated parliamentarians opposed to his tarnished leadership. Vocal parliamentarians like Mathias Ngobi, Daudi Ochieng were arrested. Amin was not suspended but, instead, sent on two weeks leave.[360]

This event brought the Obote-Mutesa II confrontation to a height never experienced before. Both leaders then resorted to ethnic manipulation, with the military as the main sector to win over. While Kabaka Mutesa II put his trust in the Teso and Bantu elements in the army, Obote solicited the support of high-ranking northerners, notably from Lango (Obote's tribe), Acholi (Lwo brothers) and few from West Nile led by Idi Amin. The Obote government also expanded the Ugandan army until it was the seventh largest on the continent.[361] Obote then accused Mutesa II of colluding with the Iteso army commander, Brigadier Shaban Opolot, to use the army to topple the government. The plot was an excuse for Obote to arrest some of the chief supporters of the Kabaka on May 22, 1966, including Brigadier Opolot. He also organized a battalion under Idi Amin to storm the Kabaka's palace at Lubiri. This forms the 1966 crisis, as known in Uganda's history.[362] The first major victim of the Obote coup of 1966 had been the 1962 Constitution and constitutionalism in post-Obote Uganda.

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[360] H. Kyemba, *A State of Blood*, 24.

[361] A. Mazrui & M. Tidy, Nationalism *and New States in Africa* (London: Longman Publishing house, 1984), 250.
[362] E. Masinde-Aseka, *Transformational Leadership in East Africa*, 316

The 1962 Constitution had been the result of protracted negotiations involving the colonial power, ethnic forces and the political parties. It had given political ethnic leaders an opportunity for meaningful political action. Therefore without it, Uganda entered a political abyss and rule of tyrants.

The result of this crisis ran deep in Uganda's history and state security. Buganda as a region and the Baganda as a people were isolated by other tribes. This made the Buganda support anyone opposed to Obote and explains their support for the Amin coup of 1971 and the NRA war under Museveni against Obote between 1981 and 1985. Other regions and especially Buganda, later, also felt that northerners had dominated the Obote government at their expense. The evidence they had was very strong. Milton Obote (northerner) became President after the crisis of 1966, while Felix Kenyi Onama (northerner) was Defence Minister, Erinayo Oryema (northerner) Inspector-General of police and Akena-Adoko (northerner) was Head of Intelligence.[363] This polarization accounts greatly for the upheavals that followed. Idi Amin also exploited this period of crisis to recruit many Nubians and Southern Sudanese into the Ugandan army. Their careers in the army depended on Amin alone and they owed him and not Obote personal loyalty.[364]

Other than involving the army in solving what was largely a political problem, this intervention by Obote and Mutesa made the army less national and more ethnic in character. The dangers of politicizing the military largely accounts for

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[363] O. Amaza, *Museveni's Long March: From Guerilla to Statesman* (Kampala: Fountain publishers 1998), 152.
[364] H. Kyemba, *A State of Blood*, 28.

the instability and unconstitutional regime change in post-independence Uganda. This supports this study's earlier argument that political leaders in Uganda should be held responsible for setting up the foundation where physical force became a matter of first choice rather than the last resort in the settlement of political differences. This weakened institutions like Parliament, the Judiciary, and the Constitution as a legal guide and other civilian institutions as arena for resolving political conflicts.

In 1967 Obote then proceeded to introduce his own rules of the game by promulgating the 1967 Republican Constitution and the resultant subsequent move to the left. Through this un-debated constitution, traditional rulers like Kabaka Mutesa II were deposed. This dictatorial constitution was not endorsed by the population but by members of Parliament whose terms of office should have ended that year.[365]

These rules of the game were an apparent attempt by Obote to regularize and legitimize his seizure of power. However, the net effect of all this was to bring the Ugandan army into Uganda's politics since whoever had total command of the army took over power, albeit unconstitutionally. The army or military then became the judge in civil or political matters.

The net effect of Obote's success after 1967 should not be viewed narrowly from the angle that he had defeated Kabaka Mutesa II and abolished kingdoms in Uganda, but rather that he had, by so doing, precisely undermined the politico-

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[365] A.B.K, Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, 60.

civilian institutions; something that he so badly needed to do in order to legitimize his coup. By weakening such institutions as Parliament, the civil society and the Constitution, he introduced and defined his own rules of the game where the army came to occupy and play a central role as mediator in civilian struggles. To show the priority given to Defence, by 1968, the Ministry of Defence allocation was 10.2 percent of the national budget (in Kenya, it was 6.9 percent and in Tanzania 3.8 percent) or more than £ 17 million.[366] This reliance on the army, in turn, generated within the army as an institution, a sense of political functional indispensability in post-independence politics in Uganda. Leaders after Obote have not corrected this anomaly and this forms the basis of disagreements and conflicts. The rise to power of Idi Amin in 1971 exacerbated the situation.

Idi Amin's period (1971-1979)

On 25th January 1971, Idi Amin and his troops seized power from Milton Obote unconstitutionally, in a coup. Idi Amin was not a maverick intrusion upon the Uganda political scene because he had been deeply and significantly entwined in it before 1971. As Apollo Nsibambi has put it, "he (Amin) was a product of Uganda's political culture; his coming to power being directly linked to the social cleavages that have hindered Uganda's national integration, the failure of Uganda's politicians to devise peaceful methods of conflict resolution, and above all the greed of Ugandans to "eat" by controlling the state".[367]

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[366] M. Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, 290.
[367] A. Nsibambi, "Political Integration in Uganda: Problems and Prospects", in *East African Journal* (Feb. 1968), 31-9.

In 1971 when Amin overthrew Obote, the political elite under Obote had very little support outside its own ranks precisely because the only classes capable of independent political organization, like the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat, had been paralyzed. As a result of Obote's reliance on the military for both defence and advice, the petty bourgeosie and the proletariat had almost no role to play in the day to-day administration of Uganda. He also instilled a state of fear that no group could easily rise to challenge his policies or to offer Uganda any meaningful advice. Uganda was largely a 'one man state' at the time of the Amin coup of 1971. Parliament, the political parties and other civilian institutions as arenas for resolving political conflicts had long been relegated into the background by Obote and other competing leaders. The army, therefore, remained strong because it had arms and disciplined organization. Conscious of their weaknesses, other classes like the petty bourgeoisie, the proletariat, and locals like the Baganda sought alliance with Amin and the army.[368]

While justifying the coup of January 1971, Amin gave 18 points for his course of action. He also announced on the radio that his would be a purely caretaker administration.[369] However, as it later turned out, Amin ruled Uganda for over eight years. His aim while in power was not to implement a program or impose an ideology or improve the lot of his people, but merely to have power and reap its benefits. As Kasoozi noted, Amin's greatest preoccupation was survival.[370] He did this by physically eliminating his enemies in the army, the police, the

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[368] M. Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 42-43.
[369] J. Mittelman, *Out of Underdevelopment: Prospects for the Third World* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1988), 168.
[370] A. B. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, 104.

prisons, and among civilians. His loomed large over any institution in the country during his rule. This largely explains why any explanation of the miserable performance of his regime focuses mostly on Amin, as an individual..

Immediately after Amin's coup, as Hansen writes, "Obote the individual became identified with the Lango group and his regime with the Acholi as well".[371] During the early years of his violent rule, Idi Amin extended terror into northern Uganda when he ordered mass killings of Acholi army personnel as well as execution of prominent Acholi individuals.[372] As Hansen correctly put it, "Had the vengeance of the coup been directed at the government of Obote as a whole, it would have had to be directed at people from almost every corner of Uganda".[373]

Obote drew his ministers from West Nile, Lango, Acholi, Kigezi, Ankole, Buganda, Bunyoro, Toro and elsewhere".[374] Witch hunting of Acholi soldiers continued to the different barracks in Uganda. In March 1971, more than thirty Acholi and Langi soldiers were dynamited at Makindye Barracks. On 22nd July 1971, between 150 to 500 Acholi and Langi from Simba Battalion, Mbarara were herded into trucks, taken to an isolated ranch and gunned down. Further massacres of soldiers from these ethnic groups occurred at military barracks at Masindi, Soroti and Kitgum.[375]

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[371] H. Holger, "Ethnicity and Military Rule in Uganda", 92.
[372] A.G.G. Ginyera-Pincywa, *Northern Uganda in National Politics*, 4. See also H. Holger, "Ethnicity and Military rule in Uganda, 104, and S.R. Karugire, *Roots of Political Instability in Uganda,* 77.
[373] H. Holger, "Ethnicity and Military rule in Uganda", 104.
[374] A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda,*117.
[375]A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, 1964-1985, 111.

The point to be made from the above is that post-independence leadership in Uganda took revenge against members of other ethnic groups on account of the fact that past leaders came from their areas/ethnic group instead of adopting remedial steps to promote unity. The political formulae that Idi Amin adopted made thousands of Acholi and Langi individuals flee the country to neighbouring countries like Kenya and Tanzania from where they re-grouped against his regime.

Secondly, such politics of revenge and indiscriminate extermination of tribes just because past leaders came from those regions or tribes left a permanent scar of hatred in Uganda. It is not surprising that after the fall of Idi Amin in 1979, West Nilers were to be stereotyped in the person of Idi Amin (himself a Kakwa of that region). During Obote's second term in power (1980-85), soldiers in the new army, including Acholi individuals, took revenge on people living in the West Nile region.[376] Consequently those ex-soldiers and pro-Amin individuals who escaped into Zaire (DRC) regrouped and launched attacks in the West Nile region of Uganda. This strengthens our earlier argument that conflict in Uganda is largely because the leaders polarized the country for their selfish political interests.

When Idi Amin seized power, one of the promises he made was to organize free and fair elections which, according to him, civilian political leaders had failed to do for the eight years they were in power. Amin was reported to have said:

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[376] J. Crisp, "Uganda Refugees in Sudan and Zaire: The Problem of Repatriation", *African Affairs,* 85, 339 (1986), 163-180. See also A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda,* 17.

The military must support a civilian government that has the support of the people. Mine therefore will be a caretaker administration after which free and fair elections will soon be held.[377]

Amin's viewpoint coincided with those of the silent majority in the country then. Most supported Amin simply because of their hatred for Obote who had exhibited a high propensity to monopolize political power in the country either by the use of the army or through camouflage of his UPC party. Amin's promise did not materialize. He instead introduced the famous "Elders forum"[378] in which he began to condemn politicians and political parties.[379] Amin later promulgated a Decree dissolving all elected District and Urban councils[380]. He banned all political parties and proscribed political activities of any nature.

As it later turned out, Amin did what his predecessor had done by adopting a political formula that suited his interests and that of the people he purported to represent. He later declared that,

> The military should remain in power for at least five years so that the people may be educated to think in terms of Uganda as a whole and to love and respect one another in the spirit of brotherhood, unity and equality.[381]

The overall consequence of this declaration was that soldiers came to occupy the most central place within the political system with a role that was pervasive; embracing the entire spectrum of governmental functions, and going right down to the grassroots level. Amin also suspended several significant sections of the

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[377] G. Ibingira, *African Upheavals Since Independence* (Boulder: West View Press, 1980), 75.
[378] In every district, Idi Amin instructed his military attaches to identify prominent elders to constitute a kind of consultative forum and to advise on local issues pertaining to their areas.
[379] F. Bwengye, The *Agony of Uganda: From Idi Amin to Obote,* (London: Regency Press, 1985), 37.
[380] For details see Decree 2 of 2nd Feb. 1971
[381] See *Uganda Argus*, 21 Feb, 1971.

1967 Constitution, including Article, 3 and 63, through the issue of the Legal Notice No. I of 1971.[382] This basically meant that the constitution was no longer supreme law and that it could be altered without reference to Parliament.[383] It also meant that Parliament was suspended until further notice. From then on, Idi Amin's government developed a profound faith in militarism as a formula for achieving and maintaining state power. Militarism became the norm in Ugandan politics and society. The regime had no respect for constitutionalism and the rule of law. In legal theory, according to Barya, constitutionalism rests upon the principle of limited government that is expressed in the doctrine of separation of power.[384] In Amin's regime, however, the President himself became the head of the land and also the sole lawmaker. Judicial scrutiny over several aspects of the exercise of executive power was eliminated and quasi-judicial powers were conferred to a number of military and para-military institutions such as the Military Tribunal, the Economic Crimes Tribunal, the State Research Bureau, the Military Police and the Armed Forces.[385]

During the eight years of his rule, the armed forces were absolved of any misdemeanor in respect of anything done for the purpose of maintaining law and order and public security in any part of Uganda from the time of the military take over.[386] Amin's soldiers used this "blanket protection" to undertake

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[382] Masinde Aseka, *Transformational Leadership in East Africa*, 323.

[383] Masinde Aseka, *Transformational Leadership in East Africa*, 323. See also Oloka-Onyango, *Judicial Power and Constitutionalism in Uganda*(Kampala: CBR Publications, 1993), 30.

[384] J.B. Barya, *Popular Democracy and the Legitimacy of the Constitution. Some Reflections on Uganda's Constitution Making Process* (Kampala: CBR Publications, 1993), 3.

[385] E, Masinde Aseka, *Transformational Leadership in East Africa*, 324

[386] A. Mazrui & M. Tidy, *Nationalism and New States in Africa,* 172.

revenge killings in parts of Acholiland and Lango on the grounds that these areas were Obote domains.

Amin's use of force to sustain himself in power earned him many enemies both within Uganda and abroad. As time went on, the regime faced great economic and political hardships. To divert the attention of Ugandans from their plight, Amin decided to invade the Kagera salient of Tanzania on October 28, 1978. The Tanzanian government responded by invading Uganda.[387] In 1979 Tanzanian troops-assisted Ugandan exiles to fight Amin. In April 1979, Amin's personalist regime was brought to an end. Amin's regime had rested heavily on neo-patrimonial ties in society to the detriment of other civil-political institutions.

A critical analysis of the Amin regime and leadership illustrates that it was a 'one-man' state where the leader acted contrary to the constitution.   He promoted the ideology of militarism more than Obote had done by usurping the powers of all civilian institutions like Parliament, civil society organizations, and the judiciary. As Omara Otunnu rightly observes,

> Militarism germinates, takes root and flourishes in society when the military usurps power. Military coups acquire a tradition and bring about a change in the power relations of the society by their impact on the citizenry. Thus military coups and military rule legitimize violence and sanction military means as a method in their general efforts to shift power relations and in social relations.[388]

Indeed, the most enduring legacy of Idi Amin's rule in Uganda may be militarism, which his regime nurtured and bequeathed to the socio-political

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[387] A. W. Maiso, "A History of Multiparty Democracy in Uganda, 1962-1983", (M.A Dissertation, History Dept, Makerere University, 1994), 210.

[388] A. Omara-Otunnu, "The Dynamics of Conflict in Uganda", in Oliver Furley (Ed.), *Conflict in Africa* (London: I.B Touris Publishers, 1995), 403.

system.[389] The militarism during Idi Amin's rule was perhaps best captured by the grammar of power at the time: 'I can fight, therefore I must rule'. Today in Uganda, militarism has graduated that grammar into the NRA dictum, according to Otunnu, "I fought, therefore I must rule" or "I shall kill anybody who plays about with my army".[390] In essence such "hard talk" is not reconciliatory but simply pushes ex-soldiers and deposed politicians into conflict as the only alternative.

Militarism, which has its roots in civil-military relations and the nature of the state in colonialism, has now gained sanction and social currency in Uganda and has terminally affected socio-political processes and economic activities in the country.

In the period after Amin's fall, the military came to dominate the political space in Uganda at the expense of civilian institutions. For example, after political differences arising out of, for instance, the rigging of elections or the unequal distribution of political posts in the cabinet or other central government organs, the military option became the first rather than the last resort. Political leaders with strong support within the military quickly resorted to the option, leading to conflicts in parts of Uganda.

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[389]A. Omara-Otunnu, "The Dynamics of Conflict in Uganda", Chapters 8-14.
[390] A. Omara-Otunnu, "The Dynamics of Conflict in Uganda", 403.

Weak leadership and political chaos in Uganda, 1979-1985

After the fall of Idi Amin in April 1979, it was hoped that Ugandans would realize that the country's problems were mainly due to political disorganization and especially inept leadership. It was hoped that Ugandans would strive to build viable political institutions with mechanisms to resolve conflicts peacefully. This, however, was not to be. Ugandans then discovered that it was easier to overthrow a bad government and leader than to create a good one. Post-Idi Amin leaders adopted "a winner takes all" type of politics and struggle that plunged Uganda into a 5 year civil war between 1981 and 1985.

In March 1979, the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF), a coalition of Ugandan exile groups, was created at the Moshi Conference convened under Tanzania's auspices. It set up a National Consultative Council (NCC), a National Executive Council (NEC) and a Military Commission which took over after the liberation in April 1979.[391] The NCC had a daunting task to restore political and economic stability and to establish new institutional arrangements which would serve as the basis for a viable democratic system for the future.

The political situation in Uganda between April 1979, when Idi Amin was overthrown, and 1986, when the National Resistance Movement of Yoweri Museveni took charge, was largely chaotic. In this period alone, Ugandans were subjected to the inept leadership of five presidents and separate governments. These included Yusuf Lule, (68 days from April 15-June 21 1979), Lukongwa

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[391] E. A. Brett, "Neutralising the Use of Force in Uganda: The Role of the Military in Politics", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 331, (1995), 129-152.

Binaisa (June 22 1979- May 1980), Paulo Muwanga (May 1980-Dec 1980), Second Obote regime (10 Dec 1980- July 27 1985) and Tito-Okello Lutwa.[392]

These governments and the different leaders exhibited a number of weaknesses. First, none of them had a firm hold on the police, the secret services, the army or the prisons. Lines of authority and power in both government and paramilitary agencies were chaotic with the result, for example, that the soldiers in the Binaisa, Obote and Okello governments often defied orders and behaved unprofessionally throughout most of the period. As Museveni lamented, "even Amin's soldiers had been unruly and undisciplined, but until 1977, he had enforced brutal control over them and, in consequence, most of Uganda".[393] Most of these governments were overly dependent on foreigners for political survival.[394]

Moreover, none of the five governments that succeeded Idi Amin was elected by the people of Uganda, and, hence, none had political legitimacy. Obote claimed that he was voted into office in 1980 by the people, but in reality, he had ascended to power on the whims of the army and the electoral commission put in place by his henchman in UPC, Paulo Muwanga, then head of the Military Commission.

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[392] *Daily Monitor* 9th April 2007. See also F. Bwengye, *The Agony of Uganda,* 37.
[393] Onyango-Odongo, "The Historical Memories of Armed Conflict in Uganda", (Kampala, Unpublished), 11-12.
[394] A. B. K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda,* 1964-1985, 123.

68 days of the Lule Leadership

The Moshi Conference held in Tanzania in April 1979 elected Professor Yusuf Kironde Lule as chairman of the Uganda National Liberation Front and, subsequently, first post-Amin President. However, after a mere 68 days, he was violently removed from office.

On taking over the reins of rule, the new government was mired in political intrigues, and ideological and constitutional wrangles. Like leaders before him, Lule attempted to reorganize the army by implementing a quota system of enlistment as recommended by his political adviser-Professor Semakula-Kiwanuka. He recommended that the number of recruits from each ethnic group should be proportionate to the numerical strength of that group in the country as a whole.[395]

The aim was to enlist most of his Baganda tribesmen into the army as a way to counter the Uganda People's Congress and the Acholi-Langi tribesmen of Obote who then dominated the Liberation army. Mamdani demonstrates that, like Amin who organized a large-scale recruitment of the urban riff-raff into the army, Lule behaved in more or less the same way, if not worse. In his determination to eliminate supposed UPC threats, Lule also demoted Paulo Muwanga by transferring him from the sensitive portfolio of internal affairs Minister to Labour and Yoweri Museveni from Defence to that of Regional

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[395] G .W. Maiso, "A History of Multiparty Democracy in Uganda", 217.

Cooperation.[396] He then argued that the constitution gave him powers to do so even without consulting the National Consultative Council. As he stated,

> The constitution of a state is different from that of a party which is in government, and clearly the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) is quite analogous to a party in this regard. The former establishes the state, the organs of its government and their respective functions; the latter establishes the structure of the party (i.e. UNLF) and its goals which its government must accomplish under the state constitution.[397]

This became a source of conflict between President Lule and the National Consultative Council. It also showed how Lule wanted to exploit 'loopholes' in the constitution to deepen the political directions of NCC.

Like Obote in the 1960s, Lule had tried to use constitutional provisions and to manipulate the constitution to protect his interest. However, unlike Obote then who had infiltrated the military and used it to protect his interest, Lule had not. Worse still, in the National Consultative Council was the famous "GANG of FOUR" that included Professors: Rugumayo, Dan Wadada Nubudere, Omwony Ojok and Yash Tandon who were also interested in leading Uganda then. On June 21 1979, Lule was removed from office after a vote of no-confidence by the Uganda National Liberation Front's (NCC) reportedly orchestrated by the "gang of four".[398]

Besides, there were the pro-Obote elements in the army and administration. As J. Mulira put it, Obote was a factor in all the chaos between 1979 and 1985.

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[396] G .W. Maiso, "A History of Multiparty Democracy in Uganda", 217.
[397] Muyanda-Mutebi, *Uganda Since the War of 1979* (Kampala, Unpulished), 27.
[398] *The Daily Monitor* 9 October, 2007, See also interview with Dan Nabudere, 8/10/2007.

Obote's influence then was indirectly promoted by General Tito Okello, Chief of Staff, David Oyite-Ojok and the over 5000 soldiers that Oyite had recruited from the Langi, Acholi and Iteso communities in and around Kampala[399]. As Lule later confessed in an interview, "there were many pro-Obote elements in the government that had been forced on me by Tanzania".[400]

As president, Lule failed to contend with the political forces in the post-Amin era. He failed to divide those working against his interests or unite them into a single force working for him. He even failed to exploit the bitter differences that existed between the intellectuals such as the "Gang of four" and the Obote elements. Instead, through his actions, he united them against himself. As Kasozi ably put it, Lule did not realize that it was the Uganda National Liberation Front and not the Constitution that had put him in power.[401]

Lule's fall helps to support this study's position stated earlier that conflict in Uganda can squarely be blamed on the Ugandan political leadership and especially its failure to work out basic political consensus on how to resolve political differences short of physical force. It further illustrates how fragmented the Uganda political elite was on political issues. Each group or leader in power attempted to retain power at the expense of other groups. In most cases such competing groups opted to operate outside the constitution, leading to conflict, division and ethnic politics in the state. The Baganda felt disillusioned and demonstrated in Kampala streets calling for the immediate reinstatement of

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[399] Interview with J. Mulira on 8th October, 2007
[400] A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, 130.
[401] A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, 131.

Lule. They also accused Obote and his Langi tribesmen and their Acholi cousins of brewing trouble for Lule. Lwanga Lunyiigo, currently a Presidential adviser to Yoweri Museveni, has even claimed elsewhere that Lule was removed from power in 1979 mainly because of an attempt to shift the ethnic composition of the army away from the northerners.[402]

The Baganda then resorted to clandestine activities against later governments. This partly explains why the Baganda effectively supported Yoweri Museveni during his five-year bush war against the second Obote regime between 1981 and 1985. The Baganda have, since the 1966 crisis, remained a strong force in the center of Uganda that all political leaders have had either to manipulate to rise to and keep power or ignore and have problems. As Ali Mazrui has written of Ugandan politics, "Uganda is an impossible country to govern effectively with the support of the Baganda, but it is also impossible to govern effectively without the support of the Baganda".[403]

Following the removal of Professor Lule, the post of President of Uganda fell vacant and the National Consultative Council (NCC) immediately voted to fill this post. Three contestants emerged, that is, Godfrey Binaisa, Edward Rugumayo, the then chairman of the NCC, and Paulo Muwanga, the then Minister of Internal Affairs. Binaisa, a former Attorney General of Uganda, emerged as the winner. He was elected chairman of the National Executive

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[402] P. Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes,* (London: Hurst & Company, 1992), 130.
[403] A. Mazrui, "The Social Origin of Uganda's Presidents: From King to Peasant Warrior", *Canada Journal of African Studies*, 1 (1974), 3-23.

Committee of the UNLF and, subsequently, the President of the Republic of Uganda.[404]

The Binaisa Regime (June 22, 1979-May 1980)

Godfrey Lukongwa Binaisa was not new to Uganda's turbulent history and politics of manipulation. Born in 1920, Binaisa was first appointed Uganda's Attorney General in 1962 and had been very instrumental in the formulation of the Republic constitution of 1967.[405]

Under Binaisa, the UNLF organized elections to fill 60 vacant seats of the NCC, reserved for people who had stayed in Uganda during Amin's regime and who did not attend the Moshi Conference.[406] The army, which Lule had neglected, would get 10 seats and women would get 9 elected members. The council expanded from 30 to 127 delegates through a process that many considered as favouring the Uganda Peoples Congress of Milton Obote.[407]

Unlike Lule, Godfrey Binaisa tried his best to contend with the political forces that Lule's regime had failed to contain/engage. However, he fell victim to the conspiratorial methods of political behaviour so typical of Uganda by his complicity in eliminating forces that would have protected him.

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[404] F. Bwengye, *The Agony of Uganda,* 41.
[405] In an interview with Binaisa in 2007, he strongly believes that his role in formulating the 1967 constitution and its details saved Uganda a lot of trouble. He does not regret doing it even when sections of the political elite have always argued that this manipulation of the 1962 independence constitution and 1967 constitution are the real causes of trouble in Uganda.
[406] F. Bwengye, *The Agony of Uganda,* 41.
[407] Interview with P. Mulira, 8th October, 2007.

In his bid to diffuse the political clout of the military in politics in the country, he dismissed the Army Chief of Staff David Oyite Ojok without consulting the Military Commission and appointed him Uganda's Ambassador to Algeria, claiming that he wanted to improve discipline and to help build good public relations between the army and the public at large. His main interest was to eliminate the strong army chief, then the highest Langi in the army and Obote's ardent supporter. He avoided consulting the Military Commission under Paulo Muwanga partly because Muwanga had challenged him for the post of President and also because Muwanga was Obote's 'henchman.'[408] His failure to heed the demands of the Military Commission led to the Commission deposing him from power.[409] This was Uganda's first bloodless coup where Binaisa's cabinet was dissolved and the former President put under house arrest. The Military Commission then went ahead to arrange for General elections in 1980.[410]

The December 1980 elections organized by the Military Commission were mainly a contest between the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) led by Obote and the Democratic Party (DP) led by Paul Semwogerere. The other parties were the Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM) led by Yoweri Museveni and the Conservative Party, a successor party to the Kabaka Yekka (KY), led by Joshua Mayanja-Nkangi. The UPC was declared elected, but the result was disputed and rejected by the Democratic Party and the UPM of Yoweri Museveni which had managed to win only one seat to parliament. This was the main reason advanced by Yoweri Museveni to start a five year bush war against the

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[408] Interview with P. Mulira, 8th October, 2007.
[409] E. Masinde Aseka, *Transformational Leadership in East Africa,* 334.
[410] A. Gakwandi, *Uganda Pocket Facts*, 24.

government and leadership of Obote in 1981, proving that, as one political commentator-Kintu Nyago stated in the *Daily Monitor*, "the failure by a section of the Ugandan political elite to channel their political demands and grievances through the existing constitutional framework is the main source of conflict".[411] This seems to be the case in the period 1981 to 1985 when Museveni started and fought a bush war in Luwero (in Buganda) against Obote and led to the 20 year old conflict pitting different rebel groups in Acholiland against the Museveni government and leadership in northern Uganda. In the period that followed this election, Ugandan politics degenerated into open ethnic backed conflicts.

The rebellion in the South that Obote faced, led by Y. Museveni and his NRA in the Luwero triangle was paralleled by one in West Nile which was initiated by members of the Former Uganda National Army (FUNA). Moyo and Arua areas were identified with Amin and blamed by many Acholi for the massacres of 1971. In late 1980, FUNA invaded the district and occupied Arua. The UNLA, mainly composed of Acholi troops, responded to this with widespread attacks on civilians, leading to a guerilla war which drove hundreds of thousands across the border, tied down some army units, and guaranteed further support for a rebellion which could have been avoided with careful handling by Obote and his subordinates. According to Major General Emilio-Mondo, General Mustapha Adrisi, Brigadier Killi, local people in Arua believed Obote, as an individual,

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[411] *Daily Monitor* 5, October 2007.

hated West Nilers.[412]   As evidence of his leadership weakness, Obote did not visit such areas to dispel such propaganda and beliefs.

The second Obote regime (1980-1985)

In December 1980, Obote formed his second administration (the first having been between 1962 and 1971). This was after the 1980 disputed elections in which UPC and Obote claimed victory. Many groups in Uganda did not regard these elections as having been free and fair at all. The elections were actually won by the Democratic Party, which swept Buganda and Busoga with a landslide.[413]

Talking about the election and its aftermath, Museveni, then the leader of the opposition Uganda Patriotic Movement said:

> it was clear that the UPC and Obote were heading for a resounding defeat in spite of all the rigging they had done at the earlier stage of registration of voters, nomination of candidates and demarcation of electoral boundaries.[414]

This marked the beginning of difficult years for Ugandans. First, Museveni and his Uganda Patriotic Movement rejected the outcome of the 1986 elections and later began a guerilla war against the second Obote regime. In February, civil war began. This war raged on for five years between February 1981 and 26 January 1986 when Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Army stormed Kampala, the capital city and took over power. Violence characterized

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[412] Interview with retired Amin soldiers, Major. Gen. Emilio-Mondo and General Mustapha – 20 October 2007 at Arua.
[413] E. Masinde-Aseka, *Transformational Leadership in East Africa*, 335
[414] Amaza-Ondoga, *Museveni's Long March from Guerilla to Statesman*, 19.

the second Obote regime right from 1980 to his fall in 1985. The opposition Obote faced was intense and sustained throughout his second tenure.[415]

Obote had thought that he could easily rely on the army and a divided ethnic Uganda to keep power as he had done in his first tenure (1962-1971). However, he was wrong. Resistance to the second Obote government began effectively when the different fighting groups crystallized into formidable movements.[416] The most significant movement remained the National Resistance Movement under Yoweri Museveni. Others were the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) led by Andrew Kayiira and The Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) in West Nile, chaired by Brigadier Moses Ali (former member of the Uganda Army of Idi Amin).[417]

Within the Uganda National liberation Front, an anti-dictatorship group was also formed, led by the "Gang of Four" that was made up of Edward Rugumayo, Dan Wadada Nabudere, Omwony-Ojok and Yash Tandon. Their strategy was not to go to full-scale war but to resolve political differences through round table conferences. They thought that the solution to Uganda's problems was democracy and that democracy could only be achieved by all political groups coming together as they had done at Moshi and planning a strategy[418]. Whereas their aims were noble and suggested methods were good, they could not achieve much in a country where the other political elite regarded the military option as

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[415] Interview with Godfrey Binaisa, 2007 January
[416] A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, 166
[417] Harrell-Bond and Barbara E, *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees,* (Oxford: University Press, 1986), 35
[418] Interview with Nabudere-Mbale 10 September 2007.

the best solution to political problems. Worse still, this group (UNLF-anti-dictatorship) remained elitist and did not address itself to the role of peasants in the political process. They published hundreds of papers and booklets that exposed the Obote regime, but that was all they did.[419]   Whereas they contributed to the psychological warfare, they remained ineffective against a regime and leadership that was used to the role of military force and military solutions for even political problems.

Obote had come to power through the use of violence and set in motion a program where the army remained the anchor of politics in Uganda. In 1985, he was removed from power violently by his one-time loyal Generals, Tito Okello and Bazilio Okello. Although these two soldiers administered the "coup de grace", their regime was rendered helpless by the other fighting movements. The Okellos felt that they were tired of fighting for greedy political leaders. This led to their mutiny in 1985 which ended in the coup against Obote.

The second Obote regime and its preoccupation with wars of resistance brought about internal division between the two ethnic groups that had until then dominated politics and the military in Uganda (i.e. the Acholi and Langi). The Acholi in the army, fighting against Museveni and other rebel leaders, began to complain that their deaths were disproportionately high and that only Langi soldiers were being promoted. They were confirmed in their belief when Obote

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[419] A. B. K. Kasozi, The *Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, 170.

by passed senior Acholi officers and chose a Langi, Smith Opon-Acak, as his new Chief of Staff after the death of Oyite Ojok.[420]

Obote's cabinet was also divided between two principal factions. The first, led by the President himself, consisted of young men in their early forties or late thirties and included Chris Rwakasis, Peter Otai, Dr. Luwuliza Kirunda and others. This group controlled the National Security Agency (NASA); a spy network that had information on many people and organizations suspected of being hostile to the UPC government. The other faction was led by Paulo Muwanga, with the co-operation of many Acholi elite led by Otema Alimadi (the Prime Minister and an Acholi) and General Tito Okello.[421] This second faction, largely constituted by Acholi, wanted to negotiate with rebel factions opposed to Obote but were foiled by the Obote faction that believed in total warfare.

The political elite and leadership got seriously divided and this greatly assisted the National Resistance Movement/Army of Museveni to advance against the UNLA forces. Even at this stage, Obote still failed to realize that power never belongs to an individual but to an organized group. Once his UPC group began to disintegrate, Obote's powers weakened drastically. Worse still, the weakening of the Acholi/Langi alliance meant that Obote could not hold on to power for long. By June 1985, dissent in the ranks of Obote's army became public as disagreements between General Tito Okello and Army Chief of Staff-Opon Acak intensified. In the North, Bazilio Okello, an Acholi officer, began to mobilize his

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[420] A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, 172.
[421] Onyango Odongo, "The Historical Memories of Armed Conflicts in Uganda 11.

forces after disobeying Obote's orders that he returns to Kampala. This was the beginning of a mutiny that Obote could not resist. Acholi soldiers, who Obote had relied on for long to keep power, turned guns against him, and on 27 July 1985, announced a coup against the Obote administration.[422] General Tito Okello was then proclaimed the Head of State. The Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) became riddled with defection and desertions as hundreds of members and sometimes whole formations left to join the National Resistance Army (NRA) of Yoweri Museveni.[423]

Obote's second regime (1980-1985) was the greatest disservice to Ugandans. Violence was always high throughout the regime and, unlike Idi Amin who had managed to take control of the army even at periods of turbulence, Obote did not. One may also argue that if Obote had allowed the democratic process to run its course, the blood bath of 1981-1985 could have been avoided. However, by thinking that he could force the population to accept him, he failed to measure the limits of his political power. The opposition that Obote faced was intense and sustained throughout his second tenure. He even failed to exploit the North-South divide as he had done before and, instead, fell because of North-North divide, involving the Acholi against the Langi. The downfall of Milton Obote on 27 July 1985 did not lead to immediate peace in Uganda. It instead exposed the fragmented nature of Uganda's political and military elite, subsequently leading to more chaos and war.

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[422] E. Masinde Aseka, *Transformational Leadership in East Africa*, 337.
[423] O. Amaza-Ondoga, *Museveni's Long March from Guerilla to Statesman*, 55.

By early 1984, Obote's position had become tenuous. He never had the support of his overseas backers and the cost of the war had by then eliminated the economic recovery initiated with the structural adjustment programme in 1981-1982. Officials and politicians received negligible incomes and many behaved with complete cynicism. Services deteriorated further and corruption and the black economy flourished.[424] One would have expected that Uganda's political and military elite would have quickly exploited this to overthrow Obote. This, however, did not happen then and it was only when Obote fell out with his Acholi officers that he lost power in a coup.

Obote's long stay in power up to 1985 was largely due to division and petty squabbles among the elite especially between Yoweri Museveni and the Baganda group led by Andrew Kayiira. Between 1981 and 1985, several secret meetings were organized by the different opposition groups like Museveni's NRA, Kayiira's UFM, and the Uganda Democratic Freedom Movement [FEDEMU] on how to remove Obote, but none of them was successful. In July 1985 when Obote was overthrown, Museveni was still preoccupied with his guerilla war in Luwero in Buganda, while other rebel groups also operated within parts of Buganda but with minor impact. All these forces and their activities gained momentum after the internal division between the Acholi and Langi-dominated government had brought Obote's rule to an end.

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[424] E A. Brett, "Neutralising the Use of Force in Uganda: The Role of the Military in Politics", 129-152.

Tito Okello's leadership and continued conflict in Uganda

Tito Okello was the first and only president to hail from Acholiland since independence in 1962. Before his rise to a leadership position in 1985, Tito Okello served as Obote's top commander of the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA). He later became head of State after overthrowing his long time master Obote, with the assistance of Lt. General Bazilo Okello, also an Acholi.

In a country that was witnessing military coups in succession, General Tito Okello attempted to insulate his regime from the vices of militarism. He tried to achieve this by; among others, incorporating all the fighting factions into his government. He succeeded in wooing the remnants of the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM), especially those who had formed a new wing that basically advocated for the restoration of the Kabaka of Buganda. This group was called the Uganda Democratic Freedom Movement (FEDEMU). Besides, there was also the Former Uganda National Army (FUNA). He called for an end to tribalism and appointed Paulo Muwanga, a Muganda, as Prime Minister in an effort to woo Buganda and forge a unity government.[425]

The main problem that the Okello government and leadership faced till its end remained Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Army. Even before Obote's downfall, Museveni had foiled all attempts to resolve political problems peacefully. He also frustrated the other forces like UFM and FEDEMU in their bid to organize one front against Obote. In one such meeting in 1981 at

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[425] Okello appeared well-intentioned, only that he lacked the capacity and shrewdness to handle the problems of the political elite then. He used very noble-Christian methods which people like Museveni just exploited to strengthen their grounds and topple him.

Makindye to forge ways of ousting Obote, Museveni categorically stated that "any meeting with non-military combatants to discuss military issues was useless because such people know nothing about armed political struggles". He also later rejected the proposal for democratic control of the army on the grounds that he already had a "well-trained and organized fighting force, ready to begin a liberation war against Obote and the UNLA".[426] At that time, strong disagreement between Yoweri Museveni and the other freedom fighters ruled out any possibility of creating a democratic-united front in Uganda to fight for real democracy or to solve issues democratically. Museveni insisted that he alone should carry out the difficult task of removing Obote.

Museveni's negativity to Okello's call for dialogue meant that, once again, 'the gun rather than the ballot' would determine the political course of politics in Uganda. Museveni's main argument was that there had been no fundamental political change in Kampala. To join the Tito Okello regime would have been to compromise the democratic principles for which his National Resistance Army had fought for the previous five years.[427]

After persistent invitation to Museveni, Tito Okello later appealed to the Government of Kenya under Arap Moi to organize peace talks with all other political and military contenders as a way forward. This peace arrangement was bound to fail because the political and military leaders then still viewed each other with deep suspicion. In an interview with *DRUM Magazine* in Nairobi, in

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[426]Onyango-Odongo, "The Historical Memories of Armed Conflicts in Uganda", 15.
[427] A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origin of Violence in Uganda*, 174.

1985, as the peace talks were underway, Museveni categorically stated that "the problem in Uganda is that the leadership has mainly been from the north". "The Acholi are everywhere:" he said, "in the army, big offices, etc. The southerners (and Museveni is a Munyankole from the South) have played a peripheral role since independence".[428] This apparent negative attitude meant that, even if the parties signed a peace agreement, which they did, Museveni would not respect its terms unless he was president. He also set several demands to frustrate Tito Okello's efforts. For instance, he demanded that a new military council be formed where both Okello and Museveni would enjoy equal status and that the national army of Uganda should comprise the following: 3700 soldiers (44%) from General Okello's UNLA, 3600 soldiers (42%) from Museveni's NRA, and 12 soldiers from other groups.[429] All this was accepted by Tito Okello as a way to reach a peaceful agreement and avoid war in Uganda as the only alternative to peace.

The two parties then signed the Nairobi Peace Accord (later called Peace Jokes' by Ugandan scholars like George Kanyaihamba, now High Court judge) on 17 December 1985. Museveni later wrote back to President Moi of Kenya that his commanders had rejected the terms of the accord. The NRA also complained that the Okello 'junta' and its Military Council had not honoured the terms of the agreement.[430] The truth about who violated the truce is difficult to deduce. However, all pointers indicate that Museveni felt strong enough to overran Kampala with or without the agreement. He had realized that division within the

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[428] See *Drum Magazine*, 1985, 9.
[429] Onyango -Odongo, "The Historical Memories of Armed Conflict in Uganda", 16.
[430] See W. Gazozo, "Uganda's Statement", in *AfricAsia*, 25 (January 1986), 43-4.

UNLA made it possible for him then to overrun government forces. By so doing, Museveni set a precedent where other political and military groups opposed to his rule mistrusted him and also resorted to war as the only alternative. This has contributed to failure of peace accords between Museveni's NRA and rebels in Acholiland.

Museveni's Leadership

On 26 January 1986 Museveni and his National Resistance Army (NRA) drove Okello's poorly organised UNLA out of Kampala.[431] The UNLA then disintegrated as Amin's army had done. Whereas the NRA victory in Uganda remained quite unique and unusual in Africa because it marked the first successful overthrow of an indigenous government by a locally based guerilla movement, NRA victory did not lead to total peace in the country. In Northern Uganda, the NRA victory was greeted with guns.

As Brett, put it, "victorious regimes are tempted to assert their authority by punishing and humiliating the vanquished. Yet, coercion is an uncertain basis for political authority, since violence creates potential enemies who will comply only while they believe that resistance is impossible".[432] This has been a major failure of Uganda's post-colonial leaders, Museveni included. After his victory over Okello, Museveni's major mistake lay in his failure to persuade the ex-UNLA forces and their leaders to lay down arms and integrate with his NRA. Instead, there was a feeling that this was time for revenge for the Luwero

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[431] *The Guardian*, 27 Jan, 1986
[432] E.A Brett, "Neutralizing the Use of Force in Uganda", 145.

massacre and ethnic cleansing on the Acholi for their domination of politics in Uganda. As one time Prime Minister of the Museveni regime, Kintu Musoke, once stated: "the Acholi have to pay for what they did in Luwero".[433]

Indeed, after Museveni captured Kampala in 1986, soldiers from the previous government left the capital city and fled north and east of the country. By 1987, tens of thousands of animals and other assets had been lost and normal administration was suspended in the nine districts of Gulu, Kitgum (in Acholi), Apac and Lira (in Lango), Soroti, Kumi (in Teso), Kotido, Moroto (in Karamoja) and Palisa.[434] Apart from the fact that these areas had been UPC strongholds, the initial response and attitude of the NRM leadership towards the remnants of the past regime, worsened an already difficult situation.

Museveni's troops that followed remnants of Obote and Okello soldiers allegedly killed and raped and used other forms of physical abuse of non-combatants as well when they reached Acholiland, which was foreign territory to them.[435] People in the war-torn Acholiland also saw the new army loot their cattle as revenge on all the Acholi for those few who had been party to the Obote and Okello governments.[436]

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[433] *The Monitor New Paper*, 129, 1996.
[434] Other resistances were in Kasese led by former Amin soldier-Amon Bazira who was also deputy minister under Obote II.
[435] R. Doom & Vlassenreoot, "Kony's Message: A New Koine? The Lords Resistance Army in Northern Uganda", in *African Affairs*, (390) (1999), 98 5-36, See also Amii Omara-Otunnu, "The Dynamics of Conflict in Uganda", 13 and M.L. Pirouet, "Human Rights Issues in Museveni's Uganda" in H. Holger Bernt & M. Twaddle (Eds.), *Changing Uganda: The Dilemmas of Structural Adjustment Programme, (*London: James Currey, 1991), 16.
[436] Interview with Ogenga-Latigo, 2007.

Conflict was greatest in Acholiland which had dominated the post-coup government. Yet even here, Tim Allen claims that there was initially little sympathy for the main rebel movement - the Uganda Peoples Democratic Army (UPDA) among the Acholi population. However, the situation changed due to weaknesses of Museveni and his leaders and commanders. As Tim Allen remarked,

> Most of the soldiers were taunted for their failure and castigated for their brutal actions in Luwero. (It was) killings by the 35th Battalion of NRA in Kitgum District (Acholiland), and a misguided government order for all ex-soldiers to report to barracks that caused the situation to deteriorate.[437]

This kind of order to all ex-soldiers to report to barracks reminded the Acholi of Amin's orders in 1971. In that year, Amin ordered the Acholi to report to barracks and massacred them. In pursuit of the unsuccessful radio order, heavily armed NRA troops were dispatched to various parts of Acholiland to hunt down ex-UNLA. Many ex-soldiers reacted to such orders by joining one or the other of the several rebel movements that sprung up in Acholiland. This shows how the weaknesses of Museveni and his army commanders laid ground for conflict in Acholiland.

Early rebellion against the NRM in the Teso region was also partly because of the weaknesses and arrogance of NRA leaders. The NRA was initially welcomed in Teso, which had also been harassed by Acholi soldiers after the 1985 coup by Tito Okello. According to some sources,[438] the critical factor that precipitated rebellion in the Teso area was the NRA's decision to disarm local militia

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[437] T. Allen, "Understanding Alice: Uganda's Holy Spirit Movement in Context", *Africa*, 616, 3 (1991), 370-339.
[438] Interview with Cuthbert Obwangor-Former Obote Minister 1962-1971 and respected elder.

previously set up by the Obote government to protect the inhabitants from Karimojong cattle raiders and the failure by the NRA to intervene when the Karimojong began raiding Teso area exclusively in 1986-87. Many believed that NRA soldiers were also involved in rustling and were further alienated by serious military abuse.[439]

In addition, in the immediate aftermath of the capture of power by the NRA, there was a general anti-northerners sentiment in the country. People from northern Uganda were collectively labeled "ANYANYA"; a derogatory term to imply that they (Acholi and Langi) are not Ugandans but southern Sudanese who have no legitimate right to play a role in Ugandan national life. Thus, Dennis Pain observed, "with the NRA takeover, a new community witch hunt burst out in which every Acholi was pointed out by children and adults as "Anyanya".[440] The leaders did not help the situation either. President Museveni worsened matters by referring to the past leaders as "swine" "criminals" or "brutes" and the Acholi soldiers as "Bacholi murderers". All atrocities committed in Luwero were allegedly by the "Bacholi". [441]

Instead of seeking reconciliation for the sake of peace, the NRA leaders castigated the Acholi in general for the mistakes committed by politicians and a few Acholi soldiers. Worse still, all killings believed to have been committed by

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[439] Michael Obalatum-a former UPA rebel in Kumi had been a teacher in Ngora until forced to flee into the bush by threats of NRA. Interviewed 2007, Oct. 10

[440] P. Dennis , "Ethnicity in Small Town", Paper presented to East African Universities Social Science Council Conference, Nairobi, Dec. 1972, 98

[441] For long, President Museveni has referred to 'Bacholi and Langi as "problems of Uganda". For more, see *The Monitor Newspaper* 1987, 1990. Also the President's speeches in Y. K. Museveni, *What are Africa's Problems? (*Kampala: NRM Publications, 1992). He kept referring to past leaders like Obote, Tito Okello from the north as criminals, swine (pigs). Such derogatory remarks were not reconciliatory. 'Bacholi' is a collective local terminology for all Acholi irrespective of whether they were soldiers or civilians or children.

the Acholi in Luwero during the wartime could not be proved. This kind of representation promoted hatred between the Baganda in Luwero and the Acholi and also spread fear among the ex-soldiers. Most of them, therefore, went to the bush to fight the NRA government.

The behaviour of the victorious NRA forces in Acholiland worsened the situation. NRA commanders in Acholiland acted brutally, thereby justifying fears among the people there that it was time for revenge by southerners against the northerners. Rebel suspects and alleged collaborators were randomly arrested and openly mistreated. This made many ex-soldiers fear to surrender. The significance of NRA atrocities was confirmed by Charles Alai, until 1998 a Deputy Minister in the NRM government and former UPDA fighter, who claims that he was beaten up as a suspect by the NRA at his home in Gulu, and had no option but to join the Uganda Peoples Democratic Movement/Army (UPDA) rebels because his life was threatened[442]. Andrew Adimola, a senior politician from Gulu, also claims that Bazilio Okello would have come out of the bush in 1986 had Museveni not insisted that he should be charged as a criminal.[443]

The point to be made from the above is that, had there been persuasive and a more sensitive handling of the political issue after the fall of Tito Okello, there is a likelihood that the volatile political-military situation in Acholiland would have been avoided or, at least, minimized. However, the victorious political and

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[442] Interview on 13 October, 2007.
[443] E.A. Brett, "Neutralizing the Use of Military Force in Uganda", 146.

military leaders then wanted to assert their authority and humiliate the vanquished. This led to conflict in this region that has persisted to-date.

Museveni and his commanders regarded their victory and revolution as a "fundamental change". President Museveni then wanted a military solution, not only because he saw the different rebel groups as a military or even criminal problem, but also because it would bring him and the National Resistance Movement substantial political capital. As a result, Acholiland became a cradle of different rebel movements. After the UPDA/M signed an agreement in late 1987, with the government, the Holy Spirit Movement under Alice Auma Lakwena came up. Other groups that followed include the Salvation Army of Severino Lukoya, and the Lords Resistance Army that still remains a problem in the north to this date.

For long, Museveni and his commanders disregarded calls for peace talks to resolve the conflicts in Acholiland. Once, Army Commander James Kazini laughed off such a suggestion on the grounds that the Acholi are genetically a war-like people who value war more than peace. As he said, "If anything, it is local Acholi soldiers causing problems. It's the cultural background of the people here; they are violent, it's genetic". [444]

NRM political leaders then regarded conflicts in the area as a local Acholi affair and not an outcome of the country's history and poor leadership. The war in Acholiland since 1986 has not only been a disaster for Uganda, but it has also

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[444] Quoted in Human Rights Watch, *The Scar of Death; Children Abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda,* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1997).

allowed Museveni to maintain an unreformed and corrupt army as a key pillar of his regime. It stands in the way of thorough security sector reform and gives Museveni the arguments with which to resist mounting international pressure to reduce defence spending drastically. It also gives Museveni pretexts to maintain the political status quo by denying the opposition a power base.

In conclusion, what can be said is that, since independence, post-colonial leaders in Uganda identified three problems, namely, poverty, illiteracy and disease as the true enemies of the people. However, none of them has seriously made efforts to deal with these problems. Instead, post-colonial leaders have made serious political and military mistakes that plunged the country into unending conflicts. Since independence in 1962, and especially until 1986, the topmost political office in Uganda has been in the hands of individuals without political courage and who were not able to develop a political philosophy acceptable to the majority of the Ugandan people. The problem has been that the state has always been too closely identified with individuals and these individuals have consistently failed to provide constructive and inspiring leadership. This study contends, therefore, that Uganda's problem is neither diverse ethnicity, its climate or soils or the fact that it was a colonial state, but poor political leadership.